

Introduction to Social Networks

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Office Hours: Fridays, 2-3:30pm

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Class: Mon, 2pm-4pm

Location: WI 1016

Class website: <https://q.utoronto.ca>

Course Description and Aims

This course introduces students to the field of social network analysis (SNA). The social networks perspective emphasizes the essential role of relationships among social actors in shaping the social world. We will consider how different social relationships (and patterns of relationships) form and the consequences of this emergent social structure for individuals, groups, and society. Some questions we will consider include: How does the company one keeps affect one's preferences, political views, and health outcomes? How does one's position in a social network influence their opportunities for finding a job? How can every person in the world be connected to every other through just six steps (six degrees of separation)? By the end of the course students should be able to:

- (1) Describe the major ideas in SNA
- (2) Use the major ideas in SNA to gain insight into real-world phenomena
- (3) Begin to identify the major strategies for measuring and analyzing social networks

Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is SOC101Y1 or SOC102H1 or SOC100H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time and without notice.

Learning Components and Course Requirements

Lectures:

Weekly lectures are on Mondays, 2pm-4pm in WI 1016. Lectures will introduce new content in addition to discussing the week's readings. **Responsibility of being aware of what the professor says in lectures (including administrative announcements) rests with the student.**

Readings:

Each week (except during test weeks) you are required to complete assigned readings (or other media) in advance of the week's lecture. You are also required to contribute to the Quercus discussion about the readings (see below for details). All readings and other media will be available on Quercus and links to the videos are embedded in the "Course Schedule," below.

Quercus discussion participation:

Every week that there are readings except Week 1 (so, Weeks 2-6 and 7-11), you are required to contribute to the Quercus discussion board. You may start a new thread by introducing a question or comment about a reading. Alternatively, you may choose to respond to someone else's post. Try to maintain the focus on broad themes and tensions in the reading(s), this may, of course, involve bringing in examples from current events, your personal experience, or other classes. Contributing to the discussion in each of the 9 weeks will earn you 9% of your final grade.

Short essay assignment:

Three times during the semester you will be required to complete a short essay assignment. The assignments will always be due on Friday at 5pm. You will submit your assignment through the Quercus system. Each assignment is worth 15% of your final grade. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that submitted document files are not corrupted. **If the submitted file cannot be opened, the assignment will be treated as incomplete.**

Two tests:

Two tests will be given. The first, on 13 February, will consist of material from classes 1-5. The second test will be given on the last day of class (3 April) and will focus on material from classes 7-11. You will have 1 hour and 50 minutes to complete the tests. **No final exam will be given during the final exam period.**

Evaluation Components

| | Number of occasions | Percent value | Total percent of final mark |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Syllabus quiz | 1 | 1% | 1% |
| Participation in Quercus discussion | 9 | 9% total | 9% |
| Short essay assignments | 3 | 18.0% each | 54% |
| Tests | 2 | 18% each | 36% |
| | | | 100% (total) |

Communication and Quercus

Email:

Please use your U of T email address to communicate with me about **personal matters**, or to communicate with the TAs. You can expect us to respond to your emails within 24 hours, M-F 9am-5pm. Here's a couple of important points about email communication:

- Please note that the instructor and TA will not respond to emails about issues that are clearly specified in the syllabus (e.g., due dates, office hours times).
- Please use the discussion board to ask questions about course content (see below).
- Requests for make-up tests and other accommodations should be sent to the course instructor (Professor Dokshin), not the TA.
- All emails should include the course code SOC270 in the subject line, and be signed with the student's full name and student number.

Quercus website and discussion boards:

Quercus will contain the course syllabus, readings, assignments, discussion boards, and course announcements. To clarify **questions** regarding the **syllabus**, **assignments**, as well as **substantive questions about the readings**, please use the designated discussion boards on the Quercus site. The instructor and the TA will actively monitor the discussion board and will respond to any questions posted there.

Office hours:

Fridays, 2-3:30pm in Rm. 372 of Sociology Department (725 Spadina Ave)

Late Work and Make-up Tests

Discussion board contributions:

Weekly contributions to the discussion board must be posted by midnight on Friday (of the week when the lecture is posted). Late comments will not be accepted. Your final grade for discussion participation will be based on your activity throughout the course. Consistent, thoughtful contributions during the rest of the semester can compensate for a missed contribution during a given week.

Short essay assignments:

Short essay assignments must be submitted through the course's Quercus page. All assignments are due by 5pm on Fridays. Late submission will result in a 5% deduction for each day the assignment is late (starting with the day the assignment is due, up to a maximum of 50% of the grade) unless you have a legitimate, documented reason beyond your control. Notify the Professor and your TA promptly, if you intend to submit your assignment late to arrange for the submission of the assignment with the necessary documentation.

