COURSE SYLLABUS

Ethics of Relationship. Theory and Practice

1920-2-F8501R035

Course title

Vulnerability as a social and human category: its pedagogical meaning

Topics and course structure

Educational action daily encounters situations of vulnerability. Pedagogical thinking must therefore engage with the phenomenon of vulnerability and explore its various dimensions. Vulnerability is a characteristic of the human being, which is related to our existential finitude, but also, similarly to fragility and precarity, related to groups and social settings, and finally even prompts questions that concern the political sphere. How may we interpret it? How can we recognize it? How must we take it into account in our educational work? Today more than ever, education practitioners need to be deeply aware of the importance and urgency of the issue of vulnerability at multiple levels.

Objectives

The aim of this course in relational ethics is to provide the student with the theoretical tools required to read educational phenomena and relationships – with educational consultancy and coordination roles in mind – and with a focus on ethics.

Specific learning objectives:
1. Knowledge and understanding of the main theoretical models explored during the course.

2. Independent critical reflection on course contents.

3. Ability to apply course knowledge and models to specific situations and contexts

Methodologies

Introductory lectures and discussions on the course’s key themes and theoretical bases; guided analysis of the course books; active learning sessions/workshops based on audio-visual materials and worksheets; joint recap sessions based on outlines presented in PowerPoint or guest lectures.

Online and offline teaching materials

Course books, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets and other documents for individual exercises and group work, audio-visual materials.

Programme and references for attending students

1. After an introductory presentation of the different meanings of the concept of vulnerability, the course begins with an exploration of the structural dimensions of vulnerability in the field of education, drawing on the work of Luigina Mortari and presenting and discussing documentary materials in the classroom.

2. Second, a range of interpretative approaches to vulnerability will be examined, drawing on critical essays by American philosopher Judith Butler on the connections between vulnerability, recognition and misrecognition. How are conditions of vulnerability generated? Why are they frequently not recognized and what action do we need to take in relation to them?

3. Third, we discuss Levinas’ theory about the relationship between vulnerability and human condition: still before the political level, at the level of intersubjective relationships and, therefore, the ethical level. How, ambiguously, does our encounter with the other wound us and, at the same time, deliver us from our narcissistic self-isolation?

Bibliography

**Programme and references for non-attending students**

1. After an introductory presentation of the different meanings of the concept of vulnerability, the course begins with an exploration of the structural dimensions of vulnerability in the field of education, drawing on the work of Luigina Mortari and presenting and discussing documentary materials in the classroom.

2. Second, a range of interpretative approaches to vulnerability will be examined, drawing on critical essays by American philosopher Judith Butler on the connections between vulnerability, recognition and misrecognition. How are conditions of vulnerability generated? Why are they frequently not recognized and what action do we need to take in relation to them?

3. Third, we discuss Levinas' theory about the relationship between vulnerability and human condition: still before the political level, at the level of intersubjective relationships and, therefore, the ethical level. How, ambiguously, does our encounter with the other wound us and, at the same time, deliver us from our narcissistic self-isolation?

**Bibliography**


E. Levinas, *Umanesimo dell'altro uomo*, il Melangolo, Genova 1985, only pages 115-138 (tot. 23 pages).


**Assessment methods**
Attending students: oral exam.

Assessment will consist of a final oral examination of the student’s knowledge of the course material (required reading) and the topics discussed in class. The examiner will evaluate candidates’ ability to critically analyze, rework, and apply the philosophical categories studied.

More specifically, in relation to the criteria laid down in the official annual course description (SUA_Cds):

- With respect to Organizing knowledge of multiple theoretical models, methods and instruments, the oral examiner will ask candidates questions designed to verify their knowledge of the theoretical models presented during the course.

- With respect to Analyzing, understanding and interpreting problems affecting educational settings, the oral examiner will verify candidates’ ability to read and interpret, in light of the models presented during the course, concrete problems, situations, and settings, by inviting them to discuss case studies analyzed in class or their own experience in the education sector.

- With respect to Preparing for educational consultancy, in the course of the oral examination, the examiner will assess candidates’ awareness of the complexity of consultancy practice and their ability to reflect on and rework associated meanings and problems.

Non-attending students: oral exam.

As above, except that the questions will evaluate the student’s knowledge of the prescribed reading materials without reference to the additional analysis conducted in class.

Office hours

Prof. Vergani receives students on Wednesdays from 12.30 to 14.30. Tel. 4896 U6 4th Floor, Room 4146 (students requiring an appointment should request it in advance via email). Routine information may be requested via email, or before or after classes.
Programme validity

The current programme is valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants