

New Topics in Sociology:

Introduction to Social Networks

Instructor: Fedor A. Dokshin, PhD

E-mail: fedor.dokshin@utoronto.ca

Office: Room 372 at Sociology Dept.
725 Spadina Ave, 3rd floor

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:15-2:15pm

Teaching Assistants: Chang Lin, MA
Email: chang.lin@utoronto.ca

Class: Tue 10am to 12pm

Location: LM162

Class website: <https://portal.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 her/his 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 0.5 SOC at the 100+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time and without notice.

Learning Components and Course Requirements

Lectures:

Weekly lectures will introduce essential context for the assigned readings as well as to interrogate the key concepts and techniques introduced in the week's readings. **Responsibility of being aware of what the professor says in lectures (including administrative announcements) rests with the student.**

Readings:

We will read a combination of articles and excerpts from books. All readings will be available on Blackboard. You are required to read the assigned readings in advance of the week's lecture and contribute to the Blackboard discussion of one of the readings (see below for details).

Weekly assignments:

There are two types of weekly assignments you will complete weekly:

- (1) Every week that there are readings except Week 1 (so, Weeks 2-6 and 7-11), you are required to contribute to the Blackboard 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). Contributing to the discussion in each of the 9 weeks will earn you 4.5% of your final grade.
- (2) Each week you will also be required to complete a homework assignment. The homework assignment will be due on Friday at 5pm in each of 9 weeks that have assigned readings (except Week 1). You will submit your assignment through the Blackboard system. Homework assignments will take one of two forms: (1) an assignment consisting of short-answer questions and (2) a short (~500 word) response memo about the week's readings. Each homework assignment is worth 4%.

Two In-Class Tests:

Two in-class 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 cover material from classes 7-11. You will have 1 hour and 50 minutes to complete the test. **Please bring your student identification.** Also, make sure that you have several pencils and pens in case one or more of your writing instruments stops working. **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	0.5%	0.5%
Contribution to Blackboard discussion	9	0.5% each	4.5%
Homework assignments	9	4.0% each	36%
In-class tests	2	29.5% each	59%
			100% (total)

Communication and Blackboard

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).
-
- Requests to 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 SOC294 in the subject line, and be signed with the student's full name and student number.

Blackboard website and discussion board:

The University of Toronto Blackboard system will contain the course syllabus, assignments, discussion board, 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 Blackboard site. A TA will actively monitor the discussion board and will respond to any questions posted there.

Office hours:

Do not hesitate to come talk to me if you have questions or concerns about the class, or if you need assistance. You do not need to email me in advance, if you plan to stop by during office hours. My regular office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus document.

Late Work and Make-up Tests

Homework:

Homework assignments must be submitted through the course's Blackboard website. All homework 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). Assignments more than 3 days late will not be accepted and receive a zero. If you have a legitimate, documented reason for missing a deadline, you must notify the Professor and your TA promptly to arrange for the submission of the lab assignment with the necessary documentation.

Make-up tests:

Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero for that test unless reasons beyond their control prevent them from taking it. **Within three days** of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test must give their TA or the Undergraduate Advisor in the Sociology Department a written request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by **proper documentation from a physician or college registrar** (see below). A request should be accompanied by contact information (the student's telephone number and email address) so the date, time and place of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns for the other test in this course.

Documentation:

If you miss a test or assignment deadline, you must provide one of the following types of documentation can serve to verify a legitimate reason:

1. **Verification of Student Illness or Injury Form:**
 - o In case of illness, you must supply a completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor's note is not acceptable.
2. **College registrar's letter:**
 - o If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies).
3. **Letter from Accessibility Services**
 - o This documentation is useful for ongoing medical issues that require special accommodation.

Grade Appeals

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

- For basic calculation errors, simply alert TA (Chang Lin; chang.lin@utoronto.ca) of 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".
- 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.

Accessibility Needs

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic & Reading	Assignments Due
1	09-Jan	Introduction (terminology and definitions—the language of social networks)	No assignments due this week
2	16-Jan	<p>Our connected world</p> <p>Travers and Milgram. 1969. "An experimental study of the small world problem." (Blackboard)</p> <p>Watts, D.J. 1999. "Networks, dynamics, and the small world phenomenon." (Blackboard)</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p> <p>Homework #1 due Friday at 5:00pm</p>
3	23-Jan	<p>Ego networks, ecological constraints, and the tyranny of structure</p> <p>"The Limits of Friendship" <i>The New Yorker</i> (Blackboard)</p> <p>Young and Lim. 2014. "Time as a network good: Evidence from unemployment and the standard workweek"</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p> <p>Homework #2 due Friday at 5:00pm</p>
4	30-Jan	<p>What is a network tie anyway?</p> <p>Marsden and Campbell. 1984. "Measuring tie strength"</p> <p>Granovetter. 1973. "The strength of weak ties"</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p> <p>Homework #3 due Friday at 5:00pm</p>
5	06-Feb	<p>Where do networks come from?</p> <p>Feld. 1981. "The focused organization of social ties"</p> <p>McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook. "Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks.</p> <p>Kossinets and Watts. 2006. "Empirical analysis of an evolving social network"</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p> <p>Homework #4 due Friday at 5:00pm</p>
6	13-Feb	In-Class Test 1	In-Class Test 1
Reading week—No Class			
7	27-Feb	<p>Social capital</p> <p>Coleman. 1988. "Social capital in the creation of human capital."</p> <p>Smith. 2005. "'Don't put my name on it': Social Capital Activation and Job-Finding Assistance among the Black Urban Poor."</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p> <p>Homework #5 due Friday at 5:00pm</p>
8	06-Mar	<p>Network diffusion</p> <p>Watch Ted Talk by Nicholas Christakis (Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/nicholas_christakis_how_social_networks_predict_epidemics)</p>	<p>Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday</p>

Week	Date	Topic & Reading	Assignments Due
		Centola. 2010. "The Spread of Behavior in an Online Social Network Experiment." Gladwell. "Small change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted." <i>The New Yorker</i> .	Homework #6 due Friday at 5:00pm
9	13-Mar	Echo chambers and filter bubbles Watch Ted Talk by Eli Pariser (Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles) Cowan. 2014. "Secrets and misperceptions: The creation of self-fulfilling illusions." Shi, Shi, Dokshin, Evans, and Macy. 2017. "Millions of online book co-purchases reveal partisan differences in the consumption of science."	Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday Homework #7 due Friday at 5:00pm
10	20-Mar	Social networks and health Bearman, Moody, and Stovel. 2004. "Chains of affection: The structure of adolescent romantic and sexual networks." [TBD]	Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday Homework #8 due Friday at 5:00pm
11	27-Mar	Social networks and inequality DiMaggio and Garip. 2012. "Network Effects and Social Inequality" Small. "Unanticipated Gains" [excerpt]	Contribute to Blackboard Discussion by 7pm on Monday Homework #9 due Friday at 5:00pm
12	03-Apr	In-Class Test 2	