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:

**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?**


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


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


September 30: No class; Rosh Hashanah
October 2: Tie Strength and Small Worlds: An Introduction to Network Analysis


October 7: Centrality and Power


October 9: No class; Yom Kippur

October 14, 16: Cohesion and Structural Equivalence


October 21: No class; mid-semester break

October 23: Labor Markets and Structural Holes


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


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


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


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

November 25: A Network Theory of Action


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


December 9: Final Examination