



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Sociological Theory and Social Change

2021-1-E4001N070

Learning objectives

The aim of the course is to introduce students to classic authors of sociological thought and their theories, and to essential concepts related to social structure. Special attention will be devoted to issues of social change and social inequality.

Students are required to learn the founding concepts of sociological thinking and, by the end of the course, should be able to apply those concepts to the investigation of contemporary society. In addition, students should be able to recognise different forms of sociological research.

Contents

The module introduces key concepts of sociological analysis and founding authors of the discipline (Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and Parsons).

The course presents the classic themes of sociological research (action and interaction, institutions, reproduction and social change), while illustrating different research approaches and the connections between sociology and other disciplines.

Finally, the theme of social inequality is widely explored.

Detailed program

In the first classes, students are introduced to sociological thought and to the analyses of the historical and social conditions contributing to its development. Also highlighted is that sociology, since its beginning, has become extremely diverse, with several analytical approaches having evolved, and has overlapped with other related disciplines.

The course then focusses on classic authors of sociological theory (Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and Parsons), highlighting the different ways in which they tackle the theme of social structure and related concepts: reproduction, change, order, institutions, conflict.

In the following part of the course, issues examined by contemporary sociological research are discussed, i.e. organisations, life courses, education, economy and work. The theme of social inequality will be explored in greater depth in the final part of the course, paying particular attention to social stratification and its reproduction between generations.

Finally, students are required to read sociological articles published in research journals, having the opportunity to experience examples of different forms of sociological research (adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods).

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of modern history.

Teaching methods

Lectures, discussions and guided analysis of research articles written by contemporary Italian authors

Assessment methods

Written exam based on multiple choice and essay questions. Multiple choice questions are aimed at verifying a student's knowledge of fundamental concepts. Essay questions (one about classic authors, one on a sociological topic and one about the article chosen by each student) are aimed at examining students' skills in developing autonomous reflections based on ideas learned during the course. After the written exam, it is possible to take an additional oral exam - upon request of the student or course leader. In this case, the oral exam's mark contributes

to the final mark (potentially either raising or lowering).

Due to Covid-19 emergency, written exams will be held on Moodle and oral exams on the WebEx platform. A link to the WebEx room will be displayed on the course's elearning webpage.

Students behaving suspiciously during the written exam will be called to sustain a mandatory oral exam additional to the written one.

Students enrolled before 2019/2020 and choosing to face the exam with professor Marchisio's program, will be called to sustain an oral exam and are required to previously inform about their choice.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Arnaldo Bagnasco, Marzio Barbagli e Alessandro Cavalli, "Corso di Sociologia", Il Mulino: Bologna 2012 (Introduction, chapters: 2; 3; 4 – excluding par. 2 and 5; 5; 6 – excluding par. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 11 – excluding par. 3; 12 – excluding par. 4; 13 – excluding par. 1, 2 and 3; 14 – excluding par. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; 15; 17 – excluding par. 1; 18 – excluding par. 6 and 7; 19 – excluding par. 4 and 5; 22 – excluding par. 1, 2 and 3.2; 24 – excluding par. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

Paolo Jedlowski, "Il mondo in questione. Introduzione alla storia del pensiero sociologico", Carocci: Roma 2009 (chapters 3, 4, 5, 6)

Arnaldo Bagnasco, "Prima lezione di sociologia", Laterza: Bari-Roma 2015 (chapter 4 – Generi sociologici)

An article chosen by the student from those proposed in class (the list will be made available on elearning.unimib.it and may also be requested from the teacher).
