Syllabus

Villanova University

Course: CSC 5930/9010 - Network Science
Term: Spring 2026
Instructor: Dr. Maurício Gruppi
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Office: Mendel Hall, 292A
Last updated: January 2, 2026

🔗 Quick links

- Course Schedule

- Textbook - Network Science by Albert-László Barabási

- Textbook - Networks, Crowds, and Markets by David Easley and Jon Kleinberg

🕐 Meeting times and locations

- **Section 002**: Tue/Thu 2:30-3:45 PM, Mendel Hall G87

🕐 Office hours

- **Dr. Gruppi**:

  - Tue/Thu 1PM-2PM in Mendel 292A

  - Wednesdays 5 PM-6 PM in Mendel 292A

  - *Note: You do not have to book a time to come to office hours, but I do appreciate if you let me know in advance that you will be coming.*

  - *Available at other times or via Zoom upon request.*

All office hours subject to change. Updates will be posted.

TL;DR

- 🙋 **Be present:** Avoid phones and off-task laptop use during class; step out if you need to use your phone.

- 📈 **Assessments**: In-class labs, 1 homework assignment, 3 exams, final project + presentation, participation.

- 📖 **Textbooks: Network Science textbook has a free online version**. Also: Networks, Crowds, and Markets.

- 📅 **Deadlines**: Communicate early if exceptional circumstances arise.

- 🤖 **AI Tools**: Can be helpful for learning; do not submit AI-generated work as your own. Follow the disclosure rules below.

- 🎯 **Goal**: Your success. Reach out early and often.

Contents

📖 Main references

- The textbook for this course is available for free in digital format and available for purchase in print: **Network Science by Albert-László Barabási**

- Some of the content may also be taken from the textbook **Networks, Crowds, and Markets by Easley and Kleinberg**.

📋 Course content

This course introduces the theory and practice of Network Science—how we model, analyze, and reason about complex systems of connections across disciplines (computing, social systems, biology, finance, transportation, and more).

Module	Description
1. Graph Theory and Probability	Degree, adjacency, paths, distances, clustering coefficient, probability distributions.
2. Random Networks	The Erdős-Rényi model, degree distribution, expected degree, critical point, the Small World Phenomenon and Six-Degrees of Separation.
3. Scale-free Networks	Barabasi-Albert model, power laws, growth and preferential attachment, hubs, the Ultra-small property, degree exponent.
4. Evolving Networks	Fitness, deletion, aging.
5. Degree Correlations	Measuring correlation, degree assortativity, the Friendship Paradox.
6. Network Robustness	Attack tolerance, cascading failures.
7. Communities	Modularity, clustering.
8. Spreading Phenomena	Epidemic modeling, immunization.
9. Graph Embedding	Graph Laplacian, Spectral Embedding, Graph neural networks.

📋 Course structure

- **In person** at scheduled time and location.

- **Weekly plan on LMS**: topics, readings, deliverable deadlines, and exam dates.

- **Lecture recordings** available upon request (see policy below).

🎯 Course goals

The goal of this course is to provide the students with the fundamental knowledge in network science. Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- **Model** networks from real-world data across multiple disciplines.

- **Analyze** network structure using degree distribution, connectedness and centrality.

- **Identify communities and clusters** and explain their implications.

- **Reason about spreading phenomena** (epidemics, diffusion, cascades).

- Extract **dense representations/embedding** of networks.

- Produce meaningful **visualizations** of network structures.

Outcome	Modules	Assessed by
Models of network data	1, 2, 3, 4, 9	Labs; homework; project
Characterize network structure	1,2,3,5	Exam; labs; homework; project
Communities	7	Exam; project
Spreading phenomena	8	Exam; project
Graph embedding	9	Exam; project
Visualization	1-9	Homework; labs; project

📈 Assessment

Assessment of the learning goals in the class will be performed across various activities. Grades will be distributed with the following activities:

Assignment	Weight
Exams	30%
Labs	20%
Homework	15%
Final project + presentation	30%
Active participation	5(+5%)
Total	100%

A description of each assessment module as well as their related goals is shown in Table 1. The final grade cutoff points are displayed in Table 2.

Assessment	Description	Goals assessed
Exams	Exams will assess the theoretical and problem-solving skills. These will take place in class.	Fundamental understanding, interpretation
Lab sessions	Practical exercises to be done in class. Students will need a laptop capable of running Python and Gephi.	Application, problem solving.
Homework	One task will be assigned and will consists of an analysis of real and synthetic networks.	Application, problem solving, fundamental understanding.
Final project	The project will span several weeks and will draw upon the entire course material. Students will produce a network analysis on real data, prepare a report and present to the class.	Application, fundamental understanding, interpretation.
Active participation	Participation in in-class discussions, asking/answering questions in and out of class, etc.	Human aspect of learning, care for the topic.

