UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Psychology of Social Influences

2122-2-F9201P021

Learning area

2: Social psychology, economic psychology and decision-making

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- The theoretical and methodological foundations of the psychology of social influences.
- The different forms of social influence.
- The social influence dynamics underlying individual and group decision-making processes.
- The areas and methods of application of the psychology of social influences.

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Knowing how to identify and deconstruct the different forms of social influence.
- Knowing how to apply social influence strategies to a variety of contexts (e.g., promotion of social change in groups and organizations, health and well-being, marketing).

- Know how to promote resistance to unwanted forms of social influence.

Contents

The course is divided into three thematic modules. One module focuses on the classics of social influence, considering direct forms (e.g. obedience) and indirect forms (e.g. conformism) of influence. The second module concerns the study of persuasion and the different strategies to implement and to resist to it. Finally, the third module deals with the study of antecedents (e.g. social isolation), mechanisms (e.g. emotions), and the areas of application (e.g. health, marketing, Internet) of social influence.

Detailed program

The main theoretical models of the psychology of social influences

The different forms of social influence

Direct and indirect forms of social influence

Informational and normative social influence

Influence of the majority and minority

The Robert Cialdini's approach: the six weapons of persuasion

The role of individual differences in social influence processes

The antecedents of social influence: uncertainty and social exclusion

The role of emotions in the processes of social influence

Reading social change: how to deconstruct the different forms of social influence

Promoting social change: methods and areas of application (e.g., health and marketing) of different forms of social influence

Resisting social influence: how to implement ways of resisting social influence processes

Social influence in the Internet age.

Prerequisites

No one in particular; although a good knowledge of the foundations of social psychology enables a more informed understanding of the course contents. In any case, in order to make the course accessible to everyone, the first lessons will be devoted to reviewing the fundamental concepts of the discipline.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods include the use of lectures, films, classroom discussions, and practical exercises. Smartphone apps (e.g., Socrative) that allow students to respond in real-time to open or closed questions will be used. All course material (e.g., slides, readings) are made available on the e-learning website of the course so that also non-attending students can use it.

Attending students are given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the course contents through two main practical activities. The first concerns the ability to apply the strategies of persuasion from the perspective of Robert Cialdini. The second gives each group the chance to consider one of the proposed chapters of the "Oxford Handbook of Social Influence" and present it to the class using slides, films, and discussions with the classroom, under the supervision of the teacher.

Lessons will be held in presence unless further COVID-19-related restrictions are imposed.

Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.

Assessment methods

The exam consists of an oral test. Questions are aimed at assessing the effective acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply them to social reality. The answers to each question will be evaluated in terms of correctness of the answers, argumentative capacity, synthesis, ability to form links among the different areas, and the ability to critically present the phenomena. Attending students will be able to practice the topics of the exam during the course. Participation in the optional activities proposed during the course (see teaching methods) also contributes to the final evaluation (0-2 points).

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1 Aronson, E. (2006). L'animale sociale. Apogeo Editore (relativamente ai capitoli 1, 2 e 3 - da pag. 1 a pag. 113).

2 Cialdini, R. B. (2010). Le armi della persuasione. Giunti Editore.

3 Harkins, S. G, Williams, K. D., & Burger, J. (2017). The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. Di questo volume saranno considerati solamente i cinque capitoli riportati di seguito:

Hales, A. H., Ren, D., & Williams, K. D. (2017). Protect, Correct, and Eject: Ostracism as a Social Influence Tool. In The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. (Cap. 11)

van Kleef, G. (2017). Emotions as Agents of Social Influence: Insights From Emotions as Social Information Theory. In The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. (Cap. 13)

Martin, Leslie R., and M. Robin DiMatteo. (2017). Social Influence and Health. In The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. (Cap. 20)

Kirmani, A., & Ferraro, R. (2017). Social Influence in Marketing: How Other People Influence Consumer Information Processing and Decision Making. In The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. (Cap. 22)

Sagarin, B. J. & Henningsen, M. L. M. (2017). Resistance to Influence. In The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence. Oxford University Press. (Cap. 23).