UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Anthropology

2122-2-F0101R003

Course title

Power, the individual and society: an anthropology of freedom

Topics and course structure

Freedom is key-notion of past and present Western political thought, yet socio-cultural anthropology has never discussed it in ways comparable to other conceptual strong-holds of Western thought, like family, religion, and politics itself. Which are the reasons of this apparent disinterest? And what do we learn from the contributions available? Our discussion starts with an short introduction to political anthropology: origins, history and open questions. We will then look closely at anthropological contributions on freedom (and unfreedom) by considering both classic and contemporary authors who have turned their ethnographies into a critique of contemporary neo-liberal discourses. All along, we will try to understand how these anthropologists positioned themselves in front of the great historical junctures that marked their intellectual trajectories and personal lives. In this way, we will open a reflection on the civic and public role of anthropology. Particular attention will be devoted to the discourses and practices of freedom typical of the neo-liberal period (1980 to date)

Objectives

Knowledge and understanding:

Knowing a selection of key-topics and authors in the field of political anthropology; building up an anthropologically situated reflection on the idea of freedom, which accounts for the notions of power, individual and society.

Applied knowledge and understanding:
Being able to assess the political dimension in different domains of human experience, and to develop autonomous reflections that build on what students have learnt in class and through individual study.

Communication skills, learning abilities and the capacity of autonomous thought will be increased through discussions of theoretical and practical issues.

Methodologies

Lectures and seminaries; the materials uploaded on the moodle platform will help the discussion and strengthen what done in the classroom .

As the course advances, it is important to follow the evolution of the moodle platform.

Online and offline teaching materials

Programme and references for attending students

THIS PROGRAM IS MEANT ONLY FOR STUDENTS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ITALIAN (solo per studenti che non parlano l'italiano)

1- John Gledhill- Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics, London 2000

2- J. Goody, The Theft of History (2006)

3- Two books in the following list

Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim women need saving?* (2013)

Yarimar Bonilla, *Non-sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (2015).

Harri Englund, *Prisoners of Freedom* (2006).

Yarimar Bonilla, *Non-sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (2015).

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruin*s (2015).

Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the future tense* (2015).

James Ferguson, *Give a man a fish* (2015).

Programme and references for non-attending students

No difference from attending students (who do not speak Italian).

Assessment methods

Oral interview: through questions/answers I will verify that: 1) the students have studied all the materials assigned; 2) assessed the historical, geographical and anthropological details relevant to the discussion, 3) developed the capacity of autonomous thought.

Office hours

Starting from the second week of October, until the second week of December 2021, every Tuesday from 14-15 (through link sent via moddle)

Programme validity

Two years.

Course tutors and assistants

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