

COMM 4665: Human Communication in Social Networks

Wednesday 2:20 - 3:40
Journalism 342

Instructor: Robert Bond, Derby Hall 3072, bond.136@osu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 11-12:30 and by appointment.

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

1. **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.
2. 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 most weeks we will meet once synchronously and have some asynchronous material to be completed.

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 x 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.

1. Reaction papers (2 papers x 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 17 and the second due on March 24. For these papers, you will be asked to read research and discuss how it advances our 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.

2. Final reflection paper (15% of total grade)

A final reflection paper will be due on April 23. 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

Introduction to Social Networks

- January 8 -- in person
 - o Course introduction and discussion
- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 1
 - o LISTEN: New Books Network podcast, jimi adams

Social Network ideas and terminology

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Hanneman, Chapters 1-5
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on network terminology
- January 15 – in person
 - o In person discussion on reading research articles

Emotional Contagion

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 2
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on emotions in networks
- January 22 – in person discussion of below articles
 - o R. A. Easterlin, "Explaining Happiness," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100, no. 19 (2003): 11176-11183.
 - o 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

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 3
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on love and sex in networks
- January 29 – in person discussion of below articles
 - o P. S. Bearman, J. Moody, and K. Stovel, "Chains of Affection," *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (2004): 44 - 91.
 - o D. T. Gilbert, and others, "The Surprising Power of Neighborly Advice," *Science* 323 (2009): 1617-1619.

The Spread of Health Behaviors

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 4
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on health behaviors in networks
- February 5 -- in person discussion of below article
 - o Centola, D. "The Spread of Behavior in an Online Social Network Experiment", *Science*, 329, 1194-1197.

Reaction paper 1

- Asynchronous
 - o LISTEN: New Books Network podcast, Matthew O. Jackson
 - o LISTEN: The Current podcast, Damon Centola
- February 12 – no in person class
 - o 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 17 at midnight**.

Economic Networks

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 5
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on economics and networks
- February 19 – in person discussion of below articles
 - o M. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-1380.
 - o J. Henrich, "Does Culture Matter in Economic Behavior? Ultimatum Game Bargaining Among the Machiguenga," *American Economic Review* 90 (2000): 973 - 979.

Political Networks

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 6
 - o WATCH: recorded lecture on politics and networks
- February 26 -- in person discussion of the below articles
 - o J. H. Fowler, "Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks," *Political Analysis* 14 (2006): 456 - 487.
 - o 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

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 8
 - o WATCH: recorded lecture on social media and networks
- March 5 -- in person discussion of the below article
 - o Garcia-Harranz, M., et al. "Using Friends as Sensors to Detect Global-Scale Contagious Outbreaks", PLOS one 9 (4): e92413.

Reaction paper 2

- Asynchronous
 - o LISTEN: New Books Network podcast, Chris Bail
 - o LISTEN: WISE Words podcast, Nicholas Christakis
- March 19
 - o 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 March 24 at midnight.**

The Evolutionary Basis of Social Life

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 7
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on evolutionary basis of social life
- April 2 – in person discussion of the below articles
 - o J.H. Fowler, C.T. Dawes, and N.A. Christakis, "Model of Genetic Variation in Human Social Networks," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2009; 106: 1720-1724.
 - o J. C. Flack and others, "Policing Stabilizes Construction of Social Niches in Primates," *Nature* 439 (2006): 426 - 429.

The Human Superorganism

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 9
 - o WATCH: recorded lecture on the human superorganism
- April 9 – in person discussion of the below article
 - o 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.

Last week: April 16 – wrap up, catch up, discussion of final paper

Final reflection paper due – April 23

Course policies and miscellaneous

Academic misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Generative AI course policy

Given that the learning goals of this class include developing your ability to use writing to summarize and interpret scientific findings, the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools such as Copilot or ChatGPT, writer's aids like Grammarly, or translation platforms such as Google Translate is not permitted in this course. Any use of GenAI tools for work in this class may therefore be considered a violation of Ohio State's Academic Integrity policy and Code of Student Conduct because the work is not your own. The use of unauthorized GenAI tools will result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If I suspect that you have used GenAI on an assignment for this course, I will ask you to communicate with me to explain your process for completing the assignment in question.

If you feel you need to use GenAI for translation, please contact me first. If you have any other questions regarding this course policy, please contact me.

Copyright

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Counseling and Consultation Services / 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 or someone you know are 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 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Creating and environment free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

1. Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
2. Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
3. Or Email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university

employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

1. All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
2. The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Disability statement

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let Student Life Disability Services (SLDS) know immediately so that you can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, they may request that you register with SLDS. After registration, make arrangements with your instructors 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. Students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process (slds.osu.edu/covid-19-info/covid-related-accommodation-requests/), managed by SLDS.

OSU Diversity statement

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity of people and ideas. We believe in creating equitable research opportunities for all students and to providing programs and curricula that allow our students to understand critical societal challenges from diverse perspectives and aspire to use research to promote sustainable solutions for all. We are committed to maintaining an inclusive community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among all members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach their own potential. The Ohio State University does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment.

To learn more about diversity, equity, and inclusion and for opportunities to get involved, please visit:

- <https://odi.osu.edu/>
- <https://odi.osu.edu/racial-justice-resources>
- <https://odi.osu.edu/focus-on-racial-justice>
- <https://cbcs.osu.edu>

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.

Grievances and solving problems

According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, take your case to the department chairperson, college dean or associate dean, and to the provost, in that order. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

Religious accommodations

Our inclusive environment allows for religious expression. Students requesting accommodations based on faith, religious or a spiritual belief system in regard to examinations, other academic requirements or absences, are required to provide the instructor with written notice of specific dates for which the student requests alternative accommodations at the earliest possible date. For

more information about religious accommodations at Ohio State, visit odi.osu.edu/religious-accommodations.

The University Interfaith Council has a helpful, but non-exhaustive, religious holiday calendar to promote awareness and understanding of observances. For example, Ramadan the Muslim holy month observed through fasting, prayer and reflection coincides with the end of the semester and second-session classes, and students and instructors should be mindful of requests made for final projects and assignments.

Late or Absent Assignments and Missed Exams

Assignments will not be accepted more than 7 days after the due date. The only exceptions to these rules are totally unforeseen circumstances that are convincingly documented no later than 72 hours after the due date. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade (for example, a paper that would have received an A will receive a B) for each day late unless the delay has been discussed with the instructor and other arrangements have been made.

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 prevalence of COVID and the prevalence of flu, students should not attend class if they are feeling sick. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading viruses 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.

Recordings of class sessions

I may be able 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).

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.