

COMM 4665: Human Communication in Social Networks

Tuesday and Thursday 2:20 - 3:40
Journalism 371

Instructor: Robert Bond, Derby Hall 3072, bond.136@osu.edu

Office Hours: Monday 10-12 and by appointment. Office hours will be held via Zoom. The link will be shared via Carmen.

Course Description

The public is obsessed with social networking and the new ways to connect online, but scholars have been studying connectivity for decades. New research shows that if you want to understand this new phenomenon, you have to start with the real, everyday, face-to-face networks we have always had, ever since we were huddled around campfires on the Serengeti. We will explore the many ways in which social networks have a powerful effect on a wide range of human behaviors. With a foundation in understanding real world networks, we can then consider how these networks function online.

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand how and why social networks are a critical component of social and behavioral science;
2. Gain familiarity with social science research pertaining to social networks in a variety of application areas (communication, health, economics, politics, etc.) and be able to relate the work in the various areas to each other;
3. Gain familiarity with social network terminology and theories of connectivity and interaction;
4. Be able to relate their own experiences, questions, and ideas, both formally and informally, to others.

Course Materials

- **Textbook:** Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler. 2011. *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*. New York: Little Brown. ISBN: 9780316036139.
This book is available on Amazon and there is also a Kindle version.
- All scientific articles assigned are available via Carmen.

Course Format

The course will be held in a hybrid format. This means that we will hold a mixture of in-person and online course meetings. In-person course meetings will occur in the designated course classroom. If necessary, we will also meet via Zoom synchronously, but we will try to avoid that. Online course material in lieu of in-person course meetings will be delivered asynchronously. In practice, this means that in many weeks we will not have a synchronous course meeting at all or will only have one in-person synchronous course meeting. For in-person course meetings, I will do my best to make a Zoom link available for anyone who cannot join in person, and to record the session.

Requirements

The course will require you to regularly write papers in response to course materials, particularly the readings. A basic overview of the course assignments and the corresponding percentage of a student's course grade is as follows:

1. *Short assignments (4 assignments \times 6.25% each = 25% of total grade)*

At the conclusion of the six main units in the course (as noted in the list of readings below, these units are: emotional contagion, love and sex, spread of health behaviors, economic networks, political networks, and social media), there will be a short weekly assignment. The exact nature of the assignments will vary, but each will emphasize things like a brief reflection on how you might apply the course material outside of the course, things in the readings that surprised you, things in the readings that you agree or disagree with, and so on. Details of what is expected for short assignments will be shared on Carmen. There are six weeks in which you can submit a short assignment, but only four are graded, and as such you may skip two short assignments at your discretion.

2. *Reaction papers (2 papers \times 30% each = 60% of total grade)*

Reaction papers are longer reactions to (a) the course material and (b) supplementary readings. There are two reaction papers, the first due on February 28 and the second due on April 11. For these papers, you will be asked to read research and discuss how it advances our the understanding of networks given the course up to that point. Papers will be 1250-1500 words (5-6 pages). Details of what is expected in reaction papers will be shared on Carmen.

3. *Final reflection paper (15% of total grade)*

A final reflection paper will be due on April 26. This paper will require you to reflect on the course overall and how, if at all, the course has changed your perspective on social networks, communication research, and/or one of the specific topics that we cover in the course. Papers will be 1000-1250 words (4-5 pages). Details of what is expected in the final reflection paper will be shared on Carmen.

My grading system is largely a percentage based system where 93%+ = A, 90% - 92.9% = A-, 87% - 89.9% = B+, 83% - 86.9%+ = B, 80% - 82.9% = B-, 77% - 79.9% = C+, 73% - 76.9%+ = C, 70% - 72.9% = C-, 67% - 69.9% = D+, 63% - 66.9%+ = D, 60% - 62.9% = D-, less than 60% = E. I reserve the right to modify this system *downward* depending on the distribution of grades. In other words, if only one student exceeds the 90% threshold, but five hit 89%, I may choose to move the cutoff for an A- to 89%.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Note that in person course meetings are noted next to their date and the date is in blue to make them stand out.

Introduction to Social Networks (January 10, 12 & 17)

- January 10
 - Course introduction and discussion
- January 12
 - *Connected*, Chapter 1
- January 17
 - *New Books Network* podcast, jimi adams

Social Network ideas and terminology (January 19, 24 & 26)

- January 19
 - Hanneman, Chapters 1-3
- January 24
 - Hanneman, Chapter 4-5
- [January 26 – in person](#)
 - In person discussion on reading research articles

Emotional Contagion (January 31 & February 2)

- January 31
 - *Connected*, Chapter 2
- [February 2 – in person](#)
 - R. A. Easterlin, “Explaining Happiness,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100, no. 19 (2003): 11176-11183.
 - J. H. Fowler and N. A. Christakis, “Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network: Longitudinal Analysis Over 20 Years in the Framingham Heart Study,” *British Medical Journal* 337 (2008): a2338.

Love and Sex (February 7 & 9)

- February 7
 - *Connected*, Chapter 3
- [February 9 – in person](#)
 - P. S. Bearman, J. Moody, and K. Stovel, “Chains of Affection,” *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (2004): 44 - 91.
 - D. T. Gilbert, and others, “The Surprising Power of Neighborly Advice,” *Science* 323 (2009): 1617-1619.

The Spread of Health Behaviors (February 14 & 16)

- February 14
 - *Connected*, Chapter 4
- [February 16 – in person](#)

- Centola, D. “The Spread of Behavior in an Online Social Network Experiment”, *Science*, 329, 1194-1197.

Reaction paper 1 (February 21, 23 & 28)

- February 21
 - *New Books Network* podcast, Matthew O. Jackson
- February 23
 - *The Current* podcast, Damon Centola
- February 28
 - This date is set aside for reading and writing time related to the first reaction paper. More details will be shared via Carmen. The first reaction paper is **due on February 28 at midnight**.

Economic Networks (March 2, 7 & 9)

- March 2
 - *Connected*, Chapter 5
- March 7
 - M. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-1380.
 - B. Uzzi and J. Spiro, “Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem,” *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (2005): 447-465.
- [March 9 – in person](#)
 - J. Henrich, “Does Culture Matter in Economic Behavior? Ultimatum Game Bargaining Among the Machiguenga,” *American Economic Review* 90 (2000): 973 - 979.
 - D. Cesarini and others, “Heritability of Cooperative Behavior in the Trust Game,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105 (2008): 3721 - 3726.

Political Networks (March 21 & 23)

- March 21
 - *Connected*, Chapter 6
- [March 23 – in person](#)
 - J. H. Fowler, “Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks,” *Political Analysis* 14 (2006): 456 - 487.
 - L. A. Adamic and N. Glance, “The Political Blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. Election: Divided They Blog,” *Proceedings of the 3rd International Workshop on Link Discovery* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2005): 36 - 43.

Social Media (March 28 & March 30)

- March 28
 - *Connected*, Chapter 8
- [March 30 – in person](#)
 - Garcia-Harranz, M., et al. “Using Friends as Sensors to Detect Global-Scale Contagious Outbreaks”, *PLOS one* 9 (4): e92413.

Reaction paper 2 (April 4, 6 & 11)

- April 4
 - *New Books Network* podcast, Chris Bail
- April 6
 - *WISE Words* podcast, Nicholas Christakis
- April 11
 - This date is set aside for reading and writing time related to the second reaction paper. More details will be shared via Carmen. The second reaction paper is **due on April 11 at midnight**.

The Evolutionary Basis of Social Life (April 13)

- April 13
 - *Connected*, Chapter 7

The Human Superorganism (April 18 & 20)

- April 18
 - *Connected*, Chapter 9
- [April 20 – in person](#)
 - Fowler, James H., and Nicholas A. Christakis. “Cooperative behavior cascades in human social networks.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107.12 (2010): 5334-5338.
 - G. Palla, A. L. Barabasi, and T. Vicsek, “Quantifying Social Group Evolution,” *Nature* 446 (2007): 664 - 667.

