INRE 44802 / PLSC 44801:
Network Theory for International Political Economy

Spring 2015

Committee on International Relations
University of Chicago

Mondays 9:30a-12:20p
Room: 242 Saieh Hall for Economics

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Course description

This course introduces students to prominent concepts and precepts of social network theory (SNT). We will examine how SNT has recently been deployed to generate novel solutions to prominent puzzles in the study of international political economy. We will become sensitive to the main intuitions behind SNT through careful study of empirical work in political science, sociology, and public policy. Each reading for this course introduces a set of network-analytic tools, and applies them in a way that does not require advanced training in what has become an increasingly technical methodology.

The aim of this course is threefold. First, students will learn to replace purely metaphorical (and vague) talk of networks with focused propositions about the network properties and dynamics of contemporary phenomena such as international inequality, regional integration, and transnational activism. Second, students will explore what it is about the current state of the international political economy that leads analysts to abandon conventional analytical tools in favor of network theory. Put differently, this class will historicize network theory by discussing what it replaced and when. Finally, students will critically assess the validity and utility of empirical findings that network theory has generated. They will do this, in part, by devising a research proposal of their own that explicitly defends the adoption of a network-theoretic lens vis-a-vis some competitor.

Prerequisites

A course in International Relations. Advanced undergraduate students may enroll with the consent of the instructor.

Readings

Required for purchase, and available at the Seminary Co-Op:


All remaining readings are accessible via Chalk.
Determination of Grades

The final course grade will be determined by weighting your performance in the following areas:

1. Class Participation (25%).
2. Journal (25%); **due June 10, 5p.**
3. Memo 1: History of Concepts (25%); **due May 1, 5p.**
4. Memo 2: Research Proposal (25%); **due June 1, 9:30a.**

Late assignments will be dropped one letter grade for each day past the due date.

Student Responsibilities

Attendance and Participation

This course is designed to facilitate direct student engagement with the material. It is essential that students attend every class fully prepared to discuss the readings with each other. In order to help launch discussion, everyone must submit 2 discussion points via email no later than 24 hours before each class. These discussion points must not be clarification questions, but ought to develop something you picked up across the week’s readings in a generative way. I will post these discussion points (anonymously) to Chalk before each seminar session to allow you to compare and contrast your own reactions to the material with those of your peers. Your participation grade will be determined by your in-seminar contributions, including a short presentation of your research proposal on June 1, and the quality of the points submitted for discussion.

Reading

It is imperative that students complete all the assigned readings in the order they appear on the “Course Schedule” below. This being a reading-intensive seminar, I encourage students to form study groups; not for the purpose of reducing the reading load each student has to bear, but in order to be able to process the material in advance of the weekly seminar, and to identify and answer any clarification questions they may have.
Paper-Free Assignment Policy

All written assignments and resulting feedback will be handled 100% electronically. To minimize compatibility and formatting problems, I request that all paper assignments be submitted in the form of a “.pdf” email attachment to a message sent to mstaisch@uchicago.edu, time-stamped before the relevant deadlines. I will return marked up assignments as an attachment to the email address they were submitted from for your own safekeeping.

Journal

The purpose of this assignment is to boost individual learning by continually triangulating three arenas: assigned reading, initial student reflection through discussion points, and conversation in class. After each week’s session, students will create a journal entry of 300-500 words in which they react and respond to the discussion points they submitted (see above) in light of the conversation that took place in class. The instructor will collect this journal (a combination of discussion points and reaction points) at the conclusion of the course.

Memo 1: History of Concepts

As a theory of international political economy, network theory defines well-known concepts such as globalization, leadership, and power in non-conventional ways. In this assignment, students pick a single concept of some relevance to scholars of IPE, and track when, how, and why this concept began to be articulated in network-theoretic terms. More specifically, students write a (double-spaced) memo of 1,500-1,800 words (incl. footnotes) in which they:

- Assemble an annotated bibliography of eight to twelve peer-reviewed articles in which this concept features prominently (students must clear their selection with the instructor; the assigned readings can serve as a starting point; no two articles may be by the same author(s));
- Catalogue the ways in which the authors in question defend their choice of network theory over some alternative;
- Discuss the alternative conception that is being replaced;
- Judge the utility of conceptualizing the concept in network-theoretic terms.

Memo 2: Research Proposal

The purpose of this assignment is to translate network-theoretic claims into empirical research, and to defend network theory as the proper way of analyzing (and solving) a public policy
problem. More specifically, students conduct an in-class presentation based on a (double-spaced) memo of 3,000-3,600 words (incl. footnotes) in which they:

- Pose a question for investigation by analysts of international political economy;
- Specify a hypothetical answer that follows network-theoretic precepts;
- Defend said hypothesis by explicitly rejecting an alternative hypothesis on theoretical grounds;
- Sketch a preliminary recipe for examining the hypothetical answer using empirical evidence.

Electronic Etiquette and Communication with your Instructor

I request that students not use their laptops, cell phones, or PDAs during class for any reason. This means that you will need to come to class with the relevant materials and notes in hardcopy.

I encourage every student to contact me with any problems, concerns, or questions about the course as soon as they arise. You can sign up for my office hours via Starfish on Chalk. If you are unable to meet during designated times, simply send me an e-mail, and propose a few time slots during which you are available. I ask that you give me at least 48 hours to accommodate you.

Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity

The University of Chicago’s Academic Integrity statement reads:
“It is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas of work as one’s own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University’s disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another’s ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes ‘use’ should be addressed to the instructor.”

If you have questions, ask me before submitting work, and/or consult Charles Lipson’s Doing Honest Work in College (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
Course schedule

Part I: Introduction

1. March 30 - Network Theory Meets International Political Economy

Part II: Relations Into Structure

2. April 6 - Anarchy and Hierarchy
   - Lake, chs. 2 and 3.
3. April 13 - Integration and Fragmentation

*Housekeeping: Discuss Memo 1.*


- Kadushin, pp. 18-21, 29, 32-5, 44-9, 108-32.

Part III: Relations As Process

4. April 20 - Power across Space


- Kadushin, pp. 31-2, 56-73, 94-100, 162-81.
5. April 27 - Power over Time


***Due on May 1, 5p: Memo 1***

6. May 4 - Diffusion and Contagion


- Kadushin, pp. 135-59.

Part IV: Identity From Relations

7. May 11 - The United States: Leader or Imperial Power?

*Housekeeping: Discuss Memo 2.*


• Lake, preface, chs. 4 and 5.


• Kadushin, pp. 38-42, 82-8, and 103-5.

8. May 18 - Identity as a Project(ion)


• Kadushin, pp. 56-73.

***no class on May 25: Memorial Day***

Part V: Conclusions

9. June 1 - Discussion of Student Research

***Due at the beginning of class: Memo 2***
10. June 8 - Possible Futures of Network Theory in International Political Economy


- Kadushin, pp. 185-200.

***Due on June 10, 5p: Journal***