



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Cultural Research: Methodology and Techniques

2223-2-E4001N115

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#### Learning objectives

The course will offer a set of epistemological principles, conceptual tools, research methods and technics which allow the students both to develop the basic skills for projecting and carrying out empirical investigations on cultural topics, processes and phenomena and to investigate social questions, processes and phenomena from a culturalist approach

#### Contents

The course is divided in three parts: the first one is devoted to the study of some analytical key-concepts and categories, useful to identify and frame cultural processes, structures, phenomena, documents, and objects; the second part focuses on the main methods and technics of cultural research dealt with from both a sociological and interdisciplinary perspective; the third part is centered on the in-depth analysis of specific fields of the cultural research.

#### Detailed program

The course is structured in three parts. In the first part the course will provide some analytical and conceptual key-categories for identifying and analyzing cultural phenomena, objects, and texts to use in the different research phases. Through the critical reading of sociological and cultural science texts the students will get an overview of the main orientations in the study of cultural questions, from the semiotic to the praxeological one. More specifically the students will deal with the institutionalization and legitimization processes of culture; the relationship between the social and the cultural structures; the creation of classification systems of cultural tastes, the construction of symbolic boundaries and the following social processes of inclusion, exclusion; the processes of production, reception and circulation of ideas, discourses, cultural texts and objects; the building of idiocultures and

(sub)cultural identities, by paying particular attention to the spatial-temporal dimension and embodiment dynamics. In the second part the students will be introduced to the main methods and techniques of qualitative research such as narrative interviews, life stories, (auto)biographic methods; focus group; participant observation and observant participation (according to the methodological principles of sensory ethnography), video-analysis and digital ethnography. While privileging qualitative research methods and techniques the students will also face mixed methods research designs. Finally, through frontal lectures and class exercises the students will deal with some crucial data analysis techniques and methods, such as the field analysis (following Bourdieu's concept of field) and the grounded theory method. The aim of this approach is to highlight the nexus between empirical research and theorization in the different research phases, from the choice of the research object, the construction of a research question, the choices of research techniques and methods according to the research questions, the coding and analysis of the empirical material, the communication and writing of the research outputs.

In the third part the students will deal with specific issues of the cultural research, among those the memory dynamics and conflicts; the spatialization processes in the (urban) places and the building there of urban subcultures and idiocultures; body narratives and (auto)biographies especially in social media; the role of body in the construction of social inequalities within intimate/private relationships and in the workplace; the production, circulation and reception of knowledge and cultural objects with a focus on popular music and comics. These issues will be tackled through class exercises, the discussion on specific case studies, the analysis of cultural texts and objects.

## **Prerequisites**

Basic knowledges of the qualitative and quantitative research methods and main topics of cultural sociology

## **Teaching methods**

Lectures; seminars; lab sessions on audio-visual materials; presentations and group projects.

Lectures will be recorded just in case it includes audiovisual material required for presentations and group projects

## **Assessment methods**

Written exam with open questions for attending and non-attending students. The aim is to assess:

1. the comprehension degree of the issues dealt with in the course
2. the knowledge degree of the issues dealt with in the course
3. the argumentative skills
4. the clarity of exposition
5. the accuracy of sociological terminology
6. The capability of planning a research design from a cultural sociological approach.

For attending and non-attending students the participation in classroom exercises and facultative homework will be evaluated for the final mark, according to the criteria mentioned above.

In alternative to the written exam, attending students can develop a research project. The exam will consist in the evaluation of a research report and of the oral exposition of the research outputs. The research report should be sent up to two days before the oral exposition. If the research report is the result of a collective project work, it shall be possible to identify the individual contribution of each student.

Attending students should participate in a sufficient number of exercises, that will communicate in the first

lecture.

## Textbooks and Reading Materials

For attending and non-attending students:

1. Bourdieu, P. (2015). *Le forme di capitale*, Roma, Armando (introduction included) or M. Santoro (2023), *Cosa è cultura*, Bologna, Il Mulino (chapters: II, III, V, VI, VII)
2. the reading material is available at the 'Copisteria Fronteretro', Viale Sarca 191. This includes the following reading assignments divided in two parts:
3. Theories and Concepts
  - Gruning, B. & Santoro, M. (2014). *La cultura*. In: T. Grande & E. Parini (eds), *Sociologia*. Roma: Carocci.
  - Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L., (1992) *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*. Polity Press: Cambridge,. (paragrafi: 'Methodological Relationalism'; 'The Fuzzy Logic of Practical Sense'; 'The Logic of Fields'; 'Habitus, 'Interest, Habitus, Rationality').
  - Bourdieu, P. (2009). *Spazio sociale e spazio simbolico*. In Id.: *Ragioni Pratiche*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
  - Lamont, M. & Fournier, M. (1992). Introduction. In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (eds), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Crane, D. (1992). *High culture versus popular culture revisited. A reconceptualization of recorded cultures*. In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (eds), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Collins, R. (1992). *Women and the production of status culture*. In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (eds), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Swidler, A. (2009). *La cultura in azione*. In: M. Santoro & R. Sassatelli (eds), *Studiare la cultura*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
  - Fine, A. (2009). *Piccoli gruppi e creazione culturale*. In: M. Santoro & R. Sassatelli (eds), *Studiare la cultura*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
4. Research methods and techniques
  - Creswell, J.W., (1994). *Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oak: Sage.
  - Peterson, R.A. & Simkus, A. (1992). *How musical tastes mark occupational status group*. In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (eds), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Kelle, U. (2007). *The Development of Categories: Different approaches in grounded theory*. In: A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oak: Sage.
  - Willis, P. (2008). *Lavoro simbolico e immaginazione etnografica. Intervista a Paul Willis*. Studi culturali, 2 (Edited by M. Santoro & R. Sassatelli).
  - Wacquant, L. (2011). *Habitus as a topic tool: Reflection on becoming a Prizefighter*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 8.
  - Goffmann, E. (2005). *Sul "Fieldwork"*. I Studi culturali, 1.
  - Demazière, G. & C. Dubar, C. (2000). *Dentro le storie*. Milano: Cortina Editore. (I parte)
  - Knoblauch, H., Tuma, R. and Schnittler, B, (2016). *Videoanalisi e videografia*. *Societàmutamentopolitica*, 7(14).

Further suggested readings will be provided during the course

## Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION

