

Social Networks and Society**Byrne Seminar- Spring 2015**

Wednesdays, September 2 – September 30, 12:35pm – 3:35pm
Hickman Hall 127 D/C

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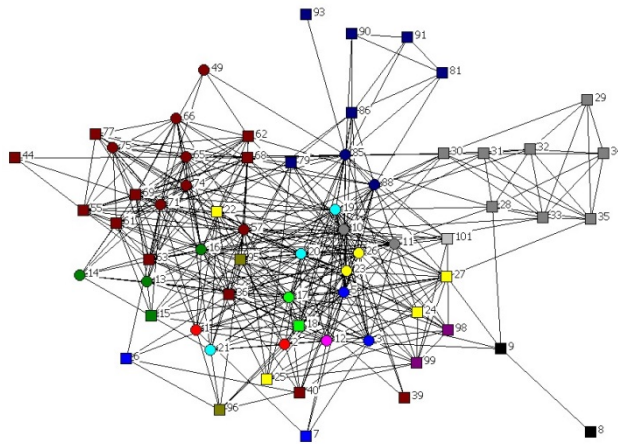
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Background

How many 'friends' do you have? Millions of people use social networking websites, such as Facebook or Twitter, nearly every day. Even before the Internet, the way we communicated with friends, family, and colleagues created 'networks' that connected us with one another, but also produced limiting social boundaries. Simply put, as long as people communicate with each other, social networks exist, with



both expansive and constraining effects. This seminar introduces you to how scholars study social networks and use them to make sense of society. We'll examine how our forms of communication affect our opportunities to achieve our goals and to manage our relationships. We'll also look at how our communication builds up into large entities – organizations. In all, our social networks help to create the fabric of society.

Students will examine aspects of communicating that build and create social networks. We will explore the implications of types of network structures for both individuals and organizations.

We will also look at the dark side of networks, including issues of privacy and security. Students will reflect on and analyze their own social networks as well as examples from everyday life (e.g., newspapers, webcasts, radio stories, etc). By the end of this seminar, students:

- Will be able to define, describe, and critically assess aspects of social networks and what that means in terms of communication/relationships.
- Will be able to explain qualities of their own personal networks that make them unique.
- Will be able to articulate networking strategies and how they apply to their own lives.
- Will be able to explain the various ways social networks are seen as a form of organizational practice.
- Will develop an introductory understanding of how communication/social network analysis is conducted.

Seminar Plan

Each week we will discuss an aspect of social networks. Through the course of the seminar, you will develop skills and tools to analyze your social networks and discuss how knowledge about social networks (i.e., research) informs your own strategic networking, both personally and professionally. During class we will work in groups for various activities, giving you a chance to engage first hand with the material we are discussing.

Required Readings

See course schedule for assigned readings for each week.

Grading:

Requirement	Percent
<u>In-class participation</u> (i.e., attend, be prepared for class, show knowledge of readings, ask good questions, make contributions, help other participants effectively engage in discussion).	40%
<u>Background work</u> (i.e., complete the short readings and demonstrate competency of them).	35%
<u>Final Report</u> – Networks in Society	25%
<u>Grading:</u> pass = 70% and higher. <i>Expectations are that your work will explicitly make connections to the course content (our discussions; the readings) and that your writing will be well organized, articulate, and grammatically correct.</i>	

Seminar Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Sept 2	Introductions, overview of communication and social networks	None. In class exercise: mapping out my social network Handout: Basic vocabulary of social networks
Sept 9	Utilizing social networks in your careers (the good!) Big data, social networks, and privacy (and the bad!)	READ: Casciaro, Tiziana, & Lobo, Miguel Sousa. (2005). Competent jerks, lovable fools, and the formation of social networks. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 83(6), 92-99. READ: USA Today article and Science Daily brief.
Sept 16	Building social networks for career; relating concepts to organizational networks and community resilience	READ: Uzzi, B., & Dunlap, S. (2005, December). How to build your network. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , pp. 53-60.
Sept 23	Field Trip (or network privacy... TBD)	
Sept 30	Networks in Society Wrap up	Paired presentations

Assignment Details

Paired presentations: Paired presentations will provide you an opportunity to apply the ideas that you have learned through the course of the seminar. You will have time in class to work on the presentations, and to select a topic.

The goal of the presentation is for you and your partner to demonstrate a basic understanding of network concepts, and to apply them in context. Your assignment is to find a recent news article, and to analyze the network of communication interactions represented in the article. Your network needs to consist of at least 6 actors. A demonstration will be given in class.

The presentation should consist of a title page and 3 additional content slides (4 slides in total). Submit two hard copies of your presentation to class (print all 4 slides on 2 pages), as well as a copy of the article you analyzed.

Your 5-minute presentation will focus on discussing the network that you discover in your article. Your presentation should address the following questions:

- (1) Who are the key actors in the network?
- (2) How are the actors connected? What represents a tie?
- (3) Does the network reveal any unique aspects of the situation?