Table 1: Assessment modules

Grade	Cutoff	Grade	Cutoff
A	95	C	73
A-	90	C-	70
B+	87	D+	67
B	83	D	63
B-	80	D-	60
C+	77	F	<60

Table 2: Letter grade cutoff points

✅ Attendance

[Back to top]

Attendance is expected for a successful completion of this course. The instructor will register the attendance at the beginning of every class.

As per university guidelines, if the number of unexcused absences for first year students exceeds twice the number of weekly classes (four absences for a course that meets twice a week), then such student will receive a failing grade "Y".

Personal Days

In addition to the attendance policy stated above, students are entitled to one excused absence for any reason that may contribute to their personal wellness. Students must advise the instructor by email before class of their intent to utilize a Personal Day as the reason for their absence. A

Personal Day will not be approved retroactively. Students may, but are not required, to provide additional information regarding their absence. Additionally, a Personal Day **may not**:

    a. be used immediately preceding or following a University holiday or break period;

    b. be used on days when exams, presentations or other major assignments are scheduled.

A Personal Day does not grant an automatic extension for items due. Students remain responsible for all assignments, exams, presentations, etc. due on that date. It is in the instructor's discretion to determine whether any extension is appropriate given individual circumstances.

💻 Technology
[Back to top]

- **Required**: Laptop capable of running: Python (3.9+), Jupyter/VS Code, NetworkX, pandas, matplotlib; Gephi for visualization. Use laptops **only** for in-class activities.

- Phones are a big distraction in class. Being concentrated on your phone during a lecture is also disrespectful to the instructor and colleagues. ***If you need to use your phone, do it outside the classroom***.

- All homework and projects **must be typeset**, unless otherwise stated. Students should make use of a computer and a text editor to write reports and homework solutions and **submit them in PDF format**.

🤖 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools
[Back to top]

AI tools (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini) can support learning, but submitting AI-generated work as your own is prohibited and may constitute an Academic Integrity violation.

Allowed AI use (with disclosure)

- Brainstorming outlines, datasets and data collection methods, clarifying concepts, drafting figure captions.

- Code explanations and debugging suggestions (you must write/own final code).

- Grammar/spell-check for your writing.

- Assistance with presentation preparation.

Prohibited AI use

- Generating solutions or code you submit without substantial modification and understanding.

- Using AI during exams or in-class assessments.

Required AI Usage Statement (if used)

Include a short note in your submission (e.g., in the README or report appendix) describing what tool, for which purpose, and how you verified the output. You may use the following template:

```
AI Usage Disclosure (Course: CSC 5930/9010 - Network Science)
Tool(s) used: [e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini]
Purpose: [brainstorming, debugging, caption drafting, etc.]
Sample prompts: [list the most relevant prompts you used for each purpose]
Verification: [how you validated outputs, what you rewrote or corrected]
Authorship: I confirm the submitted work reflects my own understanding and writing.
```

🕐 Late work
[Back to top]

Late work will not be accepted unless there is an excused absence. Make sure to notify the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the submission.

✍️ Student conduct
[Back to top]

As it is every member's responsibility to contribute to the creation of a healthy and safe community, students are required to comply with University health and safety directives, guidelines, rules, regulations and protocols in times of emergency and/or public health concern. Violations may be referred for action under the Code of Student Conduct.

Office of Disabilities and Learning Support Services
[Back to top]

It is the policy of Villanova to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. All students who need accommodations should go to Clockwork for Students via myNOVA to complete the Online Intake or to send accommodation letters to professors. Go to the LSS website or the ODS website for registration guidelines and instructions. If you have any questions please contact LSS at 610-519-5176 or learning.support.services@villanova.edu, or ODS at 610-519-3209 or ods@villanova.edu.

Academic Integrity
[Back to top]

All students are expected to uphold Villanova's Academic Integrity Policy and Code. Any incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for disciplinary action. You may view the University's Academic Integrity Policy and Code for a detailed description.

Absence for Religious Holidays
[Back to top]

Villanova University makes every reasonable effort to allow members of the community to observe their religious holidays, consistent with the University's obligations, responsibilities, and policies. Students who expect to miss a class or assignment due to the observance of a religious holiday should discuss the matter with their professors as soon as possible, normally at least two weeks in advance. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence. For more information, see Religious Holidays.

Lecture recording
[Back to top]

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and may be made available to students in the course for viewing remotely. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation, and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

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[Back to top]

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