

# UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Sociology 417  
Social Networks  
Mark Mizruchi  
Fall 2008

Office: 4234 LSA; 764-7444  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:00-3:00, or by appointment  
Email address: [mizruchi@umich.edu](mailto:mizruchi@umich.edu)  
Homepage: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mizruchi/>

The term “social networks” has become a buzzword in popular culture. People now routinely talk about “networking” to advance their careers, that we are connected by “six degrees of separation,” and that it’s “who we know” rather than “what we know” that matters. The *study* of networks as a social phenomenon has been around for decades, however. Dating back to the work of J. L. Moreno in the 1930s, this approach emerged on a significant scale in the 1960s and has expanded geometrically since that time. In this class we will treat the concept of social networks as an approach to the study of social structure. We will begin by discussing the role of structural sociology within the larger context of sociological theory. We will then examine the study of networks as a branch of structural sociology. After providing a theoretical foundation, we will apply the network approach to a range of substantive questions.

The course will be run as a seminar, in which we cover a particular topic each week. On Tuesday I will provide a background lecture on the topic. On Thursday (except for certain weeks, described in class) we will have a class discussion of the week’s materials, led by students (probably in groups of two). Students will choose their topics during the first week of class and will meet with the instructor prior to their presentation.

**Requirements:** In addition to the presentation and one’s overall contribution to class discussion, the grade will be based on two criteria: an in-class final examination, and a series of weekly reaction papers (of approximately two pages in length), in which students comment on the readings for that week. The paper is waived in the week(s) that the student leads the discussion. Students are also allowed one additional “week off” of their choosing. All of the assignments and requirements will be described in more detail in class.

**Readings:** A list of required readings is presented in the course outline below. With three exceptions, all of the readings for the course will be available on-line on the class CTools site. The remaining readings will be drawn from three books (available at the Shaman Drum Bookstore, 313 South State Street), the purchase of which is strongly recommended:

Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo, *Linked* (Plume, 2003)  
 Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point* (Little, Brown, & Co., 2000)  
 Granovetter, Mark, *Getting a Job* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, University of Chicago Press, 1995)

**COURSE OUTLINE** (All readings, except for those from the three books listed above, are located on the class CTools site)

## **September 2: Introduction to the Course**

### **September 4, 9, 11: What is Social Structure?**

Readings: Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 1-13; Barry Wellman, "Structural Analysis: From Method and Metaphor to Theory and Substance," in Wellman and Berkowitz, *Social Structures: A Network Approach*, pp. 19-61 (read closely to 35; skim the remainder); Mark S. Mizruchi, "Social Network Analysis: Recent Achievements and Current Controversies," *Acta Sociologica*, 1994, 37:329-343; Peter M. Blau and Joseph E. Schwartz, *Crosscutting Social Circles*, Preface.

### **September 16, 18: Social Structure and Intergroup Relations**

Readings: Georg Simmel, "The Expansion of the Dyad," pp. 135-144 in Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*; Judith R. Blau and Peter M. Blau, "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," *American Sociological Review* (hereafter *ASR*), 1982, 47:114-129; James Moody, "Race, School Integration, and Friendship Segregation in America," *American Journal of Sociology* (hereafter *AJS*), 2001, 107:679-716; Scott L. Feld, "Why Your Friends Have More Friends than You," *AJS*, 1991, 96:1464-1477.

Recommended: Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2001, 27:415-444.

### **September 23, 25: Collective Action and Social Movements**

Readings: Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, pp. 3-29; Mark Granovetter, "Threshold Models of Collective Behavior," *AJS*, 1978, 83:1420-1443; Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism," *AJS*, 1986, 92:64-90.

September 30: No class; Rosh Hashanah

## **October 2: Tie Strength and Small Worlds: An Introduction to Network Analysis**

Readings: Barabasi, *Linked*, pp. 1-54; Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *AJS*, 1973, 78:1360-1380; "Gans on Granovetter's 'Strength of Weak Ties,'" "Granovetter Replies to Gans," and Gans Responds to Granovetter," *AJS*, 1974, 80:524-531.

## **October 7: Centrality and Power**

Readings: Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, pp. 30-88; Mark S. Mizruchi and Blyden B. Potts, "Centrality and Power Revisited: Actor Success in Group Decision Making," *Social Networks*, 1998, 20:353-387; Wayne E. Baker and Rober R. Faulkner, "The Social Organization of Conspiracy: Illegal Networks in the Heavy Electrical Equipment Industry," *ASR*, 1993, 58:837-860.

Recommended: Phillip Bonacich, "Technique for Analyzing Overlapping Memberships," *Sociological Methodology*, 1972, 4:176-185.

October 9: No class; Yom Kippur

## **October 14, 16: Cohesion and Structural Equivalence**

Readings: Herbert Menzel and Elihu Katz, "Social Relations and Innovation in the Medical Profession: The Epidemiology of a New Drug," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1955, 19:337-352; Ronald S. Burt, "Social Contagion and Innovation: Cohesion versus Structural Equivalence," *AJS*, 1987, 92:1287-1335 (read to 1318, and 1326-1328); Mark S. Mizruchi, "Cohesion, Structural Equivalence, and Similarity of Behavior: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment," *Social Networks*, 1993, 15:275-307 (read closely to 284; skim the remainder).

Recommended: Joseph Galaskiewicz and Ronald S. Burt, "Interorganization Contagion in Corporate Philanthropy," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1991, 36:88-105.

October 21: No class; mid-semester break

## **October 23: Labor Markets and Structural Holes**

Readings: Granovetter, *Getting a Job*, pp. 3-50; Ronald S. Burt, *Structural Holes*, pp. 8-38; Mark S. Mizruchi, "The Stability of the American Business Elite: Discrimination, Competence, or Connections?" *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 2000, 9:545-554.

Recommended: Trond Petersen, Ishak Saporta, and Marc-David Seidel, "Offering a Job: Meritocracy and Social Networks," *AJS*, 2000, 106:763-816.

### **October 28, 30: Market Relations and Embeddedness**

Readings: Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *AJS*, 1985, 91:481-510 (also in Granovetter, *Getting a Job*, pp. 211-240); Wayne E. Baker, "The Social Structure of a National Securities Market," *AJS*, 1984, 89:775-811.

### **November 4, 6: Networks and the Corporate Elite**

Readings: Gerald F. Davis, Mina Yoo, and Wayne E. Baker, "The Small World of the American Corporate Elite, 1982-2001," *Strategic Organization*, 2003, 1:301-326; Barabasi, *Linked*, pp. 199-217; Mark S. Mizruchi, "What Do Interlocks Do? An Analysis, Critique, and Assessment of Research on Interlocking Directorates," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1996, 22:271-298.

Recommended: Duncan J. Watts, "Networks, Dynamics, and the Small-World Phenomenon," *AJS*, 1999, 105:493-527.

### **November 11, 13: Corporate Networks and Politics**

Readings: Dan Clawson, Alan Neustadt, and James Bearden, "The Logic of Business Unity," *ASR*, 1986, 51:797-811; Mark S. Mizruchi, "Similarity of Political Behavior among Large American Corporations," *AJS*, 1989, 95:401-424; Val Burris, "Interlocking Directorates and Political Cohesion among Corporate Elites," *AJS*, 2005, 111:249-283.

### **November 18, 20: Critique of Network Theory I: Rational Choice Theory**

Readings: Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, pp. 1-14, 40-47; Peter Hedstrom, "Rational Choice and Social Structure: On Rational-Choice Theorizing in Sociology," typescript; James S. Coleman, "Free Riders and Zealots: The Role of Social Networks," *Sociological Theory*, 1988, 6:52-57.

**November 25: A Network Theory of Action**

Readings: John F. Padgett and Christopher K. Ansell, "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400-1434," *AJS*, 1993, 98:1259-1319; Mikolaj Jan Piskorski, "I'm Not on the Market, I'm Here with Friends: Finding Jobs or Spouses On-Line," Unpublished manuscript, Department of Strategy, Harvard Business School.

**December 2, 4: Critique of Network Theory II: The Role of Culture**

Readings: Steven Brint, "Hidden Meanings: Cultural Content and Context in Harrison White's Structural Sociology" *Sociological Theory*, 1992, 10:194-208; Harrison C. White, "Reply to Steven Brint," *Sociological Theory*, 1992, 10:209-213; Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *ASR*, 1986, 51:273-286.

**December 9: Final Examination**