UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultures and Societies of The Pacific

2122-2-F0101R029

Course title

Pacific cultures and societies

Topics and course structure

The societies inhabiting the Pacific ocean are increasingly attracting the international attention. While climate change and sea level rise are tackling the Pacific Islands' populations vulnerability, indigenous intellectuals are playing a role in rethinking their sovereignty and peripherization by activating a pan-pacific methodological decolonization process. Through contextually different epithets (“the blue continent”, “onesolwara”, “one salt water”, etc.) the inhabitants of Oceania are reinforcing their interconnected political position within the world theater and activating creative forms of memory restoration. Subdivided by the first explores and the colonizers into Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, a division which still influences the European knowledge of the area, the Pacific Islands are reshaping a map of connections between culturally different insular contexts.

The course aims, in the first place, at providing an overall frame of the heterogeneity of the Pacific insular context, and at offering to students the instruments to decodify the complexity of the cultural oceanian context through:

a. A first section dedicated to the most important theoretical reflections, both indigenous and western, regarding the definition of the Pacific and/or Oceania, the settlement of Oceania and the encounter with Europeans, themes that are still debated within the anthropological science

b. A second section dedicated to the presentation of ethnographies and main contemporary thematic crossroads around the Islands of Oceania, selected by theme and geographical area

Secondly, the course aims at presenting the oceanian perspective on wider themes -such as the nature-culture relationship; the visibile and invisible worlds interconnections; the gender relationships; exchange, trade and gift exchange; food and food sovereignty issue; kin relationships and hierarchies; ecological responsibility and resources exploitation; citizenship's local and global policies; mobility, migrations and diasporas- in order to provide

students with a view on different models of humanity which offer a new interpretation of global phenomena.

Objectives

The course, thanks to an active participation of students, aims at promoting the following learning objectives:

Knowledge and comprehension: students will acquire in-depth knowledge on the main authors, concepts and debates of the anthropology of Oceania

Capacity to apply knowledge and comprehension: through the study of ethnographies and of the indigenous intellectual thought students will develop their critical thinking and context analysis on current issues which go beyond the Pacific area

Objectives of the course are also the strengthening of the autonomy of thought, of the communication skills, and critical thinking.

Methodologies

Lessons will be in person. If new restrictions will occur, classes will be held online.

The screening of audio-visuals, such as anthropological documentaries specific to the area, will be integrating the course, as well as PPTs to back teaching.

Online and offline teaching materials

All the teaching materials will be uploaded online

Programme and references for attending students

Students will be asked to read the following texts and articles:

1. Hau'ofa E., 1993, “Our sea of islands”, *A new Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands*, in We Are the Ocean, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, pp. 2-16

2. Cottino G., 2014, “Obesity ‘epidemic’ in the Kingdom of Tonga: critical notes on the right body size“, in *Le Journal des anthropologues*, 138-139: 65-87, 2014

3. Gnecchi Ruscone L., Paini A. (eds.), 2017, Tides of Innovation in Oceania, Anu Press (**Introduction**)

4. Jolly M., Tcherkezoff S., Tryon D. (eds.), 2009, Oceanic Encounters, Anu Press (**Introduction**)

Articles chosen within (to be agreed by the professor):

1. Gnecchi Ruscone L., Paini A. (eds.), 2017, Tides of Innovation in Oceania, ANU Press

2. Jolly M., Tcherkezoff S., Tryon D. (eds.), 2009, Oceanic Encounters, ANU Press

Or, alternatively, a monography to be chosen among (to be agreed by the professor):

1. Besnier N., 2011, On the edge of the global: modern anxieties in a Pacific Island Nation, Standford University Press

2. Small C., 1997, Voyages. From Tongan Villages to American suburbs, Cornell University Press

3. Gewertz D., Herrington F., 2010 Cheap meat. Flap food nations in the Pacific Islands, California University Press

Programme and references for non-attending students

Students will be asked to read the following texts and articles:

1. Hau'ofa E., 1993, “Our sea of islands”, *A new Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands*, in We Are the Ocean, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, pp. 2-16

2. Favole A., Giordana L., Islands of islands: responses to the center-periphery fractal model in East Futuna (Wallis and Futuna) and the Belep Islands (New Caledonia), Island Studies journal 13 (1): 209-222

3. Cottino G., 2014, “Obesity ‘epidemic’ in the Kingdom of Tonga: critical notes on the right body size“, in *Le Journal des anthropologues*, 138-139: 65-87, 2014

4. Gnecchi Ruscone L., Paini A. (eds.), 2017, Tides of Innovation in Oceania, Anu Press (**Introduction**)

5. Jolly M., Tcherkezoff S., Tryon D. (eds.), 2009, Oceanic Encounters, Anu Press (**Introduction**)

6. Tabutaulaka T., 2015, Re-presenting Melanesia. Ignoble savages and Melanesian alter-natives, in Hvding E., White G. (eds.) 2015, Pacific Alternatives. Cultural politics in contemporary Oceania, Sean Kingston Publishing

Articles chosen within (to be agreed by the professor):

1. Gnecchi Ruscone L., Paini A. (eds.), 2017, Tides of Innovation in Oceania, ANU Press

2. Jolly M., Tcherkezoff S., Tryon D. (eds.), 2009, Oceanic Encounters, ANU Press

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1. Besnier N., 2011, On the edge of the global: modern anxieties in a Pacific Island Nation, Standford University Press

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3. Gewertz D., Herrington F., 2010 Cheap meat. Flap food nations in the Pacific Islands, California University Press

Assessment methods

- Final exam: oral
- Evaluation criteria: students' knowledge of the concepts and foundational authors of the discipline, comprehension of the main conceptual issues, the familiarity with theoretical debates and the capacity to actively employ acquired knowledge will be evaluated. Furthermore, the active participation to class debates and activities will be taken into account for the final grade.

Office hours

On appointment, online

Programme validity

Programs have a two year validity

Course tutors and assistants