POLI 100F: Social Networks

Winter 2018
TTh 9:30am – 10:50am, Cognitive Science Building 004
Prof: James Fowler, SSB 392, http://fowler.ucsd.edu, Office Hours: TTh 11am-Noon (please email to schedule)
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Course description

The public is obsessed with social networking and the new ways to connect online, but scholars have been studying connectivity for decades. Recent research shows that if you want to understand this 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.

The format of this course is social. Science is a *social* activity, so there will be a large emphasis on soliciting feedback from and providing feedback to your peers.

Course materials

The main text we will use for this class is:

> Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler. 2011. *Connected: How Your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel Think and Do*. New York: Little Brown, ISBN: 9780316036139.

The hardcover edition is nearly identical in all respects, but has a different subtitle (*The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*, ISBN: 9780316036146).

This book is available on Amazon and there is also a Kindle version.

Requirements

This is a student-led course. Your grade for this course depends on participation in class (35%), weekly assignments (35%), and a final paper elaborating on an original research design (30%).

Each week you will be assigned to a small group that is responsible for leading class discussion.

On Thursdays everyone will meet in their groups in class to discuss assigned readings (please do the reading in advance!), to assign roles to group members, and to brainstorm, research, and organize their presentations.

On the following Tuesdays, each group member must hand in a written assignment and one group will be chosen at random to lead discussion.

Roles

Each group must assign roles to members of their group:

1. The “reporter” will be responsible for presenting material in the textbook. Aim to identify 3 main points made in the text and give examples of each.

2. The “researcher” must present an additional scientific article not in the textbook that is related to one of the main points in the text raised by the “reporter”. The presentation should include

the research question, hypotheses tested, methods used, data employed, and key results.

3. The "scientist" will propose an original research design. This research design should test a theory related to the article reviewed by the "researcher", and it should be something that could feasibly be conducted by a Senior writing an honors thesis. The presentation should include the research question, hypotheses tested, methods used, data employed.

Each group member will be given about 5-10 minutes to present and should conclude their presentation with 3 questions designed to encourage class discussion. We will have a class discussion for 15-20 minutes after each person presents.

No powerpoint! If you need to illustrate an idea, be prepared to draw it on the board.

Participation

Don't worry if you are shy about presenting! Participation grades will be based on engagement with other group members and willingness to engage in class discussion when your group is not presenting. Pretty much everyone gets an A on this unless it seems like you are not trying.

Weekly Assignments

On Tuesdays *before class*, *each* member of *all* groups must turn in a one page hard copy description of what they intend to present. This can be less formal than a normal paper (for example, it can be an outline or a series of bullet points) but it must be legible and comprehensible and on time to receive full credit. All students are allowed to miss one assignment (no make-ups for absences!), so 8 or 9 completed assignments = A, 7 = B, 6 = C, 5 = D, 4 or fewer = F.

Final Paper

By the end of the course we will have heard a number of ideas for original research. For your final paper, you should formalize one of these (feel free to build on another student's idea) in a 2000-2500 word proposal for a Senior Honors Thesis. Your paper should refer to at least one main idea in the text, review at least 3 scientific articles related to that idea that are not in the text, identify a testable hypothesis, and propose a research design that identifies data that could be collected and a method to use that data to test the hypothesis. Grade deduction for late papers: one letter grade, plus one letter grade for each additional 24 hours late.

Schedule and Assigned Readings

Jan 9	***Organizational Meeting***	
Jan 11, 16	***Introduction to Social Networks***	*Connected*, Chapter 1
Jan 18, 23	***Emotional Contagion***	*Connected*, Chapter 2
Jan 25, 30	***Love and Sex***	*Connected*, Chapter 3
Feb 1, 6	***The Spread of Health Behaviors***	*Connected*, Chapter 4
Feb 8, 13	***Economic Networks***	*Connected*, Chapter 5
Feb 15, 20	***Political Networks***	*Connected*, Chapter 6
Feb 22, 27	***The Evolutionary Basis of Social Life***	*Connected*, Chapter 7
Mar 1, 6	***Social Media***	*Connected*, Chapter 8
Mar 8, 13	***The Human Superorganism***	*Connected*, Chapter 9
Mar 20	**Final Paper Due by Noon to fowler@ucsd.edu and ldeabreu@ucsd.edu**	