UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Applied Social Cognition To Public Policies

2223-2-F9201P213

Learning area

APPLIED EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Individual, social and societal factors affecting cognitions and behaviors
- Major socio-cognitive theories explaining the behavior
- Attitudes and beliefs systems affecting behavior
- Multiple intervention techniques and research methods

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Understanding, analysis, and evaluation of research designs to solve societal issues
- Analysis of diverse applied contexts of relevant social interest, e.g.: political, health, environmental, and technologies use domains
- Practical applications of diverse methods and research paradigms
- Critical analysis of applied research examples

Contents

The course will provide an overview of domains in which socio-cognitive theories and research have been applied outside the laboratory to influence public policies. The course will be devoted to examining a sample of behavioral

domains and contexts in which applied research has made contributions. These include political issues (e.g., promoting participation, reducing inequalities and improving intergroup relations), psychological and physical health (e.g., promotion and prevention behaviors, vaccination behavior), environmental concerns (e.g., climate change), mass media effects (e.g., scientific misinformation and conspiracy theories). Practical problems and ethical issues unique to the applied research will be considered.

Detailed program

- Features of applied social psychology
- Understanding social issues through applied social cognition
- Social thinking, social influence, and social relationships theories
- Beliefs' system and attitudes
- Focus on models of attitude and behavior prediction
- Interventions and public policies
- Behavioral intervention strategies
- Interventions based on social influence
- Implementation and analysis of researches applied to the different behavioral domains: politics, health, environment, social media, and other new technologies.
- Thematic sessions: conspiracy theories; scientific disinformation; vaccination behavior; climate change

Prerequisites

No previous knowledge is required. Good knowledge of the basis of Social Psychology enables more aware fruition of the course contents. Students lacking such basic knowledge are encouraged to ask for a list of basic references.

Teaching methods

The teaching method will be interactive and will take place through the discussion of scientific articles, videos' presentations and comments, practical exercises, and discussions on the course topics. The course material (slides and, when possible, scientific articles) will be made available on the e-learning site of the course so that also non-attending students can use it.

Students will be given the opportunity to deepen a topic of the course through an assignment (a project prepared within a small group of students) analyzing applied research of public interest.

Assessment methods

The exam is written with open-ended questions (equivalent to very shor essays). The questions are aimed at ascertaining the effective acquisition of socio-cognitive theories and methods to solve societal issues.

The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesize, create links, and critically read the reality. Special attention will be also devoted to the acquisition of methods and research design in applied social cognition and the ability to analyze a scientific paper in the field.

There will be an end-term examination, reccomended for attending students. The participation in optional activities (see didactic methods) contributes to the final evaluation.

Upon student's request, an oral interview is also provided, on all the topics and all the bibliography of the course, which can lead to an increase or decrease of up to 3 points compared to the score of the written exam.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Maio, G. R., Haddock, G., & Verplanken, B. (2018). The psychology of attitudes and attitude change. Sage Publications Limited. (only chapters indicated on the e-learning page).

Further compulsory material (research articles) will be made available by the teacher during the course on the e-learning website.

Detailed information about didactic material will be published on the e-learning page of the course.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | CLIMATE ACTION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS