

Introduction

Networks & Social
Structures
/ Social Networks

1. Course intro
2. Course mechanics
(assignments, evaluations, etc.)
3. Social structures

McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. McGill honours, recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

<https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/welcome/traditional-territory>

see also:

Chelsea Vowel. "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments." Âpihtawikosisân (blog), September 23, 2016. <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>.

Live classes

- ⋮ Some portions of the class (live lectures, lab walkthroughs, full-class discussions) will be streamed/recorded and made available to students in the class
- ⋮ Remote participation is possible if you are unable to attend in person some days
- ⋮ Lab work sessions will not be recorded/streamed

Introductory questionnaire

- ⋮ If you have not done so already, please fill out the introductory questionnaire
- ⋮ <https://forms.office.com/r/WJfsyavcY1>
(link also distributed in email and available on MyCourses)

Attending in person

- ∴ Wearing of masks is not required, but is greatly appreciated while in the classroom
- ∴ If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 *please stay home* (this will not affect your grade in this course)
- ∴ It is up to us to make a safe and welcoming learning environment for everyone!



Social structures

∴ Theoretical tools to think about social processes through the lens of **social structures** and **relational systems**

Social network theory

∴ History and theory of **social networks** as a way to understand human relations and organization

Network methods

∴ Methodological tools to **produce** and **consume** empirical network analyses

Balancing theory and methods is tricky, but vital for the topics in the class



Syllabus is online

- ⋮ Available at <https://soci424.netlify.app>
- ⋮ Contains *schedule, assignments, assessment,* and other important information
- ⋮ Updated with *links to slides and lecture recordings,* and with any schedule changes regularly

Schedule



Introduction

Sociologists talk about social structure, but what is that? We begin the course by defining the concept of social structure with an eye toward relational analysis and examining how it helps us ask and answer important questions. We will also introduce the primary formalization of social structure used in this class: the network.

Thu, Jan 4

Lecture/seminar:

⋮ Introduction: what is social structure and what do networks have to do with it?
(html; pdf)

Lab:

⋮ **Worksheet 0:** Getting up and running with R
(html)

Required:

⋮ **Rawlings et al. (2023)**, *Introduction and What is Social Structure?* (not due on Perusall until following class)

Supplementary:

⋮ **Martin (2009)**, *Social Structures* Chapter 1

Tue, Jan 9

Lab:

⋮ **Worksheet 1:** Getting familiar with R and RMarkdown

| | | Percent of final grade | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Component | Due | SOCI 424 | SOCI 624 |
| Reading | See schedule | 10% | 10% |
| Worksheets | See schedule | 35% | 25% |
| Worksheet peer evaluation | See schedule | 5% | 5% |
| Project précis | Thu, Feb 8 | 5% | 5% |
| Project proposal | Thu, Feb 29 | 20% | 10% |
| Project presentation | Wed, Apr 3 | 25% | 20% |
| Project paper | Fri, Apr 19 | N/A | 25% |

Perusall for online reading/evaluation

- ⋮ Readings are a central aspect of the course
- ⋮ All readings will be done through the online tool Perusall
- ⋮ **To register for this class's Perusall, see MyCourses**

Grading - SOCI 424

- ⋮ Each reading is automatically scored 0 points or 1 point (Perusall may tell you that the maximum score is 3, but that is not the case in this class)
- ⋮ Lowest *two* reading scores dropped at the end of the term
- ⋮ If you did the reading on time, but did not get credit, messame me to fix the score (*really*)

