

COMM 4665: Human Communication in Social Networks

Wednesday 2:20 - 3:40
Journalism Building 342

Instructor: Robert Bond, Derby Hall 3072, bond.136@osu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00-1:00 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 23 and the second due on April 6. 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 30. 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 14 -- 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 21 – 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 28 – 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
- February 4 – 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 11 -- 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 18 – 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 23 at midnight**.

Economic Networks

- Asynchronous
 - o READ: Connected, Chapter 5
 - o WATCH: Recorded lecture on economics and networks
- February 25 – in person discussion of below articles
 - o M. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-1380.

Economic Networks (part 2)

- March 4 – in person discussion of below articles
 - 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
- March 11 -- in person discussion of the below articles

- 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

- Asynchronous
 - READ: Connected, Chapter 8
 - WATCH: recorded lecture on social media and networks
- March 25 -- in person discussion of the below article
 - Garcia-Harranz, M., et al. "Using Friends as Sensors to Detect Global-Scale Contagious Outbreaks", *PLOS one* 9 (4): e92413.

Reaction paper 2

- Asynchronous
 - LISTEN: New Books Network podcast, Chris Bail
 - LISTEN: WISE Words podcast, Nicholas Christakis
- April 1
 - 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 6 at midnight**.

The Evolutionary Basis of Social Life

- Asynchronous
 - READ: Connected, Chapter 7
 - WATCH: Recorded lecture on evolutionary basis of social life
- April 8 – in person discussion of the below articles
 - 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.
 - J. C. Flack and others, "Policing Stabilizes Construction of Social Niches in Primates," *Nature* 439 (2006): 426 - 429.

The Human Superorganism

- Asynchronous
 - READ: Connected, Chapter 9
 - WATCH: recorded lecture on the human superorganism

- April 15 – in person discussion of the below article
 - 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.

AI and social networks

- Asynchronous
 - READ: AI 2027 (<https://ai-2027.com/>)
 - READ: AI as Normal Technology (<https://knightcolumbia.org/content/ai-as-normal-technology>)
 -
- April 22 – in person discussion of the above articles and the potential impact of AI on social networks

Final reflection paper due – April 30

Course policies and miscellaneous
(these are standard course policies taken from:
<https://ugeducation.osu.edu/academics/syllabus-policies-statements/standard-syllabus-statements>**)**

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 please review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

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

If students have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, they should contact the instructor.

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship, or on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or

other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

Religious Accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement **and** the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#).

Disability Statement (with Accommodations for Illness)

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If students

anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health and medical conditions, whether chronic or temporary), they should let their instructor know immediately so that they can privately discuss options. Students do not need to disclose specific information about a disability to faculty. To establish reasonable accommodations, students may be asked to register with Student Life Disability Services (see below for campus-specific contact information). After registration, students should make arrangements with their instructors as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that accommodations may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If students are ill and need to miss class, including if they are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of viral infection or fever, they should let their instructor know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations.

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614-292-3307 phone

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

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.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a welcoming community. 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 Civil Rights Compliance Office (CRCO):

Online reporting form: <http://civilrights.osu.edu/>

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605

civilrights@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 Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- 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.
- 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.