CMST 3900 Section 1  
Social Networks  
TTh 10:30-11:50  
111 Coates Hall

Instructor: Dr. Loretta L. Pecchioni  
Office: 124 Coates Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. and by appointment  
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Course Objectives

This course focuses on the development, maintenance and dissolution of social and interpersonal relationships within the context of social networks. At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. define social networks and related concepts, such as their characteristics and functions
2. apply social network concepts to romantic and friend relationships
3. extend social network concepts to other personal and social relationships
4. analyze how social networks function
5. identify and offer solutions to relational problems that arise from the functioning of social networks
6. critique the social contextual perspective by identifying its strengths and weaknesses

Course Grading

Grades in this course will be based on each student’s performance on the following assessment items. Descriptions of each assessment appear later in this syllabus. For some assessments, more detailed assignment sheets will be posted on Moodle. Grades will be based on the standard 10
point scale, with a total of 800 points possible. Therefore, the following point range translates into the following grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>720-800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>640-719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>560-639</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>480-559</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than 480</td>
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Grades will be posted on Moodle in a timely fashion so that you are aware of your current standing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (2 or 4, tbd)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Final</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 for section drafts (5 @ 20 each)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger Introduction</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 for who and why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 for update reports (3 @ 10 each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Input</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10 @ 10 each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for Clarification</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5 @ 10 each)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Exercises</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5 @ 10 each)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>800</strong></td>
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**Course Schedule**

Deadlines for assignments will be posted on Moodle at the beginning of the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and on Moodle.

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**Overview of Assessments**

*Exams (2 to 4, to be determined) 200 points total*

The total of 200 points will be divided as follows, 50 points each for:

- chapters 1 and 2
- chapters 3 through 5
- chapters 6 and 7
- chapters 8 through 10
We will decide as a group how many exams we will have: between two and four. The dates for these exams will depend to some extent on how many, but will be determined within the first 2 weeks of class meetings.

Exam questions will cover assigned readings, lecture content, and class discussions. The format will include multiple choice and short answer questions. As a class, we will develop a study guide as we identify key terms and issues through our discussions. Since the study guides will be “living” documents, they will be updated at least once each week.

**Comprehensive Final**

100

The final exam will assess your ability to apply, analyze, and evaluate the course content. The format will be essay. Potential questions will be identified throughout the semester, but the course learning objectives will serve as a guide for how course content will be assessed on the final exam.

**Paper**

200

100 for section drafts (5 @ 20 each)

100 for final version

The paper assignment will give you the opportunity to examine your own social network, identify how it functions, identify recurring problems and offer suggestions for solving those problems. To help you develop your paper, you will submit portions of it over the course of the semester. I will provide you with feedback and suggestions so that your final paper will be easier to pull together and will be more likely to meet the required elements. The paper grading template for the final version appears at the end of the assignment detail which is posted separately on Moodle.

I have identified three required sections and five optional ones. Everyone will be expected to complete the required sections, but you may choose from among the optional ones. In addition, if the class suggests a topic for a section, we may add it as an option. Overall, you should submit five (5) sections for feedback before turning in your final paper. Each section will be worth 20 points toward your final grade, therefore, this part of the process is worth half of your overall paper grade. You may submit your drafts and final paper electronically or in hard copy. Deadlines are listed on Moodle.

**Interview**

50

As noted in class, the textbook focuses on certain relationships and individuals. One of our goals in class will be to extend the social contextual perspective by examining other relationships and individuals. One such limitation is that the research reported in the textbook includes only adolescents and young adults. In order to extend the perspective, we need to be able to bring in
the experiences of people who are older. The point of your interviews will be to gather those experiences so that we can examine if and when age matters in the dynamics of social networks.

Your assignment is to interview someone who is at least 40 years old, using the interview schedule included in the assignment detail. You should record the interview and then transcribe it. You should then submit the transcript electronically so that I will be able to read each one and compile the answers for further use in class. I will not expect you to read the full transcripts of everyone else's interviews, but will try to pull together examples that illustrate key points. These materials will be posted on Moodle so that you are able to review them before we discuss them further in class.

**Stranger Introduction**

50

- 20 for who and why
- 30 for update reports (3 @ 10 each)

One of the longstanding uses of social networks is to find someone who is able to make an introduction to someone whom you want to meet. This assignment asks you to report on this process. Although it would be nice to actually get an introduction, your grade does not depend on that goal. Rather, you will be graded on reporting on the process.