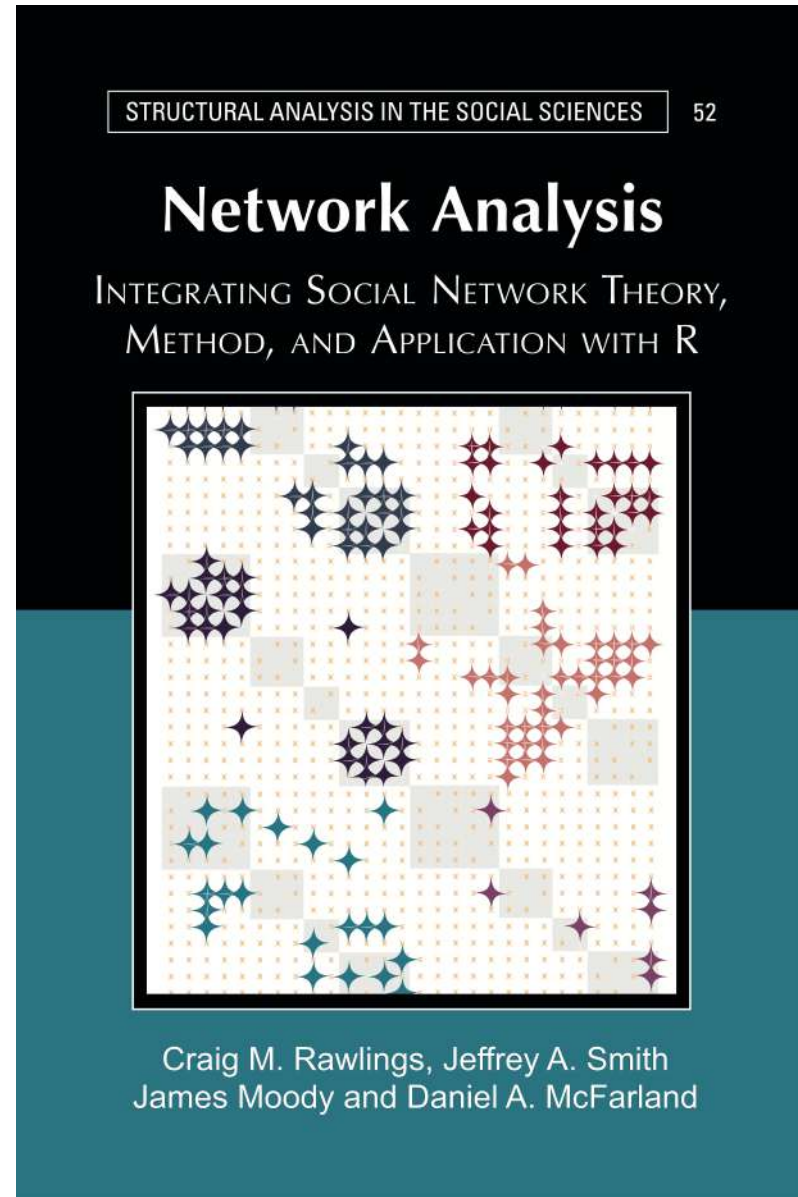
Grading - SOCI 624

- ⋮ Readings will be scored hollistically
- ⋮ You *are* expected to participate in annotations and online discussoins



Textbook

- ⋮ Rawlings, Smith, Moody, and McFarland (2023)
- ⋮ General introduction to network analysis especially suited to social scientists
- ⋮ Excellent integration of theory and methods
- ⋮ Explicit treatment of networks and culture
- ⋮ Fantastic hands-on tutorials:
<https://inarwhal.github.io/NetworkAnalysisR-book/>
- ⋮ First two readings from this book due *Tuesday*
- ⋮ *(See also Martin 2009)*





Student projects

Each student will complete an independent research project.

Undergraduate students (SOC/ 424) will analyze a network dataset, asking relevant questions and performing a quantitative investigation. The project will culminate in a presentation to the class at the end of the term.

Graduate students (SOC/ 624) will complete an original, theoretically informed research paper. They will present a brief overview of the project in a presentation in the final days of class and turn in a completed paper at the end of the term.

Weekly worksheet

- ⋮ Worksheet due most weeks
- ⋮ Worksheets are a mix of quantitative tasks and qualitative reflections
- ⋮ Distributed and turned in as an R Markdown document (.Rmd)
- ⋮ You are welcome and encouraged to work together on these, but they must be submitted individually

Peer assessment

- ⋮ Anonymized worksheets will be peer assessed
- ⋮ After each worksheet deadline, each student will be assigned two completed worksheets to assess
- ⋮ Worksheets will be assessed not just for correctness, but also for content, style, and ease of comprehension

Timing

- ⋮ **Distributed** Tuesday
- ⋮ **Worksheet due** Friday
- ⋮ **Peer assessments due** Following Tuesday

Thursdays: *lecture and discussion*

- ⋮ Class will typically begin with a lecture and slides
- ⋮ Class-wide discussion will follow
- ⋮ All readings should be done ***before*** Thursday classes

Tuesdays: *lab and work session*

- ⋮ Class will be devoted to worksheets and individual projects
- ⋮ Often with some guided code walkthroughs

Working in R

- ⋮ The R programming language will be a major component of this course
- ⋮ We will use R (and R Markdown) to manage data, run network analyses, create visualizations, and write up results
- ⋮ The class assumes *some* familiarity with programming
- ⋮ Labs assume you have a laptop you can bring to class

Let me know ASAP if this won't be possible

Learning R

- ⋮ Very basic introduction (adapted from Data Carpentry)
- ⋮ Norm Matloff's *fasteR*
For getting quickly up to speed
- ⋮ Rawlings et al.'s (2023) Tutorials
- ⋮ ***We will spend next Tuesday getting R installed on your computer and going over some basics***



Social structure

SOCIAL STRUCTURE: AN ILLUSTRATION



Position

- ∴ A student's relation to the **teachers** (adults) defines the institutional expectations on their behavior
- ∴ A student's **friendships** influence their identity, activities, norms
- ∴ Who a student **communicates** with influences what they know
- ∴ A student's position in a **status order** defines their power or lack of power and affects mental health and academic achievement

Structure

- ∴ The **instructor** relationship defines the role of *teacher* and *student* across the school
- ∴ Arrangement of **friendship cliques** define the social cohesiveness of the school
- ∴ **Communication** patterns influence the speed and accuracy of information spread among students
- ∴ Aggregated **status relations** define the level of hierarchy, conflict, and inequality among students



Structure is encountered as a constraining external “fact”, **BUT** it is created and maintained through interaction

E.g. a high-schooler’s peer group

Structure has as much to do with *relationships* (tendencies toward interaction) as *roles* (institutionalized expectations)

E.g. structural division between students and instructors

Small-scale structures, as *specific* entities (based on relationships, rules, heuristics) imply something about global structures in *general*

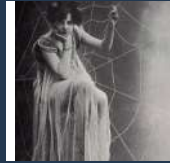
E.g. being friends with your friends’ friends



Image credit



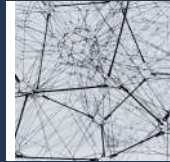
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Caught in a Web c.1909
Postcard, via [Maudelynn's
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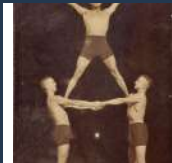


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