UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Psychology of Culture

2122-3-E1901R083

Course title

Psychology of culture

Topics and course structure

The aim of the course is to identify the key theoretical categories in making sense of culture - and its effects on basic psychological processes (i.e., cognition, emotion, communication). Overcoming the traditional nature-nurture dichotomy, the current co-evolutionary perspective between biology (“nature”) and environment (“culture”) will first be outlined. A number of diverse theoretical perspectives on the conceptualization of culture and its possible effects will then be sketched out, keeping in focus the ongoing transition from structure to process models in the modeling of culture dynamics (that is, from a view on culture as consensual, enduring, and context-general to perspectives that take culture to be more fragmented, fluctuating, and context-specific). Specific attention will be devoted to cultural learning, biculturalism and intercultural processes.

Bicultural individuals are those who, through enduring exposure to at least two cultures, have come to possess systems of meaning and practices of both cultures, and can therefore alternate and switch between them depending on the cultural cues available in the immediate context. Besides deepening how biculturals (individuals with a bicultural mind) show a better psychological adjustment to a variety of situations than monoculturals, the multi-bicultural mind approach, within the expert-novice dynamics of cultural transmission and appropriation, will supply an articulated milieu apt to address the “why” and “how” (besides only “what”) questions and answers in the managing of educational challenges within and across cultures.

The course will be structured as follow:

Culture as a perspective on reality.

Culture as a distinctive feature of the human species (from an evolutionary and ontogenetic standpoint).

The pathways through which culture operates: culture as mediation, culture as meaning participation, cultural transmission and cultural appropriation (the expert-novice dynamics).

At the root of cultural diversities: why are there different cultures. Cultural diversities and their dynamic, relationship-featured configuration.

How cultures shape cognitive processes (categorization processes, forms of reasoning), emotional processes (in generating emotional experiences, in expressing emotions through facial expressions, voice, and words, in action tendencies), pragmatic processes (from greetings to conversation management, to expressing and detecting lies), social processes (in how negotiation is conducted, how cooperation takes place, and their impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships).

How cultures can be “translated” one into in the other: requirements, unpackaging processes, and educational opportunities.

Multiculturalisms, multicultural individuals and multicultural mind.

Fostering the education of a bicultural mind, bicultural mind in face-to-face contexts.

Objectives

The course targets the following aims:

- knowledge of the most relevant theoretical conceptualizations and methods of analysis of culture;

- application of theoretical knowledge on culture and of methods for its analysis to the domain of education and training;

- knowledge of benchmarks in designing educational activities for the management of intercultural processes;

- working knowledge in identifying and analyzing cultural phenomena in education and training domains;

- working knowledge in designing educational and training interventions aimed at fostering the appropriation of multiple cultural interpretative frames

Methodologies

Traditional learning through academic lessons will be bridged with learning-by-doing experiences (participatory appropriation approach) specifically designed and targeted to the domains involved (situated learning).

Online and offline teaching materials

Programme and references for attending students

Anolli, L. (2011). La sfida della mente multiculturale. Nuove forme di convivenza [The multicultural mind as a challenge. Novel trajectories for living together]. Milano: Cortina.

Papers/book chapters (will be downloadable from moodle). One among the following :

Anolli, L. (2006). Il bambino: da organismo biologico a soggetto culturale. In: La mente multiculturale. Bari: Laterza.

Anolli, L.M. (2011). La mente biculturale: il prossimo "salto in avanti" della specie umana?. GIORNALE ITALIANO DI PSICOLOGIA, 38(3), 533-546.

Anolli, L.M. (2003). Significato modale e comunicazione non verbale. Articolo bersaglio. GIORNALE ITALIANO DI PSICOLOGIA, 3, 453-525.

Students who don't speak Italian can agree with the teacher an Engish bibliography.

Programme and references for non-attending students

Anolli, L. (2011). La sfida della mente multiculturale. Nuove forme di convivenza [The multicultural mind as a challenge. Novel trajectories for living together]. Milano: Cortina.

Papers/book chapters (will be downloadable from the e-learning page of the course):

Anolli, L. (2006). Il bambino: da organismo biologico a soggetto culturale. In: La mente multiculturale. Bari: Laterza.

Anolli, L.M. (2011). La mente biculturale: il prossimo "salto in avanti" della specie umana?. GIORNALE ITALIANO DI PSICOLOGIA, 38(3), 533-546.

Anolli, L.M. (2003). Significato modale e comunicazione non verbale. Articolo bersaglio. GIORNALE ITALIANO DI PSICOLOGIA, 3, 453-525.

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Assessment methods

Written examination with open questions.

Oral examination will be integrated to written test only on demand (by students or by the teacher).

Office hours

Tuesday h. 14.30-16.30, fixed by mail at: valentino.zurloni@unimib.it

Programme validity

Two years

Course tutors and assistants