



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultural Research: Methodology and Techniques

1920-2-E4001N115

Learning objectives

The course offers a set of analytical and conceptual tools, research methods and technics which allow the students to develop the basic skills for planning and carrying out empirical investigations on cultural topics and phenomena.

Contents

The course is divided into three parts: the first one is devoted to the study of some analytical key-concepts and categories, useful to identify and frame cultural objects, phenomena, documents and processes; the second part focuses on the main methods and technics of cultural researches dealt with from both a sociological and interdisciplinary perspective; the third part is centered on the in-depth analysis of specific fields of the cultural research.

Detailed program

The course is structured in three parts. In the first part the course provides some analytical and conceptual key-categories for identifying and analyzing cultural objects, phenomena and texts to use in the different research phases. Through the critical reading of sociological and cultural science texts the students will get an overview of the main orientations in the study of cultural questions, from the semiotic to the praxeological one. More specifically, the students will deal with the relationship between the social and the cultural structures; the processes of production, reception and circulation of ideas, cultural texts and objects; the building of idioculture and

(sub)cultural identities, by paying particular attention to the spatial-temporal dimension and embodiment dynamics. In the second part the students will be introduced to the main methods and techniques of qualitative research such as narrative interviews, life stories, (auto)biographic methods; participant observation sensory ethnography in the physical and virtual spaces, applied to the investigation of cultural objects, text and phenomena. The aim of this approach is to highlight the nexus between empirical research and theorization in the different research phases, from the choice of the research object to the data analysis, the coding and the communication/writing of the research outputs. In the third part the students will deal with specific issues of the cultural research, among those the memory dynamics and conflicts; the spatialization processes in the (urban) places and the signification of life places; body narratives and biographies, the production, circulation and reception of knowledge and cultural objects. These issues are tackled through classroom exercises, the discussion on specific case studies, the analysis of cultural texts and objects.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of the qualitative research methods and main topics of cultural sociology

Teaching methods

Lectures; seminars; lab sessions on audio-visual materials; presentations and group projects

Assessment methods

To be considered an attending student, it is necessary to carry out at least four exercises before the date of the exam. The exercises are available at the website of the teaching course

Attending students can choose between writing a research report or project and being tested on the topics covered by the program of the teaching course. For the first two exam sessions the exam will concern only the first part of the program.

All the students have to register for the exam at the earliest date of each exam session (04/06/2020; 02/07/2020; 10/09/2020)

Exam Sessions:

04/06/2020

09/06/2020 - students who present their research report or project

02/07/2020

09/07/2020 - students who present their research report or project

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17/09/2020 - students who present their research report or project

The aim of the exam is to assess:

- the comprehension degree of the issues dealt within the course
- the knowledge degree of the issues dealt within the course
- the argumentative skills
- the clarity of exposition
- the accuracy of sociological terminology

The participation in tutorial classes and in not compulsory homework counts towards the final mark, according to the criteria mentioned above.

As an alternative to the written exam, attending students can develop and carry out a research project that will be assessed through a research report and the oral exposition of the research outputs. The research report may be the result of a team project work, but the contribution of each student has to be specified.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For attending and non-attending students the reading material is available at the 'Copisteria Fronteretro', Viale Sarca 191. This includes:

reading assignments:

- Grüning, B. e Santoro, M. 'La cultura' in T. Grande, and E. Parini (eds.), *Sociologia*
- Geertz, C. 'Note sul combattimento dei Galli a Bali' in *Interpretazione di culture*
- Bourdieu, P. 'Spazio sociale e spazio simbolico' in *Ragioni Pratiche*
- Bourdieu, P. 'Il capitale culturale' in M. Santoro (ed.) *Forme di capitale*
- Swidler, A. 'La cultura in azione' in M. Santoro and R. Sassatelli (eds.), *Studiare la cultura*
- Griswold, W. 'La cultura e il diamante culturale' in *Sociologia della cultura*
- Willis, P., 'Common culture' (cap. 3, 4, 5)
- Fine, A. 'Piccoli gruppi e creazione culturale' in M. Santoro and R. Sassatelli (eds.), *Studiare la cultura*
- Alasuutari, P. 'Theorizing in qualitative research'
- Cresswell, J.W., *Research Design* (cap. I)
- Semi, G. *L'Osservazione partecipante* (par. 1.1, 2.1., 2.4., 3.1.)
- Heatcote, A. 'Interrupted research: Emotions, sense and social space in (and out of) the field', in S. R. Hemer and A. Dundon (eds.), *Emotions, Senses, Spaces*
- Demazière, G. and C. Dubar, C. *Dentro le storie* (I parte)

- Plummer, K. *Documents of life* (cap. 6,7,8)
- Stanley, L. 'On auto/biography in sociology'
- Lamerichs, N. 'Traditional and Digital Fieldwork', in Id. *Productive Fandom*

For non-attending students (in addition): G. Semi (2010), *L'osservazione partecipante*, Bologna: Il Mulino

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- Weber, M., *La scienza come professione*
 - Bourdieu, P. *et al.*, 'La costruzione dell'oggetto', in *Il mestiere di sociologo*
 - Kelle, U. 'The Development of Categories: Different approaches in grounded theory', in A. Bryant and K. Charmaz (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*
 - Willis, P., 'Lavoro simbolico e immaginazione etnografica', interview of M. Santoro and R. Sassatelli
 - Grüning, B. 'Appendice autoetnografica', in *Atmosfere locali*
 - Grüning, B. 'Beyond the cold war: the reception of Arendt in Germany and Italy'
 - Cardano, M. '«E poi cominciai a sentire le voci...». Narrazioni del male mentale'
 - Grazian, D. 'Urban Nightlife, Social Capital and the Public Life of Cities'
 - Wacquant, L. 'The pugilistic point of view'
 - Green, I.A. *et al.* 'Space, Place and Sexual Sociality: Towards an 'Atmospheric Analysis''
 - Said, A. 'We ought to be here: Historicizing space and mobilization in Tahir Square'
 - Podoshen, J. S. *et al.* 'Theoretical reflections on dystopian consumer culture: Black Metal'
 - Young, J. E. 'The counter-Monument'
 - Haworth-Hoppner, S. e Maines, D. 'A Sociological account of Invalidated anorexic Identities'
 - Schott, N.D. *et al.* 'Neoliberalism, Pro-Ana/mia websites, and pathologizing women'
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