**Step One**

Identify someone you do not know, but think it would be beneficial to meet. You will need to justify your choice, so think about someone who might help you with your career rather than a celebrity you hope will fall in love with you. Turn in the name of this person and your reason(s) for wanting to meet him or her. Do not move forward to step two until you have received approval for this choice.

**Step Two**

Work your network to find someone who knows this person, or someone who knows someone who knows this person. Keep track of the strategies you use and the results. You will be asked to report on these strategies as well as why you think they are working or not. In your report, you should include dead ends as well as any promising leads. While you should describe your process, do not forget to analyze it as well. Deadlines for submitting your updates are posted on Moodle.

**Discussion Input**

100

(10 @ 10 each)

As we apply and extend the social contextual perspective throughout the semester, we will want to discuss our experiences and insights. We should draw not only on our own experiences, but those of our friends and family as well. In order to collect and share our ideas, we will use the forum on Moodle. I will post questions that we will discuss during the next class period. You
should post your response by midnight before the day of class, giving everyone time to read all
the posts before class starts. I will read them in order to create a little structure – what are the
common responses, what are the unique ones, how do we want to develop them further?

Questions will not be posted for every class meeting, but some class meetings may have more
than one question posted. Over the course of the semester, you should respond to at least 10 of
these questions. Feel free, however, to respond to more if you so desire.

Requests for Clarification
(5 @ 10 each)

The book we are reading for class is not designed as a textbook. As a consequence, the author
assumes knowledge that you might not have. I am able to guess at some of the gaps, but
obviously do not know what all you do not know. So, please note when you are reading anything
that seems confusing and send me a question about it. For example, he mentions the desire to
reduce uncertainty with relational partners. You have probably heard about uncertainty reduction
typey, but may not feel sufficiently informed to contemplate how its concepts apply to social
networks. Let me know and I will adapt my lectures accordingly.

On the course schedule, reading assignments are due on the date of the schedule. You should
read the relevant material before coming to class. [Note: I will also be posting reading guides for
each chapter to help you focus on the key elements for our class.] If you send me your
question(s) by 9:00 a.m. before our class meeting, I will have time to incorporate your questions
into my lecture and our discussion. I expect that you will have more questions early in the
semester, but feel free to send them whenever they arise.

Put simply, as you are reading, if you go “huh?” at any point, let me know. If you are unclear,
chances are that someone else in class is also unclear.

In-Class Exercises
(5 @ 10 each)

Over the course of the semester, we will engage in several in-class exercises. At the conclusion
of each exercise, you will be asked to write a short commentary on what you learned from the
exercise. I anticipate at least 8 such exercises. The five highest grades will be used to calculate
your course grade. Therefore, if you miss an exercise, it will not negatively impact your grade. If
you miss several, however, you may not have the opportunity to take advantage of this
assessment. Some of these activities will be announced before hand, but some may arise from
our class discussions and thus will be impromptu.

Be prepared for these exercises by bringing paper and writing utensils or your portable device so
that you are able to compile your response and submit it. I will accept hand written work as well
as typed responses, but they will be due at the end of our class period.
Course Policies

Classroom Decorum

My goal is for us to develop a supportive classroom environment where everyone feels free to share their opinions and raise questions. My assumption is not that everyone will agree, but will respectfully voice their differences. Think about the between aggressive and assertive communication. Aggressive communication attacks the individual. Assertive communication attacks the ideas. I prefer that we challenge each other’s ideas rather than attack them.

I find all the electronic devices distracting, but I also hate spending my time policing your behavior while you are using them. So, I will not ban the use of technology in class. In fact, there are times when we will rely on those devices for class activities. However, please try not to be distracting in their use. Quiet the notification system – ring tones, beeps, clicks, whatever. Try not to laugh at inappropriate times because you just read an amusing text. If I notice the person behind you watching the video you are watching, I will ask why you are not sharing it with the rest of the class.

Deadlines

If you know that you will be absent on the day that an assignment is due, you may hand the assignment in early or send it electronically by the deadline. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time because of an emergency, you will need to provide proof of that emergency in order to have the assignment accepted. Assignments handed in late will be penalized 10% for each late class period, except in documented cases of emergency. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the initial deadline.

Reasonable Accommodation

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.