

PHD SEMINAR ON SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY**Course Syllabus**

Course Information

Course Title: Social Network Theory
Course Number: OB 7312-001
Class Location: JSOM 13.510
Class Time: 1:00 – 3:45 PM, Tuesdays

Instructor Contact Information

Name: Dr. Zhiang (John) LIN
Office Location: JSOM 4.405
Office Hours: Before and after class, or by appointment
Phone: 972-883-2753
E-mail: zlin@utdallas.edu
Homepage: <http://www.utdallas.edu/~zlin>

Teaching Assistant Contact Information

Name: Rui Jiang
Office: ATC 2.911
E-mail: Rui.Jiang@utdallas.edu

The teaching assistant will mainly be responsible for: 1) coordination between the instructor and the class, 2) assistance in the preparation of reading articles, 3) helping with software demos, and 4) other related matters.

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Pre-requisites: Enrollment in the OSIM PhD program or permission of instructor

Course Description

Social network theory, as one of the fastest growing paradigms originated from anthropology and sociology, has gained enormous popularity within the broad field of organizational management. Yet, misconceptions have been common with regard to its true nature and applicability. This PhD level course intends to provide a systematic introduction to social network theory by reviewing its basic history, philosophy, theories, and methodologies. We will also explore how social network theory can be applied to addressing various management issues such as knowledge diffusion, social capital, strategic alliance, and network dynamics.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should

- 1) have a solid understanding of the main concepts and development in the field of social network theory;
 - 2) be able to use some important network software packages such as UciNet;
 - 3) be able to apply network theories and concepts to address some important organizational issues; and
 - 4) be able to develop a solid term paper for a publishable research project.
-

Required Textbooks and Materials

Textbook:

- Network Analysis by D. Knoke and J. Kuklinski. Published by Sage in 1982 (ISBN-10: 080391914X, ISBN-13: 978-0803919143). Available at UTD Bookstore, Off Campus Bookstore, or Amazon.com.

Reading Packet for Social Network Theory:

- Available with the TA and may be downloaded from online library sources.

Network Analysis Software UciNet 6:

- Available at: <http://www.analytictech.com/downloaduc6.htm>. Student discount is provided there. Please also obtain a copy of the manual.
-

Grading Policies

This course requires extensive readings, active discussions, and intelligent research work. A student's final grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, and F) will be based on a weighted average grade of the following three components (weekly participation, term paper, and presentation of term paper). The individual grade for each of the three components will be similar to that of the final grade, with the exception that it will include an additional grade of A+ for exceptional work.

1. Weekly Participation (30%)

Students are expected to come to each class being prepared for and actively involved in discussing all the readings assigned from the syllabus. There are two forms in this category: 1) article review and discussion and 2) term paper preparation and progress.

a) *Article Review and Discussion*

For each weekly assigned article, two to three students will serve as main discussion leaders. Each discussion leader, individually, should also submit to the instructor a two page review containing his/her *critiques, extensions, and applications* of the ideas and methods from the article. The quality of each student's discussion will be evaluated in the following questions:

- Does the student demonstrate a basic understanding of the assigned reading materials?
- Can the student identify the common themes in the readings and use these themes to integrate and compare the articles?
- Does the student use the readings as a base to develop new ideas or insights for potential new projects?
- Can the student formulate appropriate critiques of the readings and defend his/her position in

- discussion with other class members?
- Can the student provide convincing and coherent reasoning?

b) Term Paper Preparation and Progress

This course will provide each student an opportunity to apply what is learned from the articles and discussions to his/her own term paper preparation, not only in data collection and analysis, but also in writing each section of the term paper. For every stage of the term paper preparation (as listed in the syllabus), each student will be responsible to prepare relevant files (e.g., writings, slides, data demos, etc.) to share in front of the class for idea exchanges and feedback seeking. Student should also upload the writing part to the designated box before Sunday night to give the instructor some time to go over them and provide suggestions for improvement. Evaluations will be based on the quality of the preparation and the progress since the previous stage.

A student's weekly participation credit may be reduced if he/she misses portions of the class.

