Sociology 924 (Spring 2018)

Social Capital and Public Life
(Network Mechanisms in Sociology)

9:30AM – 12PM, Mondays
SocSci 8108

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4pm or by appointment

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Overview:
This graduate course aims to provide a selective survey of the social networks and social capital literature (broadly defined) in sociology and other social science disciplines. Because the concept of social capital has been actively applied to a wide range of topics across multiple disciplines, our survey will be inevitably limited in its scope. The focus will be on understanding how various properties and mechanisms of social networks can shape our social, economic, and political life.

As a graduate seminar course, the main goal of this course is to help you develop your own original research. I expect you to pay attention to methodological issues (i.e. research design, measurement, data sources, analytic methods etc.) as well as theoretical and substantive issues in reading materials. Toward the end of the semester, I hope you find the theories of social capital a productive “research programme” and useful for developing your own research project.

Format
This is a seminar course, and as such participation and dialogue is essential. Each session will begin with a brief set of comments by me, in which I will set the stage by summarizing the content of readings assigned for that week and trying to provide some context for them. The remainder of the session will be led by student discussion leaders.

I will lead the discussions in the first two weeks, while everyone else is getting settled. After that, each student will be assigned to lead the discussion on at least one article (possibly more) in most weeks. The student will serve as the “author” of the assigned article and lead the discussion about the article, very briefly presenting the key arguments & contributions of the article and responding to other students’ comments and criticisms.
Summary of Requirements:

**Participation.** I expect that you will do the assigned readings, attend seminar regularly, and participate actively.

**Reading responses.** Each week you must turn in a short statement (no more than two double-spaced pages) outlining your reactions to the reading you have done for that week. You do not have to summarize. I am interested in what you think about what you have read. These are due by noon on Sunday at the course website.

**Term paper.** The major course requirement is a research paper or research proposal, depending on your stage in graduate school. If you opt to do a research paper, it should be a paper that brings data to bear on a research question. I encourage you to think of this not simply as a term paper for this course, but as something you will seek to publish or develop into a publishable paper. If you already have a project, you are more than welcome to develop a paper from that project, as long as it is relevant (somehow) to the topics we cover in the course. If you do not have a project and are not ready to write a research paper, you can opt for a research proposal in which you will outline a research project you would like to pursue in the near future.

You are encouraged to begin working on this assignment immediately and work on it throughout the term. A 2-page proposal will be due on Monday in Week 6 (March 5) in class (you are welcome to submit this earlier in the semester). At the end of the semester, we will have a mini-conference in which you will present your paper. The final draft of the paper is due on Friday, May 11.

**Grading:**
I am reluctant to adopt a rigid percentage weighting scheme in a seminar setting, but the following is a rough guideline: 60% term paper; 15% discussion initiation; 15% reading responses; 10% for ‘qualitative factors’ including participation.

**Readings:**
Most readings will be available from the course website in digital format or through the University libraries.
Topic Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 29)  Introduction & Organizing; Social Capital: History and Debates

Required readings:

Further readings:

Week 2 (Feb 5)  Social Networks and Social Capital: Data, Measurement, and Methods

Required readings:
From *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis*:
- Alexandra Marin and Barry Wellman. “Social Network Analysis: An Introduction”
- Robert Hanneman and Mark Riddle. “Brief Instruction to Analyzing Social Network Data,” “Concepts and Measures for Basic Network Analysis”
- Peter Marsden, “Survey Methods for Network Data”
- Peter Marsden, “Network Data and Measurement.”

Further readings:
- Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*
- Peter Carrington et al. Models and Methods in Social Network Analysis.

Week 3 (Feb 12)  Where Do Networks Come From?

Required readings:
- Randall Collins. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Ch. 3
Week 4 (Feb 19)  With a Little Help from My Friends: Social Networks as Resources

Required readings:
- Fernandez et al. 2000. “Social Capital at Work: Networks and Employment at a Phone Center”
- Cameron Macdonald. “If We’re Not Calling You...We Don’t Need You: Habitus and Deficits in Middle-Class Social Support.” Unpublished Manuscript.

Further readings:
- Nan Lin 1999. “Social Networks and Status Attainment” ARS
- R. Fernandez and I Fernandez-Mater, “Networks, race, and hiring” ASR
- RM Fernandez, ML Sosa “Gendering the job: Networks and recruitment at a call center” ASR

Week 5 (Feb 26)  Social Isolation in America? Changing Personal Community

Required readings:
- Claude Fischer. Still Connected. Ch1 & 7
- Mario L. Small. 2013. “Weak Ties and the Core Discussion Network: Why People Regularly Discuss Important Matters with Unimportant Alters.” Social Networks

Further readings:
- Peter Bearman and Paolo Parigi. 2004 “Cloning Headless Frogs and Other Important Matters: Conversation Topics and Network Structure.” Social Forces
- Ashton Verdery and Rachel Margolis. “Projections of White and Black Older Adults without Living Kin in the United States, 2015 to 2060

Week 6 (Mar 5)  Position, Brokerage, and Competitive Advantages
Required readings:
- Joel Podolony. 2001. “Networks as Pipes and Prisms of Market” AJS.
- Ronald S. Burt. 2010. Neighbor Networks: Competitive Advantage Local and Personal. Ch. 2
- Katherine Stovel and Lynette Shaw. 2012. “Brokerage” ARS
- Mathijs de Vaan, David Stark, and Balazs Verdes. 2015. “Game Changer: The Topology of Creativity.” AJS

Further readings:
- Xiao, Z., & Tsui, A. 2007. When brokers may not work: The cultural contingency of social capital in Chinese high-tech firms. ASQ.
- Gabriel Rossman, Nicole Esparza, and Phillip Bonacich. 2010. “I’d Like to Thank the Academy, Team Spillovers, and Network Centrality.” ASR.

Week 7 (Mar 12) Closure, Trust, and Neighborhood Effects

Required readings:

Further readings:
- Ronald Burt. “More or less guanxi: Trust is 60% network context, 10% individual difference”
- David J. Harding and Peter Hepburn. 2014. “Cultural Mechanisms in Neighborhood Effects Research in the United States.” Sociologica Urbana e Rurale*

Week 8 (Mar 19) Social Capital Longue Duree: History, Culture, and Social Trust

Required readings:
• Henrich Greve and Hayagreeva Rao, “Echoes of the Past: Organizational Foundings as Sources of an Institutional Legacy of Mutualism.” 2012. AJS

Further readings:

Week 9 (Mar 26) Spring Break (No Meeting)

Week 10 (Apr 2) Networks, Social Influence, and Diffusion

Required readings:
• Ronald Burt, 1987. “Social contagion and innovation: Cohesion versus structural equivalence” AJS.
• Peter Bearman, James Moody, and Katherine Stovel. “Chains of affection: The structure of adolescent romantic and sexual networks” AJS
• Damon Centola and Michael Macy. 2007. “Complex Contagions and the Weakness of Long Ties.” AJS
• Damon Centola. 2015. “Social Origins of Networks and Diffusion” AJS
• Damon Centola. “The spread of behavior in an online social network experiment.” Science

Further readings:
• KY Liu, M King, PS Bearman, “Social influence and the autism epidemic” AJS

Week 11 (Apr 9) Network, Solidarity, Power, and Collective Action

Required readings:
• Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen. 1993 “Specifying the Relationship Between Social Ties and Activism.”
• Delia Baldassarri. 2015. “Cooperative Networks: Altruism, Group Solidarity, Reciprocity, and Sanctioning in Ugandan Producer Organizations.” AJS
• Delia Baldassarri. 2007. “The Integrative Power of Civic Networks.” AJS

Further readings:
• Diani, Mario Social Movements and Social Capital: A Network Perspective on Movement Outcomes. Mobilization; 1997, 2, 2, Sept, 129-147

Week 12 (Apr 16) Diversity and Social Capital

Required Readings:
• Maria Abascal and Delia Baldassarri. 2015. “Love Thy Neighbor? Ethnoracial Diversity and Trust Reexamined.” AJS.
• Van der Meer & Tolsma. 2014. “Ethnic Diversity and Its Effects on Social Cohesion.”

Recommended Readings:
• Jeffrey Smith et al. 2014. “Social Distance in the United States: Sex, Race, Religion, Age, and Education Homophily among Confidants, 1985 to 2004.” ASR.

Week 13 (Apr 23) Social Networks, History, and Ideology
Required Readings:

**Networks, Events, and Text**
- Peter Bearman, James Moody, and Robert Faris. 2002. “Networks and History”

**Networks and Polarization**

**Week 14 (April 30) Final Project Presentations**