



HONR 204-03H: Science & Society:
Network Science

Spring 2026

Tue/Thu, 4:15 pm – 5:30 pm CT

609 Mundelein Center

Last Updated: Jan 6

Please note that this syllabus may be subject to changes within the first few weeks of classes, mainly to enable minor corrections. Please check Sakai for any updates. Thank you for your understanding.

Course Information

Course Number HONR 204-03H

Course Name Science & Society: Network Science

Course Description Networks are everywhere: friendships and social media connections, trade and financial systems, the Internet, and even the interactions inside living cells. Network Science provides a common language to study these complex, interconnected systems across disciplines. In this course, students will learn core concepts such as how to measure the structure of networks, identify important nodes and communities, and model processes like the spread of information or contagion. The class blends theory with real-world examples from computer science, sociology, political science, and biology, giving students practical tools to analyze and understand the connected world around them. By the end of the course, students will see how network science helps explain phenomena ranging from viral marketing campaigns to political polarization to the resilience of infrastructure systems.

Modality In-person @ 609 Mundelein Center

Course Duration Jan 12, 2026 – May 2, 2026

Lecture Time Tue / Thu, 4:15 – 5:30 pm CT

Helpful Links

- [Office Hours](#)
- [Gradescope](#)
- [Late Pass Submission Form](#)

Instructor Information

Instructor	Dr. Satyaki Sikdar
Campus Office	211 Doyle Center
Email	ssikdar@luc.edu
Office Hours	Online and in-person by appointment via Calendly
Contact Preference	DM on Microsoft Teams => Email

Course Components

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Define and Classify Network Structures: Identify and describe the fundamental components of a network (nodes and edges) and distinguish between different types of networks across social, biological, and technological domains.
- Quantify Network Topology: Calculate and interpret key structural metrics, including degree distribution, clustering coefficients, and path lengths, to characterize the "shape" of a complex system.
- Identify Influence and Community: Apply mathematical measures of centrality (e.g., betweenness, closeness) to identify influential nodes and utilize algorithms to detect communities or clusters within large datasets.
- Model Diffusion and Contagion: Simulate and analyze how information, behaviors, or diseases spread through a population using established models of network dynamics.
- Utilize Computational Tools: Employ practical software tools and "common language" frameworks to visualize, manipulate, and extract insights from real-world network data.
- Evaluate System Resilience: Analyze how network architecture contributes to the robustness of infrastructure, financial systems, and biological organisms against random failures or targeted attacks.

Deliverables

Problem Sets

Problem sets will be released on **Fridays at 1 pm** and due the following **Friday at 11:55 pm**. The *lowest-scoring* problem set will be dropped when calculating the final grade. Over the semester, 4-5 problem sets will be released.

Quizzes

There will be **4** timed in-person quizzes administered during class hours. There may be some overlap in content across quizzes. Each quiz will be worth 20-30 points and contain a mix of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. They will be closed book and closed internet, but you can use your class notes. You are expected to solve the problems on your own. Collaborating with other students or using other resources will be considered an Honor Code violation.

Final Exam

There will not be a final exam for this class. The final project presentations will instead be scheduled based on the university's final exam schedule.

Participation

After each lecture, you will be asked to write a brief reflection essay (4-5 sentences) covering the topics discussed. These will be administered on **Sakai** and will be due **24 hours** after the end of the lecture. These will be graded primarily for completion, and count towards your Participation grade. The **three lowest-scoring assignments** will be dropped while calculating the final grade.

Course Project

There will be a course project in the second half of the course. You will work in teams of 2-3 with your classmates. There will be checkpoints to track each group's progress. A final project report and an 8-10 min presentation are due during the week of final exams.

Tools

Sakai

Sakai is the online course management system we will use to run the class. All course content, including the syllabus, lecture videos, assignments, solutions, and other course materials, will be posted here. It will also host your gradebook, which will be updated at least once a month. Please check the Sakai page at least once a week.

Gradescope

We will use Gradescope to administer the weekly problem sets. You can access Gradescope via the Assignments page on Sakai. For more information about Gradescope, please visit this [website](#).

Microsoft Teams

The preferred way to contact the course staff via DMs on Teams.

Tentative Schedule

This schedule may be altered to suit the needs of the class. Please check the Sakai page for the latest updates.

