# SOCI 424: Networks & Social Structures

**Sept. 14**

1. Course intro
2. Mechanics (assignments, evaluations, etc.)
3. Social structures

# Initial notes

## Live classes

- Some portions of the live class periods (lectures, full class discussions) will be recorded and made available to other students

- Breakout rooms will *not* be recorded

- Camera appreciated, but not required

## Introductory questionnaire

- If you have not done so already, please fill out the introductory questionnaire

- https://bit.ly/3mjn3W4
(Or click the link in the pinned tweet on Campuswire)

# Territorial acknowledgement

McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. Mcgill honours, recognizes, and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/welcome/traditional-territory

Chelsea Vowel. "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments." 2016. https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/.

## Goals of the course

### Social structures

- Theoretical tools to think about social processes through the lens of *social structures* and *relational systems*

### Social network theory

- History and theory of *social networks* as a way to understand human relations and organization

### Network methods

- Methodological tools to *produce* and *consume* empirical network analyses

*Balancing theory and methods is tricky, but important*



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# Syllabus

## Syllabus

- https://soci424.netlify.app/

- List of required and supplementary (optional) readings

- Links to lecture slides, recordings, and group worksheets

- List of assignments that are due

**Schedule**

### Mon, Sept 14 — Introduction: what is social structure and what do networks have to do with it?

*Sociologists frequently talk about "social structure." We begin the course by defining the concept of social structure and examining how it helps us ask and answer important questions. We will also introduce the primary formalization of social structure: the social network.*

*Guiding questions: What is social structure? | How is it different from institutions or groups? | Is a social structure always composed of people? | What is a social relation? | How network structures more than the sum of their relations?*

**Reading**

Required:
- Martin (2009), *Social Structures* Chapter 1
- Weeden and Cornwell (2020), *The Small-World Network of College Classes: Implications for Epidemic Spread on a University Campus*

**Discussion**

Lectures:
- Course intro and mechanics (slides 🅿; video 🎥)

Worksheets:
- Preliminaries of social structures (doc 🅦)

**Assignments**

- Lab 0 (*optional*): Getting up and running with R

# Assessment

## Final grade components:

**Reading (10%)**
- Evaluated through annotations on Perusall

**Class participation (10%)**
- Evaluated through group worksheets

**Methods labs (20%)**
- Evaluated for completion (0/1)

**Final project (60%)**
- Précis                (Oct 19; 5%)
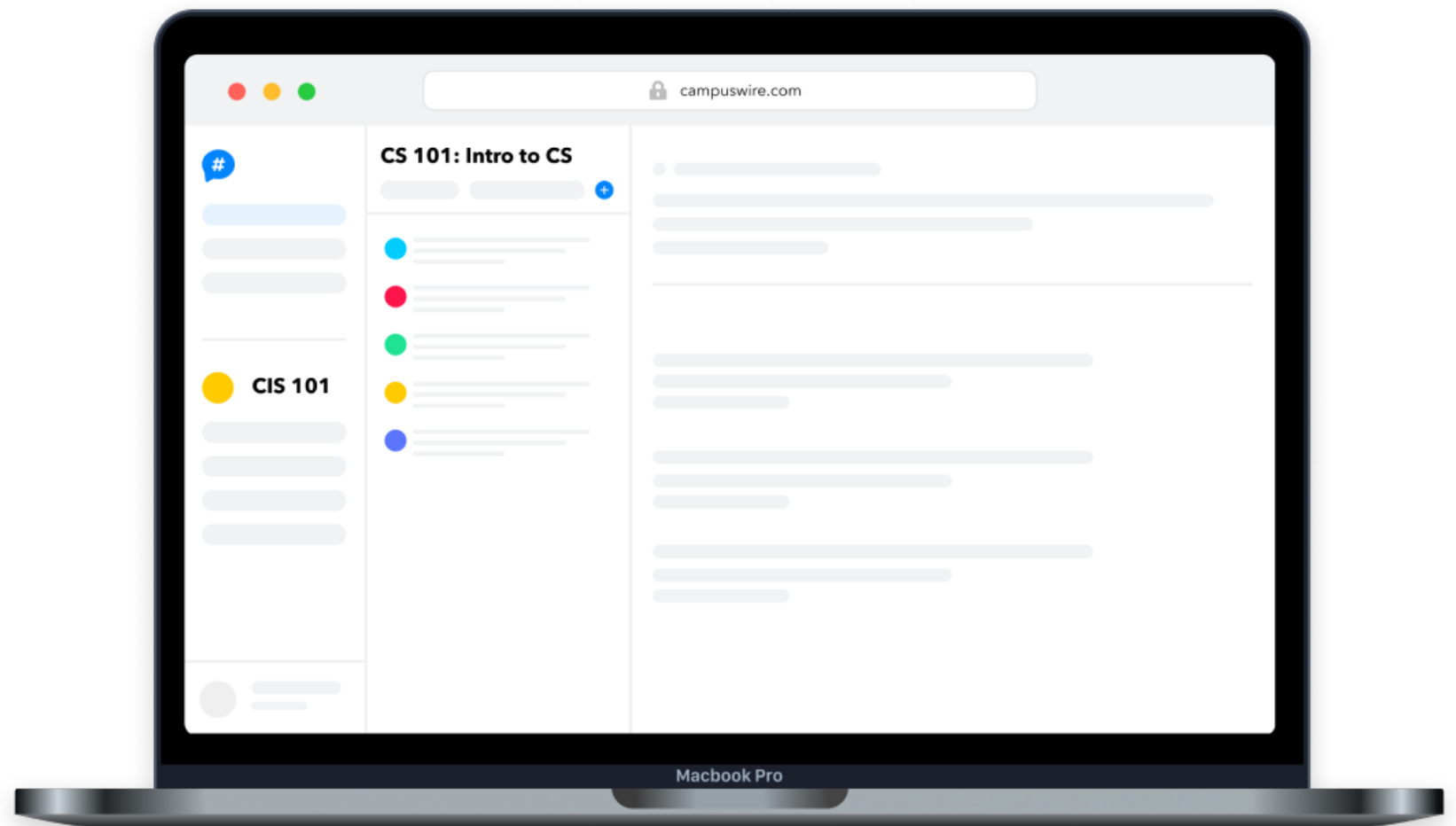- Proposal           (Nov 9; 10%)
- Presentation   (Dec 7; 20%)
- Paper                (Dec 17; 25%