2. Term Paper (60%)

Near the end of the semester, each student is required to submit a written term paper on an important organizational issue using appropriate social network theories and methods. The term paper should have all the main components (and at least a pilot network data set) of a research paper, as well as the potential to be published in a respected management journal, perhaps with some further additions or improvement. The preparation of the manuscript should follow the *Style Guide for Authors in the Academy of Management Journal*. The grading of the paper will be based on the following criteria:

- Contribution of the topic to the field;
- Thoroughness and relevance of the literature review;
- Development of the theoretical framework (including hypotheses);
- Soundness and feasibility in research design (including data sources, variable measures, and analytical methods);
- Thoughtfulness in result analyses and interpretations;
- Insights in discussions (e.g., finding implications, boundary conditions, and future directions); and
- Coherence, clarity, and professionalism of the writing.

Below are some of the important dates for the term paper development:

By Class 5, each student should submit a 1 page (single spaced) proposal, briefly describing a) the research question, b) the potential contributions, c) the theoretical framework, with some representative hypotheses, and d) the research methodology, including the data sources and main variables for testing the hypotheses.

Then by Class 10, each student will submit a 2 page (single spaced), finalized, proposal, which should show significant improvement on the above four points since the last proposal submission.

Classes 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 will be exclusively devoted to different stages of term paper preparations. So, please make the best use of the time and opportunities to produce high quality term papers that can have a potential to be publishable in top management journals.

Finally, by Sunday night before the last class, each student will need to submit the completed term paper via email to the instructor.

Class 2. *January 27, 2026* *History and Debates*

2. Milgram, S. 1967. The small world problem. Psychology Today, 1: 61-67.
3. Bott, E. 1955. Urban families: Conjugal roles and social networks. Human Relations, 8: 345-383.
4. Wellman, B. 1988. Structural analysis: From method and metaphor to theory and substance. In B. Wellman and S. Berkowitz (Eds.) Social Structures: A network approach, p.477-497. Cambridge University Press.
5. Mayhew, B. 1980. Structuralism vs. individualism: Part 1, shadow boxing in the dark. Social Forces, 59(3): 335-375.

Class 3. *February 3, 2026* *Strength of Ties and Centrality*

6. Granovetter, M. 1972. The strength of weak ties. American Journal of Sociology, 78: 1360-1380. Reprinted in Leinhardt' Social networks: A developing paradigm.
7. Hansen, M.T. 1999. The search-transfer problem: The role of weak ties in sharing knowledge across organization sub-units. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(1): 82-111.
8. Brass, D. 1984. Being in the right place: A structural analysis of individual influences in an organization. Administrative Science Quarterly, 29: 518-539.
9. Krackhardt, D. 1990. Assessing the political landscape: Structure, cognition and power in organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 35: 342-369.

Class 4. *February 10, 2026* *Structural Holes and Role Analysis*

10. Burt, R.S. 2004. Structural holes and good ideas. American Journal of Sociology, 110(2): 349-399.
11. Lin, Z., Peng, M.W., Yang, H., and Sun, L. 2009. How do networks and learning drive M&As? An Institutional Comparison between China and the United States. Strategic Management Journal, 30(10): 1113-1132.
12. Borgatti, S.P. and Everett, M.G. 1992. Notions of positions in social network analysis. Sociological Methodology, 22: 1-35.
13. Krackhardt, D. and Porter, L. 1986. The snowball effect: Turnover embedded in communication networks. Journal of Applied Psychology, 71: 50-56.

Class 5. *February 17, 2026* *Proposal Submissions and Discussions;
Network Data Explorations and Demonstrations by Students;
(Students need to upload their writing to the Box on prior
Sunday night)*

Class 6. *February 24, 2026* *Embeddedness and Interfirm Governance*

14. Granovetter, M. 1985. Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. American Journal of Sociology, 91(3): 481-510.
15. Yang, H., Lin, Z., and Peng, M. 2011. Behind acquisitions of alliance partners: Exploratory learning and network embeddedness. Academy of Management Journal, 54(5): 1069-1080.
16. Powell, W.W. 1990. Neither markets nor hierarchy: Network forms of organization. Research in Organizational Behavior, 12: 295-336.
17. Yang, H., Lin, Z., and Lin, Y. 2010. A multi-level framework of firm boundaries: Firm characteristics, dyadic differences, and network attributes. Strategic Management Journal, 31(3): 237-261.
18. Lebedev, S., Lin, Z., and Peng, M. W. 2021. Power imbalance and value creation in joint ventures. Long Range Planning, 54(2), 102014.

