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**CMST 3112 Section 1**  
Social Networks and Personal Relationships  
TTh 10:30-11:50  
E131 HOWE RUSSELL E

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

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### **Course Objectives**

This course focuses on the development, maintenance and dissolution of social and interpersonal relationships within the context of social networks. At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. define social networks and related concepts, such as their characteristics and functions
  2. apply social network concepts to romantic and friend relationships
  3. extend social network concepts to other personal and social relationships
  4. analyze how social networks function
  5. identify and offer solutions to relational problems that arise from the functioning of social networks
  6. critique the social contextual perspective by identifying its strengths and weaknesses
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### **Course Grading**

Grades in this course will be based on each student's performance on the following assessment items. Descriptions of each assessment appear later in this syllabus. For some assessments, more detailed assignment sheets will be posted on Moodle. Grades will be based on a total of 700 points possible, applying the required plus/minus system. Therefore, the following point range translates into the following grade:

## 700 total points

675.5 – 700	A+	507.5-534.8	C
647.5 – 674.8	A	486.5-506.8	C-
626.5 – 646.8	A-	465.5-485.8	D+
605.5 – 625.8	B+	437.5-464.8	D
577.5 – 604.8	B	416.5-436.8	D-
556.5 – 576.8	B-	<416.4	F
535.5-555.8	C+		

NOTE: grade ranges have already been rounded by 1/2%, that is, the lower limited value is, for example, not 90%, but 89.5%

Grades will be posted on Moodle in a timely fashion so that you are aware of your current standing.

<i>Exams (4 @ 50 points each)</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Comprehensive Final</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Paper</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>100 for section drafts (5 @ 20 each)</i>	
<i>100 for final version</i>	
<i>Interaction Analysis</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Stranger Introduction</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>20 for who and why</i>	
<i>30 for update reports (3 @ 10 each)</i>	
<i>Discussion Input</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>(10 @ 5 each)</i>	
<i>In-Class Exercises</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>(5 @ 10 each)</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>

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## Course Schedule

A detailed course schedule is posted on Moodle. The schedule includes reading assignments and deadlines for other assessments. Any changes will be announced in class and on Moodle.

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## Overview of Assessments

*Exams (4) 200 points total*

The total of 200 points will be divided as follows, 50 points each for:

chapters 1 and 2	chapters 6 and 7
chapters 3 through 5	chapters 8 through 10

Exam questions will cover assigned readings, lecture content, and class discussions. The format will include multiple choice and short answer questions. A study guide for each exam will be posted on Moodle along with the reading guides for the majority of the chapters.

### ***Comprehensive Final***

100

The final exam will assess your ability to apply, analyze, and evaluate the course content. The format will be essay. Because this exam is take-home, it will be posted early in the semester, so that you will have a guide for the key elements of learning for the course and are able to make notes throughout the semester that directly address each question.

### ***Paper***

200

100 for section drafts (5 @ 20 each)

100 for final version

The paper assignment will give you the opportunity to examine your own social network, identify how it functions, identify recurring problems and offer suggestions for solving those problems. To help you develop your paper, you will submit portions of it over the course of the semester. I will provide you with feedback and suggestions so that your final paper will be easier to pull together and will be more likely to meet the required elements. The paper grading template for the final version appears at the end of the assignment detail which is posted separately on Moodle.

I have identified three required sections and five optional topic from which to choose the other two sections. Everyone will be expected to complete the required sections, but you may choose from among the optional ones. In addition, if the class suggests a topic for a section, we may add it as an option. Overall, you should submit five (5) sections for feedback before turning in your final paper. Each section will be worth 20 points toward your final grade, therefore, this part of the process is worth half of your overall paper grade. You may submit your drafts and final paper electronically or in hard copy. Deadlines are listed on Moodle.

### ***Interaction Analysis***

50

#### ***Step One – Tracking interactions*** 15

For one week, track your interactions (the reporting form is posted separately on Moodle). You should submit a completed copy of the form for each individual on each day during that week. The form asks you to identify with whom you interact, through which formats, about what topics, and your level of satisfaction with that interaction. An interaction means everything from a quick text to your roommate to a two hour discussion with your significant other. Many of your mediated interactions will be easier to track because you will have a record on your digital device. However, you do not need to report each and every text with an individual. If you have

an exchange that includes several texts over the course of the day, you may consider that exchange as one interaction rather than several individual ones.

