Final Take-Home Assignment

The final assignment is to write a synopsis, critical assessment, and (optionally) a comparison of two of the required readings for the term. The suggested page lengths below are intended merely as rough guidelines and are not obligatory. The maximum length for the assignment is twelve double-spaced pages. The assignment should be submitted in hard copy no later than 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 19. Email attachments will not be accepted. There will be a cardboard box in the Sociology Department office (736 PLC) where you can leave your paper. Please keep a copy of the assignment for your records.

Part A (50 points): Select as your subject for Part A any one of the following chapters in Barabasi, Linked: 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13. It is allowable to select a chapter for which you took responsibility for facilitating class discussion, although I encourage you to consider all of your options. If you do write about a chapter that your group presented to the class, please remember that the final assignment should reflect your own individual work. Also, keep in mind that, to increase your opportunity for bonus points you need to pick a reading for Part A and one for Part B that complement one another and allow for interesting comparisons across the readings.

1. Identify and cite the chapter you will review.

2. Summarize the main thesis or theses of this chapter. What are the author’s most important claims or assertions regarding the structure, functioning, and implications of particular types of networks? (1-2 pages)

3. Select two key quotes from the text (no more than 2-3 sentences each). Copy and cite them in your review. Explain why you have selected these quotes. Why are they important or interesting? How are they linked to the overall thesis? (1-2 pages)

4. Identify one (or at most two) of what you believe are the greatest strengths of the reading and explain the reasons for your choice. Identify one (or at most two) of what you believe are the greatest weaknesses of the reading and explain the reasons for your choice. (1-2 pages)

5. Identify one specific research question that is not directly addressed in the reading, but that you think would be helpful in either expanding upon or evaluating the claims of the author? (1 page)

Part B (50 points): Select as your subject for Part B any one of the following required readings from weeks 7-10 of the course: Granovetter, Portes, Davis et al., Nollert, Bearman et al., Wellman & Gulia, or Boyd & Ellison. Once again, it is allowable to select an article for which you took responsibility for facilitating class discussion, although I encourage you to consider all of your options.

1. Identify and cite the article you will review.

2. Summarize the main thesis or theses of this article. What are the authors’ most important claims or assertions regarding the structure, functioning, and implications of particular types of networks? (1-2 pages)

3. Select two key quotes from the text (no more than 2-3 sentences each). Copy and cite them in your review. Explain why you have selected these quotes. Why are they important or interesting? How are they linked to the overall thesis? (1-2 pages)
4. Identify one (or at most two) of what you believe are the greatest strengths of the reading and explain the reasons for your choice. Identify one (or at most two) of what you believe are the greatest weaknesses of the reading and explain the reasons for your choice. (1-2 pages)

5. Identify one specific research question that is not directly addressed in the reading, but that you think would be helpful in either expanding upon or evaluating the claims of the author? (1 page)

Part C (10 bonus points): Compare and contrast the chapter that you discussed in Part A with the article that you discussed in Part B. There is no fixed format for this section of the assignment and it is entirely optional. Merely as examples: you may want to focus on the similarities or differences that you see in the structure or dynamics of networks of very different types (e.g., technological networks versus biological networks versus social networks, etc.), or you may want to use the evidence presented in one reading as a standpoint for either corroborating or criticizing the views expressed in the other, or you may pursue any number of other, equally valid, ways of drawing connections between different perspectives within the broad field of network analysis. (1-2 pages)