Class 7. *March 3, 2026* *Social Capital and Status*

19. Koka, B. R., J. E. Prescott. 2002. Strategic alliances as social capital: A multidimensional view. Strategic Management Journal, 23(9): 795-816.
20. Sauerwald, S., Lin, Z., and Peng, M.W. 2016. Board Social Capital and Excess CEO Returns. Strategic Management Journal, 37(3): 498-520.
21. Washington, M. and Zajac E.J. 2005. Status evolution and competition: Theory and evidence. Academy of Management Journal, 48(2): 282-296.
22. Lin, Z., Yang, H., and Arya, B. 2009. Alliance partners and firm performance: Resource complementarity and status association. Strategic Management Journal, 30(9): 921-940.

Class 8. *March 10, 2026* *Bridging Individual and Structural Perspectives;
Network Dynamics*

23. Mehra, A., Kilduff, M., and Brass, D. J. 2001. The social networks of high and low self-monitors: Implications for workplace performance. Administrative Science Quarterly, 46: 121-146.
24. Lin, Z., Yang, H., Arya, B., Zhi, H., and Li, D. 2005. Structural vs. individual perspectives on the dynamics of group performance: Theoretical exploration and empirical investigation. Journal of Management, 31(3): 354-380.
25. Gulati, R., M. Sytch, A. Tatarynowicz. 2012. The rise and fall of small worlds: Exploring the dynamics of social structure. Organization Science, 23(2): 449-471.
26. Lin, Z., Yang, H., and Demirkan, I. 2007. The performance consequences of ambidexterity in strategic alliance formations: Empirical investigation and computational theorizing. Management Science, 53(10): 1645-1658.

March 17, 2026 *Spring Break. No Class;*

Class 9. *March 24, 2026 Network in International, Innovation, & Non-Profit Contexts;*

27. Batjargal, B.A.T., Hitt, M.A., Tsui, A.S., Arregle, J.L., Webb, J.W. and Miller, T.L. 2013. Institutional polycentrism, entrepreneurs' social networks, and new venture growth. Academy of Management Journal, 56(4): 1024-1049.
28. Garg, S., Lin, Z., and Yang, H. 2023. Board caste diversity in Indian MNEs: The interplay of stakeholder norms and social embeddedness. Journal of International Business Studies, 54(5): 797-828.
29. Carnabuci, G., and Dioszegi, B. 2015. Social networks, cognitive style, and innovative performance: A contingency perspective. Academy of Management Journal, 58(3): 881-905.
30. Arya, B. and Lin, Z. 2007. Understanding collaboration outcomes from an extended RBV perspective: The roles of organizational characteristics, partner attributes, and network structures. Journal of Management, 33(5): 697-723.

Class 10. *March 31, 2026 Proposal Finalizing;
Student Network Data Demonstration and Q&A;
(Students need to upload their writing to the Box on prior Sunday night)*

Class 11. *April 7, 2026 Paper Writing: Introduction; Data Collection Completion
(Students need to upload their writing to the Box on prior Sunday night)*

Class 12. *April 14, 2026 Paper Writing: Theory and Hypotheses; Data Analyses
(Students need to upload their writing to the Box on prior Sunday night)*

Class 13. *April 21, 2026 Paper Writing: Result and Discussion; Data Presentation
(Students need to upload their writing to the Box on prior Sunday night)*

Class 14. *April 28, 2026 No Class. Student Term Paper Preparations;
Due on coming Sunday night via email to the instructor*

Class 15. *May 5, 2026 Term Paper Presentations*