



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Family Counselling: Theory and Practice (blended)

2122-1-F8501R005

Course title

Families and institutional contexts: rights protection, participation and reflexivity

Topics and course structure

The course teaches to work with families and professionals in socioeducational agencies, schools and kindergartens, in order to promote the whole system's rights and wellbeing. We will consider the family as a network of complex interactions, that require observational, participatory and dialogic tools to be explored, accompanied, sustained and transformed. Working in a personalized and participatory way as a family consultant and co-designer, with the family and with a plurality of institutional actors requires communicational, relational, reflexive and research competences, entailing the capacity to take a mobile and aware critical positioning.

To this end, the course focuses on the development of **reflexive systemic competences** and demands the students' constant personal engagement in individual and group exercises, in order to develop critical reflection and reflexivity about one's own cultural frameworks, presuppositions and prejudices, using creative writing, autobiography, autoethnography, analogic and aesthetic languages, and critical dialogue.

Classes will be taught with a blended modality: asynchronous and synchronous, the latter will be recorded and uploaded in the Moodle platform.

Objectives

- main concepts of systems theory and their applications in education and counselling;

- learning from a systemic view: logical levels, transformation, structural coupling, collective mind;
- context analysis: the pedagogist's mandate, question, tasks, postures and relationships towards individuals/families, professionals, institutions, the professional community and knowing;
- reflexive analysis, in theory and practice, of a case study.

Skills:

- reading a situation with systemic lenses and methods;
- asking questions to open possibilities (e.g. during an interview or session);
- designing an intervention using aesthetic and reflexive practices (spiral model);
- teamwork to make hypotheses, critical analyses, challenge each other's perspectives, and co-design (v. case studies).

Competences:

- knowing how to act responsively in relation to the others and the here-and-now context;
- emotional self-awareness and reflexive positioning toward experience;
- learning to learn (transformative learning);
- caring (taking responsibility): for one's own work and learning, for the context, for oneself, the other, and the world (self-other-eco-education);
- transversal competences: language, writing, designing, ethical, relational, communicational.

Methodologies

The course applies a method for knowledge building based on students' experience and active exploration (learning by doing). Each topic is treated with (video)lectures, online activities, forums, and tasks to be delivered within established delays. Synchronous didactic is interactive and dialogical.

Online activities are tracked, to monitor students' work and give random general feedback (not personalized). The final outcome of teamwork (case study), that simulates real team functioning, will be presented at the end of the course to demonstrate the effective understanding and capacity of using the learned concepts.

To prepare the exam, each student is invited to create a portfolio of own activities, to be used in reconstructing what has been learnt, to the aim of. preparing the individual reflexive essay.

Online and offline teaching materials

Teaching materials are uploaded to the platform (video lectures, recorded lessons, readings, stories and film excerpts), some materials will be provided by the students themselves.

Programme and references for attending students

The course is in blended form, with 36 synchronous hours (in presence/webinars) and 20 hours of online asynchronous activities (videlectures, weekly tasks). All students (attending or not) are aggregated in teams. Non attending students who do not desire to be part of a group can signal it. The program and exam are identical and based on real competences that are demonstrated in the final essay and oral examination.

The course is divided in 3 parts:

A) **Introduction to the systemic approach**, exploration of topics and methods. Around 12 hours of (video)lectures, online propedeutical individual and group activities, 2 webinars.

B) **Reflexive competences: from practice to theory**: focused on 5 subcompetences linked to the systemic model (responsivity, relational reciprocity, creative management of conflict, multiplication of stories, the cycle of intervention). Around 32 hours of (video)lectures, online individual and group activities, 2 webinars.

C) **Team work on case studies**: group work, role playing and students' presentations with feedback and tutoring. Around 12 hours online activities. Closing and formative evaluation of the course in presence.

Study is done on books for the exam and readings uploaded in the Moodle platform. Students may propose an alternative program to the teacher. Standard program for the exam entails 2 books and at least 5 research papers (in Italiano and/or English).

Books (choose 2 among these or propose a valid alternative)

Formenti L. Formazione e trasformazione. Un modello complesso. Raffaello Cortina, 2017.

