
Personal Relationships and Social Networks
Communication Studies 7910
Wednesdays 3:30 – 6:20 p.m.
153 Coates Hall

Instructor: Dr. Loretta L. Pecchioni
Office: 124 Coates Hall
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00 to 9:30 and 10:30 to 11:00 and
by appointment
Phone: 578-6724 or call the department office at 578-2172
as graduate students, feel free (within reason) to call me at home,
768-9965 (yes, that's an old-fashioned land line)
E-mail: lpecch1@lsu.edu

Required reading: Parks, M. R. (2007). *Personal relationships and social networks*.
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Course Objectives

1. To expose students to theory and research regarding personal relationships and social networks broadly and with depth in selected areas.
 2. To enhance students' ability to critically analyze bodies of research, especially in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of lines of research.
 3. To provide students with the opportunity to actively participate in research.
 4. To help students identify ways to translate course concepts for an undergraduate course on personal relationships and social networks.
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Course Grading

Course grades will be based on individual performance during class discussions, leading class sessions on your research interest, elements of your research project, and the exams.

Class participation	100 points	25%
Class leadership on research topic	50 points	12.5%
Research project*	150 points	37.5%
Exams	100 points	25%

Total

400 points

*see description after schedule for details

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Topic areas are proposed, however, events in class may dictate that the schedule be adjusted to meet the needs and interests of class members. Any changes from the proposed schedule will be announced in class and on Moodle.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic(s)</i>
Jan. 13	introduction and overview of course activities and content foundations of the social contextual perspective <i>read chapter 1 from Parks</i>
Jan. 20	inside relationships and networks discussion of potential research projects <i>read chapter 2 from Parks</i>
Jan. 27	initiating relationships, becoming friends and romantic partners <i>read chapters 3, 4 and 5 from Parks</i>
Feb. 3	comparing age, gender, race and ethnicity, managing relational boundaries <i>read chapters 6, 7 and 8 from Parks</i>
Feb. 10	turn in statement on role of theory in your project
Feb. 17	relational termination/transition and considering the social contextual perspective turn in proposal for your class project <i>read chapters 9 and 10 from Parks</i>
Feb. 24	Exam turn in annotated bibliography for your class project
Mar. 2	student topic student topic
Mar. 9	student topic feedback session on literature reviews

Mar. 16	student topic feedback session on methods sections
Mar. 23	Spring Break – no class
Mar. 30	student topic student topic
Apr. 6	student topic student topic
Apr. 13	student topic student topic
Apr. 20	Tying it all together
Apr. 27	Project presentations
May 4	Wednesday 5:00 p.m. deadline to turn in final exams
May 5	Thursday 5:00 p.m. deadline to turn in project papers

Course Assignments

Class Participation

As graduate students, you are expected to attend each and every class meeting and actively participate. One of the great joys of a good graduate seminar is learning from your colleagues, therefore, each class member is expected to contribute to scholarly discussions about the content area(s) assigned for each week. As you are reading the assigned materials, you should identify questions or issues that will help to generate discussion that assists each class member in developing an understanding of the content area as well as larger issues regarding research and theory in the field of communication. Please feel free to ask questions for clarification. Asking for clarification points out areas where we might not have shared understanding and can be very fruitful areas of discussion. Contribution to these discussions will not be graded solely on the number of times an individual speaks, but on the quality of his/her comments and the value such comments provide to further the discussion.

Missing class will adversely affect your class participation grade. If you know that you will be missing class because of a conference, interview, or other scheduled reason, just

let me know. If an emergency should arise that precludes you from attending class, try to let me know. I do not need the details, just the notification. I understand that when emergencies arise it may be difficult to notify me before class.

Class Leadership on Research Topic

A major goal that I have for you is to end the semester with a research paper that is ready for submission to a conference (see the details below). In addition to completing your research project, you will be sharing key readings that inform your project. Each of you will have about one hour in class to talk about your project and the supporting literature. For your class period, you will want to identify those key articles and get me a copy at least one week before your assigned day so that I can post files for everyone to read before you present in class. Your job is to not only talk about these specific readings, but also to provide the larger context and issues being addressed in your project. The rest of the class should read the articles and come prepared to talk about the issues raised and identify connections to the broader context(s) of personal relationships and social networks.

Research Project

Each student is expected to participate in a research project related to the content area of the class. The goal is for each student to have a convention-quality paper (about 25 pages) ready by the end of the semester. This project *must* be related to our course content in some meaningful way, and, therefore, must be approved by me. Feel free to talk with me about your project at any time (well, not in the middle of the night!).

For an individual project, each student will be responsible for developing a proposal for approval; conducting a literature review; collecting and analyzing data (using all those terms broadly); and, writing up a final, convention-quality (not defined broadly!) paper. Groups of students may decide to work together on the research project. For group projects, the group may decide to divide the work up among its members in any manner found appropriate by the group members, but a synopsis of the division of labor should be provided to me.

To help you develop your project and keep on track with writing the related paper, we will have several checkpoints throughout the semester.

- Theoretical grounding 10 points
- Proposal 10 points
- Annotated bibliography 10 points
- Peer review of literature review 10 points
- Peer review of methods 10 points
- Final project paper 100 points

Theoretical grounding. You should submit a 2-3 page paper identifying how the social contextual perspective might help ground your project for this class. If you intend to combine the SCP with another theory, identify that theory, provide a brief description and explain how combining these approaches allows you to ask relevant questions.

Proposal. The project proposal should be 3-5 pages outlining the questions that will be addressed and how you will go about answering those questions (methodology) as well as identifying some of the most relevant literature. I recommend that you include a proposed project timeline as well to help you stay on track to meet course deadlines.

Annotated bibliography. For the relevant literature section of your project paper, you will need to review studies that inform your project. For this assignment, you should identify at least three relevant articles. An annotated bibliography includes the citation, a one or two paragraph summary of the article's key arguments and findings, and one paragraph on how this article relates to and/or informs your project. The articles you choose for this assignment may well end up being the ones that you share with the class for your topic leadership, but they do not have to be the same ones.

Peer review of literature review. By this point in the semester, you should have started drafting your paper for your final project. Your literature review may not be complete, but should have a few key sections ready for feedback. You will be paired with one or two members of class. You should share your draft at least 72 hours before our class meeting. You should read the other person's work and make comments about how their argument is framed, supported by evidence, and note any bits of information that are not yet covered. Ideally, you will be able to share your written comments a few hours before we meet together. We will have time in class to discuss the feedback you received.

Peer review of methods section. Much the same as the peer review of the literature review, you should have this section drafted and ready to share for feedback. Again, you will be paired with others in class. You should send each other these sections at least 72 hours before our class time. If possible, share your written comments with the other person before we meet so that we may focus on discussing what needs improvement.

Exams

We will have two exams for this class. Each will be worth 50 points.

The first exam will focus on the social contextual perspective – key concepts/terms, applications, areas of research – to insure that you have a solid grounding in this perspective as it frames much of our discussion throughout the semester. This exam will be designed to mimic in-house comprehensive exam questions, therefore, we will take time during class to answer these questions.

The final exam will consist of a variety of essay questions testing your knowledge on several levels. Questions will draw on the assigned readings, the class discussions, and

the research projects conducted for the class. I will post the questions for the final exam at least two weeks before your responses are due. Turn in your responses any time before the deadline noted in the course schedule. You may submit them electronically or as a hard copy.

Reasonable Accommodation

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.