Week #	Week of	Topic	Deliverables
1	Jan 12	Course Introduction, Networks 101	
2	Jan 19	Strong and Weak Ties	PS 1
3	Jan 26	Triadic Closure & Homophily	
4	Feb 2	Positive and Negative Links. Gephi & NetworkX. Quiz 1.	
5	Feb 9	Network Centrality	PS 2
6	Feb 16	Structure of the Web	
7	Feb 23	Power Laws. Quiz 2.	Project Proposals
	Mar 2	No Classes (Spring Break)	
8	Mar 9	Cascades in Networks	PS 3
9	Mar 16	Small-world phenomena	
10	Mar 23	Spreading Phenomena. Quiz 3.	PS 4
11	Mar 30	Epidemics	
12	Apr 6	Epidemics II No Class on Thu, Apr 2. (Easter)	
13	Apr 13	Network Robustness	PS 5. Project Demo.
14	Apr 20	Misc Topics. Quiz 4.	
15	Apr 27	Project Presentations during Final Exam slot.	Final Project Report

Requirements and Expectations

Course Textbooks

Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning About a Highly Connected World (required)

David Easley and John Kleinberg

ISBN: 1-283-17117-1

The book is freely available online and can be accessed using this [link](#).

Network Science (optional)

Albert-László Barabási

The book is freely available online and can be accessed using this [link](#).

Additional references may be used during the course which would be listed on the course Sakai page.

What I expect of you

- That you are fully present when participating in the class.
- That you abide by the Loyola University Honor Code.
- That you are kind to yourself, fellow students, and the course staff.
- That, if something happens to interfere with your ability to meet your course obligations, you tell me as soon as possible.
- You communicate professionally in all class-related communications, email, text, instant messages, etc.,
- That you do the assigned activities thoughtfully and on time.
- That you have fun learning about Data Mining.

What you can expect of me

- That I give you coursework that is well organized and reasonable to schedule your study time appropriately.
- That I give you challenging work that allows you to explore the topic in a way that interests you.
- That I give you regular graded activities so that you always know how you are doing in the class.

- That I give you advanced guidance on how things will be graded, so you know my expectations for an assignment.
- That I grade the work in a timely manner (within 10 days of the due date) and that I grade fairly.
- That I provide the necessary support and training you need to succeed in the classroom.
- That I have fun teaching the class so that it will be fun for you to learn.

Evaluation and Grading

Grade Distribution

Component	Weight
Problem Sets	25%
Quizzes	4 x 10% = 40%
Participation	10%
Course Project	25%

Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
94+	90+	87+	84+	80+	77+	74+	70+	67+	60+	<60

Grade Change and Regrade Requests

Any requests for a grade change on an assignment or a quiz must be made within **seven** days when the grades are published. Any clerical errors while grading will be happily corrected.

All change requests for problem sets must be made on **Gradescope**.

Course Policies

General

- Please be kind to yourself, your fellow students, and the course staff.
- One important aspect of a Jesuit education is learning to respect the rights and opinions of others. Please respect others by (1) allowing all classmates the right to voice their opinions without fear of ridicule and (2) not using profanity or making objectionable (gendered, racial or ethnic) comments, especially comments directed at a classmate.
- Class rosters are provided to each instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun.
- Life happens, and problems may come up which may interfere with your life and work. If you feel the need to sort something out related to this class, please contact Prof. Sikdar. If you have a problem with Prof. Sikdar, please contact the department chair, Prof. George Thiruvathukal.
- I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, virtual spaces, practices, and interactions are as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others are crucial to universal learning. Active, thoughtful, and respectful participation in all aspects of the course will make our time together as productive and engaging as possible.

Attendance

The class will be conducted in-person. You are expected to attend all lectures and actively participate in class.

At Loyola, faculty members will make efforts to accommodate students if the observance of a major religious holiday interferes with a student's academic work. If you are unable to attend a class, participate in a test or quiz, be present for a presentation, or complete an assignment on a specific day because of the observance of a religious holiday, you will be excused and provided the opportunity to make up the work.

You will continue to be responsible for all assigned work and should notify the professor in advance through Loyola email of the religious observance(s) that conflict with your classes.

Late work and make up

Life often gets in the way of study. To accommodate that, you have 2 Late Passes with no questions asked.

No late work will be accepted without late passes.