### *Step Two – Review of interactions 15*

After you have recorded your interactions for one week, you should go back over your reports and write up a summary that indicates the number of individuals overall and in different relational categories (i.e., friends, family, acquaintances), the ways in which you communicated and about what. For example, you may talk to your parents about finances, your friends about partying and relationship issues, etc. Finally, you will want to identify which interactions were more or less satisfying. This information will then provide you with the content to use in the analysis phase.

### *Step Three – Analysis of interactions 20*

What did you learn by paying close attention to your interactions over one week? Are some interactions more satisfying than others? What seems to create more satisfying interactions – who the other person is, what you discussed, the purpose of your interaction, something else? Did your level of control over the interaction impact your satisfaction? For example, are you more satisfied when you initiated the interaction?

You may combine your write up for steps two and three into one paper or submit them separately. These papers may be submitted digitally or in hard copy.

### ***Stranger Introduction***

50

*20 for who and why*

*30 for update reports (3 @ 10 each)*

One of the longstanding uses of social networks is to find someone who is able to make an introduction to someone whom you want to meet. This assignment asks you to report on this process. Although it would be nice to actually get an introduction, your grade does not depend on that goal. Rather, you will be graded on reporting on the process.

### *Step One*

Identify someone you do not know, but think it would be beneficial to meet. You will need to justify your choice, so think about someone who might help you with your career rather than a celebrity you hope will fall in love with you. Turn in the name of this person and your reason(s) for wanting to meet him or her. Do not move forward to step two until you have received approval for this choice.

### *Step Two*

Work your network to find someone who knows this person, or someone who knows someone who knows this person. Keep track of the strategies you use and the results. You will be asked to

report on these strategies as well as why you think they are working or not. In your report, you should include dead ends as well as any promising leads. While you should describe your process, do not forget to analyze it as well. Deadlines for submitting your updates are posted on Moodle.

***Discussion Input*** 50  
(10 @ 5 each)

As we apply and extend the social contextual perspective throughout the semester, we will want to discuss our experiences and insights. We should draw not only on our own experiences, but those of our friends and family as well. In order to collect and share our ideas, I will post questions that we will discuss during the next class period. You should send your response to me by midnight before the day of class, giving me time to read all your responses before class starts so we will be able to discuss the common responses as well as unique ones.

Questions will not be posted for every class meeting, but some class meetings may have more than one question posted. Over the course of the semester, you should respond to at least 10 of these questions. Feel free, however, to respond to more if you so desire.

***In-Class Exercises*** 50  
(5 @ 10 each)

Over the course of the semester, we will engage in several in-class exercises. At the conclusion of each exercise, you will be asked to write a short commentary on what you learned from the exercise. I anticipate at least 8 such exercises. The five highest grades will be used to calculate your course grade. Therefore, if you miss an exercise, it will not negatively impact your grade. If you miss several, however, you may not have the opportunity to take advantage of this assessment. Some of these activities will be announced before hand, but some may arise from our class discussions and thus will be impromptu.

Be prepared for these exercises by bringing paper and writing utensils or your portable device so that you are able to compile your response and submit it. I will accept hand written work as well as typed responses, but they will be due at the end of our class period.

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## **Course Policies**

### ***Classroom Decorum***

My goal is for us to develop a supportive classroom environment where everyone feels free to share their opinions and raise questions. My assumption is not that everyone will agree, but will respectfully voice their differences. Think about the difference between aggressive and assertive communication. Aggressive communication attacks the individual. Assertive communication

attacks the ideas. I prefer that we challenge each other's ideas rather than attack each other as individuals.

I find all the electronic devices distracting, but I also hate spending my time policing your behavior while you are using them. So, I will not ban the use of technology in class. In fact, there are times when we will rely on those devices for class activities. However, please try not to be distracting in their use. Quiet the notification system – ring tones, beeps, clicks, music, whatever. Try not to laugh at inappropriate times because you just read an amusing text. If I notice the person behind you watching the video you are watching, I will ask why you are not sharing it with the rest of the class.

### ***Deadlines***

If you know that you will be absent on the day that an assignment is due, you may hand the assignment in early or send it electronically by the deadline. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time because of an emergency, you will need to provide proof of that emergency in order to have the assignment accepted. Assignments handed in late will be penalized 10% for each late class period, except in documented cases of emergency. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the initial deadline.

### ***Reasonable Accommodation***

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.