



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Networks and Social Capital

1920-2-E1601N092

Learning objectives

The course is structured into three parts and its overall objective is to highlight the importance of social relations and networks in socio-economic phenomena. The assumption is that we cannot understand socio-economic phenomena without taking into account the social relations that constitute and shape them.

Each part of the course area has a sub-objective:

- 1) first part: understanding the theoretical assumptions of any analysis of social networks and social capital;
- 2) second part: understanding the main empirical concepts for the analysis of social networks and social capital;
- 3) third part: applying those concepts into real life phenomena.

To fulfil the first sub-objective, students are asked to attend classes and studying the handbooks and scientific articles indicated in the sections 'Detailed Program' and 'Bibliography'.

The achievement of the sub-second objective requires participation in class, the reading of the handbooks, and the practice in the computer lab.

The achievement of the third sub-objective, requires participation in class, studying the handbooks, and participate to team-work in class.

Contents

During the first part of the course, students will be introduced to the main theoretical traditions that, over time, have dealt with social networks in the study of economic and social phenomena. In particular, we will discuss the psycho-sociological school, the Anthropological School of Manchester, and the Harvard School (which developed the structural network analysis).

Over the second part, students will be presented the main methodological concepts for network analysis (dyad, triad, homophily, largeness, density, intermediation, etc.). According to the number of students, two lessons might take place in computer labs in order to practice and use Ucinet, the software for network analysis.

During the third part, we will analyse the concept of social capital and its relation with the concept of network (Coleman, Putnam, Burt, Lin). We will draw attention on the operationalisation of the concept and its application to the analysis of the labour market, enterprises, and local systems development.

Detailed program

The course is structured into three parts.

The first part (first three weeks) provides with a theoretical understanding of the importance of networks in socio-economic phenomena.

The first part last three weeks (see details below).

Week 1: We will address the embeddedness of economic phenomena and the main criticism to the conception of the ipo-socialized (rational) actor and the over-socialized individual actor.

Week 2: We will consider the importance of social relations within groups to understand economic outcomes and individual behaviors. We will discuss the Elton Mayo's experiments, thus the Anthropological School of Manchester.

Week 3: We will consider the Harvard School, the development of network analysis and its roots in classics of sociology. We will discuss research on 'Small Worlds'.

At the end of the first part, students are expected to carry out an exercise/evaluation test.

Throughout the second part of the course, we will be dealing with the main methodological concepts for the analysis of networks.

Week 4: We will introduce the main SNA concepts: node, direct and indirect relation, dyad, triad, homophily, weak ties, strong ties, structural hole, popularity, centrality, multiplicity, cohesion.

Week 5: We will see how to apply these concepts and learn how to use Ucinet. These Lessons will be held in computer labs.

At the end of this part, students are expected to carry out an exercise/evaluation test.

Throughout the third part of the course, we will use the concepts of the SNA in current economic phenomena.

Week 6: We will discuss social capital, networks and labour market, how to find a job, and make career progress.

Week 7: How to measure social capital.

Week 8: Social capital, networks, and performance. We will apply network analysis to the study of companies and

enterprises (in class). We will talk about the macro approach to social capital, with reference to democracy, civicness, participation, and social movements.

At the end, students are asked to successfully complete an exercise/evaluation test.

Week 9: We will study local development and social capital in relation to Italian industrial clusters and their evolution

Week 10: _____

Week 11: We will sum up the main contents of the course. a

Week 12: We will have a final exercise/evaluation test

Prerequisites

The knowledge of English is the only pre-require.

Teaching methods

The course is based on a large number of teaching methods, namely classes, practices in computers labs, practices in class. Lessons will be supported also by video projections on the topics of the course.

Assessment methods

The final exam for non-attending students consists in a written exam with open and multiple-choice questions. Multiple choice questions require the studying of the textbooks (see Bibliography) and of the slides uploaded on the online platform. To pass the exam, students are expected to answer correctly to half + 1 questions. The lecturer reserves the right to call students for an interview on the exam.

Attending students are expected to successfully pass the multiple-choice tests scheduled at the end of each part of the course. In case of fail, students may repeat the tests until the end of the course, on the dates scheduled in the program. Example: If an attending student does not pass the first test, he/she can repeat the test when the second test is scheduled. He/she will have more time in order to do also the second test. It is thus possible to do more than one test a day but only on the scheduled dates. Further info for attending students will be provided in class.

Failing an exam will not make a student ineligible to retake the test on the following exam date.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Granovetter, Mark. (1985). "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness". American Journal of Sociology 91, pp. 481-510.

Mustafa Emirbayer (1997) Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 2. pp. 281-317

Prell, C. (2012) *Social Network Analysis*, London, Sage. Cap 2, pp. 19-58

Kadushin C. (2012) *Understanding social networks*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Cap. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10

The Strength Of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1360-80. The Strength Of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1360-80.

Lin, Nan. "Social Networks and Status Attainment." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 25, 1999, pp. 467–487

Burt, R. (2005) *Brokerage and Closure. An Introduction to Social Capital*, pp. 1-57

Robert L. Cross, Salvatore Parise, and Leigh M. Weiss (2007) *The role of networks in organizational change*, McKinsey Quarterly, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-role-of-networks-in-organizational-change>

Trigilia C. (2001). *Social capital and local development*. *European Journal of Social Theory* 4(4):427-442

John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam (1995) *Economic Growth and Social Capital in Italy* Author(s): Source: *Eastern Economic Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 295-307

Andreotti, A. ; Anselmi, G.; Hoffmann, C. (2018). *Are weak relations working? Sharing platforms and social capital*. *SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO*, 4(152), 87-103

Small. M. (2018) *Someone to talk to*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Introduction; ch. 7 and 8.
