



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Networks and Social Capital

2021-2-E1601N092

Learning objectives

The course is structured into five sections and its overall objective is to highlight the importance of social relations and networks in socio-economic phenomena. The assumption is that we cannot understand socio-economic phenomena without taking into account the social relations that constitute and shape them.

The specific objectives to reach are:

- 1) understanding the theoretical assumptions of any analysis of social networks and social capital;
- 2) understanding the main empirical concepts for the analysis of social networks and social capital;
- 3) applying those concepts into real life phenomena.

To fulfil the first objective, students are asked to watch lessons and studying the handbooks and scientific articles indicated in the sections 'Detailed Program' and 'Bibliography'.

The achievement of the second objective requires participation, the reading of the handbooks, and practice with specific software (Ucinet or Gephi).

The achievement of the third objective, requires participation, studying the handbooks, and participate to team-work.

Contents

During the first section of the course, students will become familiar with the relational approach and the concept of embeddedness.

In the second part of the course, students will be introduced to the main theoretical traditions on social networks in the study of economic and social phenomena. In particular, we will discuss the psycho-sociological school, the Anthropological Manchester School, and the Harvard School (which developed the structural network analysis).

Over the third part, students will be presented the main methodological concepts for network analysis (dyad, triad, homophily, largeness, density, intermediation, etc.). Lessons will be aimed at understanding the use of a specific SNA software (Ucinet and/or Gephi) .

During the fourth part of the course, students will learn the basic ideas and concepts of the Organizational Network Analysis, also with some team work.

In the fifth part, we will analyse the concept of social capital and its relation with the concept of network (Coleman, Putnam, Burt, Lin). We will draw attention on the operationalisation of the concept and its application to the analysis of the labour market, enterprises, and local socio-economic systems.

Detailed program

The course is structured into five sections.

Week 1: We will clarify some concepts such as social capital, and networks providing the basis for the understanding of the course. We will deepen the relational approach and the embeddedness concept with the criticism to the individual rational actor and the norms based individual actor. This part is particularly relevant because it lays the foundations for understanding the entire course.

Week 2: We will address the importance of considering relationships between individuals, and among groups to understand the economic outcomes of individual behaviours. Particular attention will be given to the experiments of Elton Mayo. We will then consider the Anthropological School of Manchester.

Week 4: We will address the concepts of: node, direct, indirect relationship, Dyad, triad, homophilia, size, density, weak tie, strong tie, structural hole, popularity, centrality, multiplicity, cohesion.

Week 5: How to use these concepts with the software Ucinet or Gephi

Week 8 The macro approach to social capital, with reference to Putnam. Local development and SC with particular reference to the Italian industrial districts and their transformations.

Conclusions of the course

Prerequisites

The knowledge of English is the only pre-require.

Teaching methods

In the Covid period, the course includes both synchronous and asynchronous lessons.

Assessment methods

The course includes two assessments methods