# Campuswire

**Campuswire**

- All communication should take place using the online tool <u>Campuswire</u>

- Feed: ask and answer questions

- DMs: communication with instructor and classmates

- Chatrooms: group discussions and other conversations

- Live sessions: class periods and help sessions

# Class period

## Mechanics

- *Live* discussions using Campuswire during scheduled class time*

- Slides, worksheets, and any other supplementary material posted ahead of time (linked from syllabus)

## Typical structure

- Begin with a short lecture (questions / discussion encouraged!)

- Break out into groups of ~5 to complete a short worksheet

- Reconvene as a class to discuss

## Help sessions / office hours

- Will schedule an optional weekly help session geared toward labs

- Open-door (no waiting room)

Photo: Chris Montgomery

\* rescheduling possible

## Reschedule?

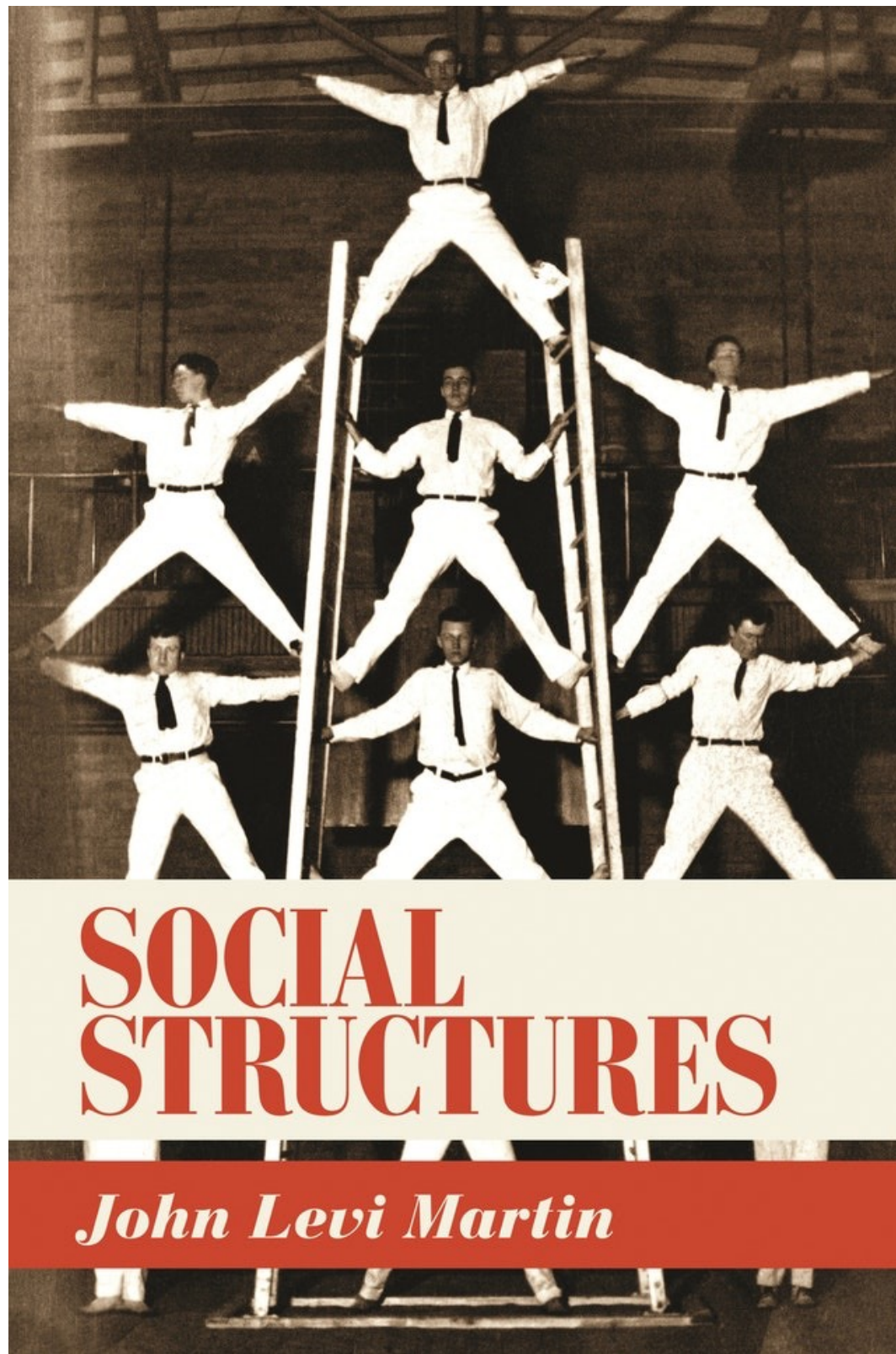Several students are in time zones west of Montreal, making the 8:30am meeting time difficult.

If we can find a time that works for everyone, *would you be open to rescheduling to a later time on Monday?*



Photo: Chris Montgomery

**A) Yes, meeting a few hours later on Mondays would be fine.**

**B) No, I would rather stick with the 8:30am meeting time.**

# Social Structures



**SOCIAL STRUCTURES**

*John Levi Martin*

## Martin (2009), Chapter 1
- Heavy-duty theory
(perhaps a bit much for first class)

## Motivation for inclusion
- Provide a *starting point* for understanding social structure in relation to other sociological concepts like institutions, roles, status, culture, …
- Situates *social structures* as related to, but *distinct from, social networks*

## One perspective
- Martin's take is common, but not universal
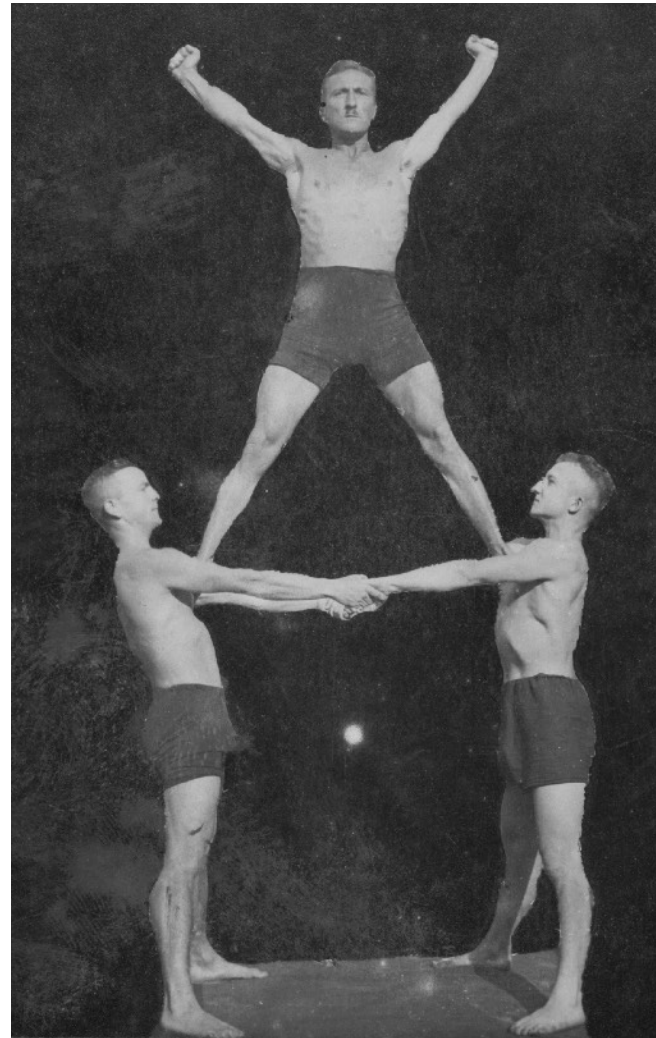- In particular, insistence that social structures involve *people* is theoretically convenient but limiting