Sclavi M., Arte di ascoltare e mondi possibili. Come si esce dalle cornici di cui siamo parte, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2003.

Luraschi, S. Le vie della riflessività. Per una pedagogia del corpomente. Armando, 2021.

Secchi, G. Lavorare con le famiglie nelle comunità per minori, Erickson, 2015.

Formenti L. Re-inventare la famiglia. Guida teorico-pratica per i professionisti dell'educazione. Apogeo, 2012. (for those who did not attend Pedagogia della famiglia at Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione)

(more to be added)

Papers:

See the reference lists uploaded in the platform; besides, each student may look for other scientific sources to explore more deeply their own interests (this is a good practice for future learning). To allow personalization, it is possibile to agree motivated changes to the program with the teacher.

Programme and references for non-attending students

There is no difference in the program, bibliography or exam.

"Attending" students are those who attend at least the 60% of synchronous activities (in presence and webinars) and complete all the online activities (weekly tasks, group work).

Those who are unable to keep this constant rhythm of work can however follow the course with their own rhythms and use forums to exchange ideas and questions, read the materials and watch the recorded lessons. All the materials will be in the platform for at least one year.

Non attending students are self-directed learners; working alone makes it harder to achieve the objectives of the course. Reading books is not enough: it is necessary to appropriate them, to apply the ideas.

Assessment methods

What is a reflexive essay? _____

The essay, uploaded in the platform Moodle repository by 10 days before the exam session, receives a qualitative commentary and an evaluation of “competent/not competent” based on the course objectives. A “not competent” mark does not prevent from sustaining the oral examination, which is a discussion of the learning outcomes documented by the reflexive essay, and, if texts are insufficiently used inside the essay, some questions to assess study.

Evaluation is communicated online the day before the oral session. If a student decides to re-edit or re-write his/her text, he/she should discuss it during the oral session with the examiner.

The oral exam is a thorough discussion about the achieved learning outcomes and flares of the reflexive essay. All texts must be brought to the exam session.

Evaluation criteria: correctness and accuracy of the essay; knowledge and correct use of theories, within the essay and during the interview; conceptual clarity and richness of quotations from the texts; basic skills and competences in reading experience with systemic, critical and reflexive lenses in the essay and oral discussion.

The format of this exam is based on a pedagogical model coherent with the course, it aims at favoring personal learning, bridging theory and praxis, experience and the studied concepts, pushing to develop critical and (self)reflexive thinking. Besides, learning to write in a personal, grounded, and effective way is necessary for a professional in pedagogy.

Evaluation of the reflexive essay: it is an important educational moment, since it offers a realistic feedback about the achievement of the course objectives.

Warning: the reflexive essay is an academic text (argumentative style, correctly quoted sources, correct and complete footnotes, bibliography).

Features: 8-10 numbered pages, WORD FORMAT, free readable font, size 12, interline 1 e 1/2, margins 2,5 on all sides. Cover and bibliography do not count.

Cover page must contain: _____

The text can be enriched and personalized with images, graphics, poetic and literary inserts, etc. It must be accurate.

The upload is within 10 days before the exam session. The repository in Moodle is visible some days before the deadline.

WARNING: avoid e-mailing copies to the teacher.

Office hours

Prof. Formenti receives upon appointment, please write an e-mail.

Programme validity

Programmes' duration is 2 academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Tutors of the course: Silvia Luraschi, Alessandra Rigamonti and Federica Vergani, social pedagogists and external collaborators of the Department.

Their role is to help with teaching and follow the online activities; other collaborators are involved in didactic activities and act as external members of exam commissions:

- Andrea Prandin, social pedagogist, counsellor
 - Mara Pirotta, social pedagogist, traineeship tutor, workshop teacher
 - Silvia Pincioli, social pedagogist, trainer Lab'O, workshop teacher
 - Sonia Mastroeni, social pedagogist, coordinator
 - Ilaria Denti, social pedagogist
 - Valentina Calciano, social pedagogist, coordinator of Lab'O
 - Andrea di Martino, school teacher, expert of myths
 - Maddalena Rossi, school teacher, trainer
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