UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

# SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

## Culture e Società delle Americhe

**2122-2-F0101R068**

### Course title

Cultures and Societies of the Americas

### Topics and course structure

The course will analyse the social construction of the categories of "land/territory", "ethnicity/race" and "nature/environment" in Brazil, paying particular attention to the Amazon area, but also drawing appropriate links with other North and South American contexts. . It will discuss not only the political role that these concepts assume in the identity and territorial claims of indigenous peoples and quilombolas (predominantly rural communities of descendants of African slaves), but also some characteristic features of the cosmologies of these groups.

The course is composed of three main tjemait cores:

1. First, the so-called "indigenous question" will be reconstructed, with emphasis on the anthropological theories developed to interpret it. We will also discuss the social role of anthropologists in the territorial claims of indigenous peoples.

2. Secondly, we will analyse the way in which the "racial" question (on the one hand, the ideology of racial democracy and mestizaje; on the other hand, the policies of "whitening") has taken shape in Brazil, comparing it with the case of the United States. We will then see how it has been intertwined with the territorial claims of the quilombolas. Finally, we will mention the theme of socio-environmental justice.

3. Finally, starting from an anthropological deconstruction of the nature-culture dichotomy, we will show how the sense of belonging to a territory is closely linked to specific local cosmologies that imply contextually variable ways of conceiving the relationship between the human and non-human worlds. These issues will be discussed starting from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism and Philppe Descola's ontologies, in dialogue with more recent multispecies approaches.

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## Objectives

Students are expected to acquire specific knowledge about ethno-racial and territorial issues that characterize the Brazilian context, learning to draw appropriate connections with cultural, social and political dynamics that characterize the rest of the continent. They will also acquire specific expertise on Amazonian cosmologies and the main theories developed to interpret them.

## Methodologies

Lectures and class discussions, with eventual use audio-visual materials.

## Online and offline teaching materials

## Programme and references for attending students

**1.** With regard to **points 1 and 2** (see "Topics and structure of the course"): **notes**, a **selection of articles** that will be provided by the lecturer during the course, and the text **Tassan M., Amazzonia Incantata** (see below).

**2.** With regard to **point 3** (see "Topics and structure of the course"), the following texts are compulsory:

- **Descola P.**, 2021, *Oltre natura e cultura*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina. Solo le parti di seguito indicate: Introduzione; Parte prima: cap. 1, cap. 2; Parte seconda: cap. 4, cap. 5; Parte terza: cap. 6, cap. 8, cap 9, cap. 10; Parte quarta: cap. 11.
- **Kohn E.**, 2021, *Come pensano le foreste*, Milano, Nottetempo.
- **Tassan M.**, 2017, *Amazzonia incantata. Luoghi, corpi e malattie in una comunità afro-discendente del Brasile*, Roma, CISU.

Unless otherwise indicated the book should be read in its entirety.

Erasmus students can contact Dr. Tassan to define a programme exclusively in English.

## Programme and references for non-attending students

**1.** With regard to **points 1 and 2** (see "Topics and structure of the course"): a **selection of articles** that will be provided by the lecturer during the course, and the text **Tassan M., Amazzonia Incantata** (see below).

**2.** With regard to **point 3** (see "Topics and structure of the course"), the following texts are compulsory:

- **Descola P.**, 2021, *Oltre natura e cultura*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina. Solo le parti di seguito indicate: Introduzione; Parte prima: cap. 1, cap. 2; Parte seconda: cap. 4, cap. 5; Parte terza: cap. 6, cap. 8, cap 9, cap. 10; Parte quarta: cap. 11.
- **Kohn E.**, 2021, *Come pensano le foreste*, Milano, Nottetempo.
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**Non-attending students are requested to contact the lecturer by email.**

## Assessment methods

Oral examination. Attending and non-attending students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the contents of the course. They should also be able to draw connections among different topics and to analyse them critically.

The exam can be performed in English by foreign/Erasmus students.

## Office hours

On appointment by e-mail.

## Programme validity

Two academic years. This means that this programme is valid from the summer session (June and July) of 2022 until the winter session (January and February) of 2024.

## Course tutors and assistants

Dott. Marco Antonio Ribeiro Vieira Lima.