SOCI 3102: Social Networks and Social Capital

Department of Sociology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

2022-23 Term 1
Tuesdays 14:30-16:15
Yasumoto Int'l Academic Park LT2

Contact Information

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Course Description

Social networks is one of the fastest growing sub-areas within the discipline of sociology. The science of social networks focuses on measuring, modeling, and understanding the different ways that people are connected to one another. This is one of the only sub-areas of sociology that has a body of theory accompanied by a distinct methodology. SNA (Social Network Analysis) is already a popular term in both academia and public, often giving an impression that it is all about analytic techniques. Not true. Many years of social network studies have extensively represented rich sociological theory traditions such as structuralism, interactionism, and relational perspectives.

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to

   I.   master the major concepts within the field of social networks, with a particular attention to social capital theory;
  II.   critically examine the causes and consequences of social networks across a variety of behavioral contexts and academic domains;
 III.   achieve minimum competency in social network analysis.

Assessment and Grading

The grade for the course will be calculated as a weighted average of the following components:

Participation	15%
Tutorial Assignments	20%
Scrapbook	20%
Final Paper	45%

Participation (15%)
- To attend or skip is an adult's decision, so I do not want to punish your few times of absence/lateness with a harsh grade. However, I will highly compensate diligent and active students.
- Class starts promptly on time. Arrivals after 5 minutes of the class beginning will be counted as lateness.
- Equal weights will be given for participation in tutorials.

Tutorial Assignments (20%)
- You will learn **R** programming and the basics of network analysis through tutorials. There will be 1-2 graded exercises for you to demonstrate and apply the knowledge of programming.

Scrapbook (20%)
- Scrapbook is a collection of media clippings and commentaries. The goal of this exercise is to take the concepts of the course out of the classroom and use them to interpret the world around you.
- You can find the details in the guide below. Due: TBA.

Final Paper (45%)
- Final paper is a team project of two. You will be paired with another student to work together.
- Presentation (10%) + Paper (35%).
- Specific instructions and assessment criteria will be provided. Due: TBA.

Grading

Grade	Descriptors
A	Excellent: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Good: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Fair: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Pass: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Academic Honesty

Please keep in mind the university's policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in the term paper and assignments. The ideas and language should be your own, and any outside sources must be clearly and properly cited. There are severe consequences if you commit any acts of academic dishonesty. In addition to the department's policy and guidelines for citations, please refer to the university-level disciplinary guidelines and procedures. The Faculty of Social Science has also compiled a handout to alert students of the importance of academic honesty and the consequences of violating the University's Rules. To this end, the final term paper should be submitted to VeriGuide.

Reading

Readings will be uploaded on Blackboard, before or after class. I recommend these books as primary references for lectures:

Light, Ryan and James Moody. 2020. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Networks*. Oxford University Press. Online accessible via the CUHK library: link

Kadushin, Charles. 2012. *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings*. Oxford University Press.

Barabasi, Albert-László. 2018. *Network Science*. Cambridge University Press. Fully available online: http://networksciencebook.com/

Wasserman, Stanley and Katherine Faust. 1994. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press.

Schedule

1	September 6	Course Introduction
2	September 13	Network Structure (I)
3	September 20	Network Structure (II)
4	September 27	Network Structure (III)
5	October 4	NO CLASS: Chung Yeung Festival
6	October 11	Network Effects (I)
7	October 18	Network Effects (II)
8	October 25	Network Effects (III)
9	November 1	CONSULTATION WEEK*
10	November 8	Network Analysis (I)
11	November 15	Network Analysis (II)
12	November 22	Networks and Culture / Student Presentation
13	November 29	Student Presentation

* Lecture will be replaced by meetings with project teams. Project teams will be asked to register a time to meet the instructor.

Tutorials

You are required to attend tutorials. Tutorials will focus on introducing social network analysis using **R** statistical program.

Tutorial schedules TBD. Tutorial times will be determined according to the tutor and students' availability. Around the end of the add/drop period, the tutor will distribute a time survey and students fill the form.

Guide to Scrapbook

Goal

Instead of a mid-term exam, you are required to submit a "scrapbook." Scrapbook is a collection of annotated clippings from the media. A central objective of this course is to help you to think about real-world problems in a different way. The goal of this exercise is to keep abreast of current events, as well as contemporary ideas and trends and to help you take the concepts of the course out of the classroom and use them to interpret the world around you. This can ultimately be a basis for your term paper. Minimum 4 clippings & 4 commentaries.

Sources

- You may draw on whatever sources you choose, including newspapers, magazines, TV, Radio, and the web. News stories, science reports, business analysis, feature articles, book reviews, commentary, editorials, advertising, web-logs, discussion groups, and email threads are all eligible for inclusion.
    - Constraints: They must have appeared/occurred this semester (i.e., publication—not event—date). They can be compiled and rendered as a single paper document. For videos, transcripts.
- They should be in English or properly translated to English.

Topics

While some topics in the syllabus seem a little abstract on first inspection, you may be surprised at how often they come up in newspaper articles, talking with friends, or simply walking around town. You can include anything that seems relevant to you (as long as you can explain why). However, here are some suggestions to get you started

- Networks, everywhere: Social (friendship, acquaintanceship, online, kinship, advice-seeking, affiliation, economic exchange, organizational), political (international relations), biological (disease, neural), technological (power grid, the Internet, transportation), and "information" networks (software, WWW).
- Network processes: People influencing each other's behavior, either directly (peer-to-peer influence, word-of-mouth marketing) or indirectly (via social norms, organizational culture, etc.). Some examples include voting behavior, consumer behavior, TV watching, etc.
- Surprising social or cultural change emerged from the rapid interactions and diffusion by people—unexpected, or previously unnoticed, or otherwise difficult to account for. Fads, fashions, revolutions, virality, and changing social norms or attitudes all fall into this category. Alternatively, prolonged

persistence of social norms in the face of concerted efforts to effect change can also be puzzling.
- Epidemics of disease, both novel and chronic.
- Complex problem-solving activities, in which many people and even agencies must collaborate to solve an urgent problem.

Commentary

- Each piece or set of related pieces, that you present in your scrap book should be accompanied by a short (or long) discussion of how and why you think the piece is interesting, relevant, and illuminated by what you learned in the course.
- No need to restate concepts verbatim or to apply them narrowly—feel free to use your imagination.
- Length does not matter. Commentary should not exceed 2 pages (in whatever font size & spacing).
- Minimum 4 clippings & 4 commentaries.

Assessment Criteria

- Your clippings' relevance to network concepts
- The extent to which you engage concepts in social networks correctly, clearly, and creatively in commentary
- Diversity of topics (e.g., sticking only to 1 topic/concept in 7 clippings of yours is not good)
- Clarity of your thoughts/takeaways in commentary
- On-time submission is crucial