To use a Late Pass, you must:

- Notify Prof. Sikdar **before** the assignment is due. Any time before the deadline is fine. The notification must be made via the [late pass submission form](#). Your request will be approved as long as you have late passes remaining. Thus, you do not need to wait for a response.
- Turn in the assignment within **3 calendar days** of the original due date. Please include a note that it is being submitted late with a Late Pass.
- You may only use one Late Pass per assignment.
- The Late Passes **will not** be applied automatically or retroactively to a past assignment.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and we expect all members of the University community to act under this principle. Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards seriously violates personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community.

These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude or cheat.
5. Students may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Read through Loyola's full statement on Academic Integrity [here](#).

These policies fully apply to this course. The penalty for task-wise academic misconduct is losing all the task's points. Multiple events of misconduct will be reported through the proper channels.

Using generative AI tools

Academic integrity is a guiding principle for academia. You may not submit others' work without attribution, fabricate information, or facilitate misconduct of others. In this course, students may use AI tools for activities such as brainstorming and proofreading but must **never** submit AI-generated content as their own work, without attribution. **Any use of AI must be disclosed and properly cited** to maintain academic integrity and support the development of individual writing skills, otherwise sanctions will result. Remember, use it but cite it!

Recording Notification

This course lectures may be recorded. This system allows us to automatically record and distribute lectures to you in a secure environment. You can watch these recordings on your computer, tablet, or smartphone. In Sakai, look for the links to the lecture videos on the course schedule. Because we will be recording the lectures, your questions and comments may be recorded. Except for faculty and staff who require access, no content will be shared with

individuals outside your course without your explicit permission. Loyola University Chicago and your instructor jointly copyright these recordings. Posting them to other websites (including YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) or elsewhere without express written permission may result in disciplinary action and possibly civil prosecution.

Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings, including student activity initiated by the instructor, may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

Intellectual Property

All lectures, notes, PowerPoints, and other instructional materials in this course are the intellectual property of the professor. As a result, they may not be distributed or shared in any manner, either on paper or virtually, without my written permission. Lectures may not be recorded without my written consent; when consent is given, those recordings may be used for review only and may not be distributed. Recognizing that your work, too, is your intellectual property, I will not share or distribute your work in any form without your written permission.

Statement of Intent

By remaining in this course, students agree to accept this syllabus as a contract and to abide by the guidelines outlined in the document. Students will be consulted should there be a necessary change to the syllabus.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner (“RCP”) under Loyola’s [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation](#) (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the [Office for Equity & Compliance](#) (“OEC”). As the University’s [Title IX](#) office, the OEC coordinates the University's response to reports and complaints of sexual misconduct (as well as discrimination of any kind) to ensure students' rights are protected.

As an instructor, I also have an obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>).

The University maintains such reporting requirements to ensure that any student who experiences sexual/gender-based violence receives accurate information about available resources and support. Such reports will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Additionally, the University’s resources and support are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. If you have any questions about this policy, you are encouraged to contact the OEC at equity@luc.edu or 773-508-7766.

If you ever wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call [The Line](#) at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with resources as needed – *without* generating a report or record with the OEC.

Student Accommodations

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Mental Health

Each year, 5-20% of US residents will contract influenza (this rate varies greatly depending on the vaccine's effectiveness and virulence of the seasonal strain). In contrast, around 7% of US residents experience a major depressive episode each year. In other words, depression is as common as the flu, yet one can sometimes be socially stigmatized, and the other is not. From my point of view as your professor, if you are having mental health issues that are interfering with your ability to function (in my course or otherwise), that is an entirely valid medical reason to ask for short term extensions or accommodations, just as you might for a physical illness or injury. So, if your situation is hard or you feel hopeless, do not hesitate to reach out, and I will try to work with you to minimize the impact mental health difficulties have on your performance in my class.

During the semester, if you find that health problems, life stressors or emotional difficulties are interfering with your academic or personal success, and you are therefore finding it difficult to cope or to complete your academic work, please consider contacting the Wellness Center. Healthcare services, crisis intervention, time-limited individual counseling, and group therapies are free of charge, and strictly confidential, having nothing to do with your educational records.

You can make an appointment [online](#). You may also call 773-508-2530 for counseling appointments or 773-508-8883 to speak with a nurse about medical concerns. More information is available at the [Wellness Center](#). If your medical or mental health condition requires ongoing academic accommodation, please register with [Student Accessibility Services](#) and provide me with a copy of your accommodation letter.