Make-up tests:

Students who miss an assessment will receive a mark of zero unless reasons beyond their control prevent them from taking it. Students wishing to make-up the missed assessment must email the Professor promptly and provide appropriate documentation (see details below).

Documentation:

If you are unable to turn in an assignment/or miss the test for medical reasons, you will need to **email me** the instructor, not the TA, **and also** declare your absence on ACORN.

Grade Appeals

The instructor and teaching assistants do their best to mark work fairly, consistently, and accurately. Nevertheless, one of us may unintentionally err in our marking. If you believe that your test or assignment has been mismarked, please adhere to the following rules

- For basic mathematical errors, simply alert one of the TAs about the error.
- In the case of more substantive appeals, **you must wait at least 24 hours** after receiving your mark. If you wish to appeal, please submit a thorough written explanation to Professor Dokshin of why you think your mark should be altered. If your appeal is deemed appropriate, the entirety of your test/assignment will be re-graded. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up. **You have 30 days after receiving a mark to appeal it.**

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
 - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work;
 - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing";

- crowdsourcing assignment answers through Facebook or another forum.
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.
- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

Plagiarism software policy: All your written will be checked through *Ouriginal*, a plagiarism detection tool, which is now embedded in Quercus.

Students agree that, by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to *Ouriginal* for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the *Ouriginal* reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of those papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the *Ouriginal* service are described on the *Ouriginal* web site.

Assignments not submitted through *Ouriginal* will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their exams, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the exam they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Ouriginal*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Ouriginal* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

Course Schedule

| Week | Date | Topic & Reading | Assignments Due |
|------------------------------|--------|--|---|
| 1 | 09-Jan | <p>Introduction (terminology and definitions—the language of social networks)</p> <p>Light and Moody. 2020. "Network basics: points, lines, and positions" in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Social Networks</i>.</p> | Syllabus quiz due by Friday by 11:59pm (on Quercus) |
| 2 | 16-Jan | <p>Our connected world</p> <p>Travers and Milgram. 1969. "An Experimental Study of the Small World Problem."</p> <p>Watts, D.J. 1999. "Networks, dynamics, and the small world phenomenon."</p> <p>Read the short text at the link below and spend ~10 minutes playing around with the applet at the bottom of the page: https://mathinsight.org/small_world_network</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |
| 3 | 23-Jan | <p>Ego networks, ecological constraints, and the tyranny of social structure</p> <p>Dunbar. 2018. "The Anatomy of Friendship."</p> <p>Young and Lim. 2014. "Time as a network good: Evidence from unemployment and the standard workweek."</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday Assignment #1 due Friday at 5pm (on Quercus) |
| 4 | 30-Jan | <p>What is a network tie anyway?</p> <p>Granovetter. 1973. "The strength of weak ties."</p> <p>Small. 2017. <i>Someone to Talk To: How Networks Matter in Practice</i>. (Introduction; Chapters 1&2)</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |
| 5 | 06-Feb | <p>Where do networks come from?</p> <p>Feld. 1981. "The focused organization of social ties"</p> <p>Kossinets and Watts. 2009. "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Network."</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |
| 6 | 13-Feb | Midterm Test | |
| Reading week—No Class | | | |
| 7 | 27-Feb | <p>Social capital</p> <p>Coleman. 1988. "Social capital in the creation of human capital."</p> <p>Burt. 1992. <i>Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition</i>. Chapter 1 & Chapter 2.</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday Assignment #2 due Friday at 5pm |
| 8 | 06-Mar | <p>Emergence and collective dynamics</p> <p>Schelling. 1978. "Micromotives and Macrobehavior" Ch. 1.</p> | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |

| Week | Date | Topic & Reading | Assignments Due |
|------|--------|--|--|
| | | Play through the interactive game at the link below: https://ncase.me/polygons/ Another reading [TBA] | |
| 9 | 13-Mar | Network diffusion Watch Ted Talk by Nicholas Christakis (Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/nicholas_christakis_the_hidden_influence_of_social_networks) Gladwell. "Small change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted." <i>The New Yorker</i> . Centola. 2018. <i>How Behavior Spreads</i> . [selection] | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |
| 10 | 20-Mar | Echo chambers and polarization Barbera. 2020. "Social Media, Echo Chambers, and Political Polarization." Cowan. 2014. "Secrets and misperceptions: The creation of self-fulfilling illusions." Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. 2015. "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook." | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday Assignment #3 due Friday at 5pm |
| 11 | 27-Mar | Social networks, well-being, and health Umberson and Karas Montez. 2010. "Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy." Bearman, Moody, and Stovel. 2004. "Chains of affection: The structure of adolescent romantic and sexual networks." | Contribute to Quercus Discussion by 11:59pm on Friday |
| 12 | 03-Apr | Final Test | |