Final reflection paper due – April 26

Course Policies and Miscellaneous

Late or Absent Assignments and Missed Exams

Unless otherwise notified, assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date due. An assignment will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the due date. The only exceptions to these rules are totally unforeseen circumstances that are convincingly documented no later than 24 hours after the due date. If you are late turning in an assignment, you delay progress in the course for myself and others.

Grade Appeals

You have one week from when the grades or assignments are posted on Carmen or returned in class (whichever occurs first) to appeal the grade. You must submit a typed, double-spaced statement to the instructor explaining why you are appealing your grade and justify it with evidence from your paper, exam, readings, lectures, and/or answer keys. If you choose to appeal your grade, I reserve the right to decrease the original grade if a grading mistake or oversight resulted in it being erroneously high.

Attendance

Given the continued high prevalence of COVID, **students should not attend class if they are feeling sick.** It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the virus to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite illness-induced absence. If you are absent due to illness, including but not limited to COVID, I will give you a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. **You do not need to provide a physician's documentation of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.**

Masks and social distancing

N95 and KN95 masks are a great way to slow the spread of COVID-19 (and lots of other illnesses, too). There are several reasons to do this, even if you are vaccinated. First, the dominant COVID subvariant, BA5, is highly contagious and has contributed to a large increase in cases recently. Second, even if you are vaccinated or have had COVID before, "breakthrough" BA5 infections are quite common. These cases are less severe than cases among individuals who have not been exposed to COVID before, but you still don't want to go through it if you don't have to. Finally, and most importantly, if you get COVID-19 you can spread it to other people, including people who cannot take the vaccine. In short, masks help protect you and they help you protect other people. Social distancing may also help slow the spread of COVID. Although classrooms are no longer configured to ensure that students can spread out, doing so may still be helpful if you have the opportunity.

Recordings of class sessions

I intend to post recordings of our class sessions on Carmen. These recordings are not a substitute for the in-person learning experience. Instead, they are a tool to help those who are forced to miss class on account of illness to catch up. As such, recordings may fail to capture in-class activities, they may be incomplete in other ways, or they be entirely missing (e.g., in the event of a problem with the recording technology).

Other resources

COVID-19 Accommodations. The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Food Security (<https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org/>, 614-688-2508). The Ohio State University is committed to ensuring that all students have access to adequate and healthy food. Any undergraduate or graduate student with a BuckID may confidentially use the Buckeye Food Alliance food pantries. No proof of need is required. The pantry is located in Lincoln Tower, Suite 150 (1800 Cannon Dr., Columbus, OH 43210). Check the website or call for current hours.

COVID-19 emergency financial assistance

(<https://sfa.osu.edu/contact-us/consumer-disclosure/COVID-19-aid>)

Ohio State has emergency grants available to aid students who are facing unexpected financial challenges related to the pandemic. Students may use the funds toward any component of the cost of attendance, or for emergency costs that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic such as food, housing, tuition, health care (including mental health care) or child care. Please visit the website for more information.

Academic Misconduct

The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. I will report all violations to the Committee of Academic Misconduct. Unless otherwise notified, you should complete all assignments by yourself. See the Student Code of conduct for more information. <http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc/>.

Tentative Nature of the Syllabus

This syllabus represents a contract in the works. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the administration of this course and therefore the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class and on CARMEN. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications.

School of Communication Diversity Statement

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services (ODS) will be appropriately accommodated. Students who need accommodations are responsible for coordinating all accommodations and services through the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>) in room 150 Pomerene Hall. Students are also responsible for making their needs known to the instructor by providing a written letter from ODS specifying the accommodations or services for which they have been approved as soon as possible after it has been approved by ODS.

Mental health statement

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Unpaid Fees

Faculty rules specify that students are to have their fees paid by the first day of enrollment for the quarter. [Faculty Rule 3335-9-12]. If you have not paid your fees, you will not be allowed to continue attending class until: 1. your fees are paid, OR 2. You have met with a Communication Advisor and Financial Aid and are working to get your fees paid.

Copyright and Appropriate Use of Course Materials

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