# Some themes

Structure is actively created through interaction *AND* encountered as constraining, external "fact"

Structure has more to do with *relationships* (tendencies toward interaction) than *roles* (institutionalized expectations)

Local structures, as *specific* entities (based on relationships, rules, heuristics) imply something about global structures in *general*

## Weeden and Cornwell (2020)

Timely and (I hope) accessible article

Concrete example for some of the themes in Martin (2009)

Touches on many topics we'll cover later in the term:
*affiliation networks, visualization, small-world networks, centrality, …*
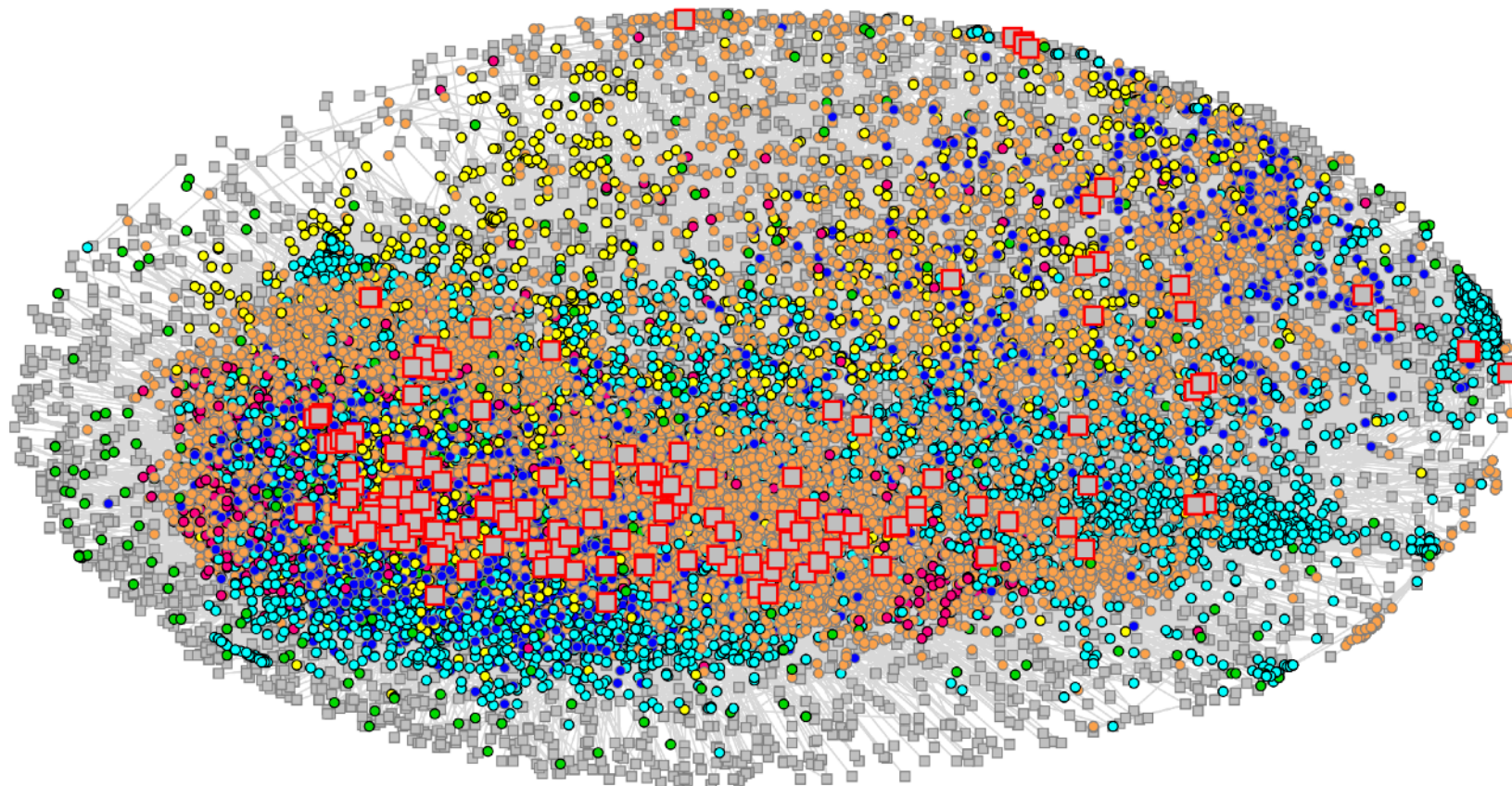


Figure 1 from Weeden and Cornwell (2020), *The Small-World Network of College Classes: Implications for Epidemic Spread on a University Campus*