UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Family Pedagogy (blended)

2223-2-E1901R111

Course title

Working with families in educational and social agencies: a research-based approach

Topics and course structure

How can we work with families in educational and social agencies? Which are the attitudes and competences that you could develop in order to be useful and to foster all the family members' well-being and learning? The systemic reflexive competences - collaboration, critical thinking, curiosity and creativity - will help you to become a more capable and responsive professional.
The course is based on systemic pedagogical and interdisciplinary research. In order to learn how to work with "families" (plural), we will try to overcome linear causality and common sense understandings based on prejudices, stereotypes, blame, stigma.
How? Learning together to search and use sound data and information, reliable knowledge, reading scientific publications, learning to observe and listen with a method, to argue your positions, to use imagination and aesthetic languages.
You will nurture, by working in a team, your capacity to learn from experience and from others. Then, your idea of "what is" a family will become more rigorous, deeper and wider, composing with other ideas.
You will be asked great personal engagement, creativity and committment to study and search, in order to build tools that would enable you to critically reflect on your cultural frameworks and prepare yourself to work with families in difficult and challenging situations.

Objectives

At the end of the course, after completing all the activities, you will show improved knowledge, skills and

competence in the following areas:

Knowledge (each concept needs to be referred to its scientific sources):

- families as systems. Main concepts: context, interactions, symmetric and complementary relationships, feedback, escalation/schismogenesis, roles and scripts, family paradigms, family narrative, myths, rituals, the family Us;
- the systemic approach in education: communication, learning, structural coupling, team as a collective mind, networking, organization, micro, meso and macrosystem;
- services and users' families: typologies of users and agencies, the cycle of intervention, norms and procedures, databases and sources, educators' tasks, relationships with caregivers and families, children and parents' rights;
- participatory approaches in working with families: P.I.P.P.I., Family Group Conference, Multifamily approach and other programmes;
- the contemporary family, the invention of parenthood, gender stereotypes and prejudices, informal learning, parents in the web and social media as peer-to-peer learning spaces.

Skills (knowing how to):

- find/use sound information from different reliable and useful sources;
- analyse an observed situation or experience using systemic concepts and methods;
- use aesthetic and narrative languages in a critical framework;
- work as a team, multiplying stories, challenging linear, causal and binary perspectives;
- position oneself in the contex and argue one's own position.

Competences :

- being able to name one's own emotions, ideas, values and prejudices, taking distance from one's own history and origins;
- being able to act in curious, creative, critical and collaborative ways in relation to specific situations, contents, people and/or contexts;
- being able to communicate in a responsive way with children, adults and family/multifamily groups, calibrating one's action in the ongoing situation.

Transversal competences (ESCO classification)

All transversal competences are relevant to this course, especially:

- mastering languages (mandatory: Italian; optional: English)
- working with digital devices and applications - searching in the web)
- processing information, ideas and concepts - critical thinking
- self-management - self-reflexivity
- social and communication - teamwork
- active citizenship - participation, inclusion and rights

Methodologies

The course is *blended*: it means that a part of the didactic (20 hours, about 3 hours' work every week) is not in presence, but online, by individual and collective tasks to be done in autonomy within the signalled deadline. You will do a research with your group, entailing individual study and team work, collective presentations and discussion of partial and final results in the classroom.
Each topic (see calendar) will be introduced by short lectures, followed by guided tasks in the classroom and

online, forums and classroom presentation with *peer-evaluation* and discussion (*flipped class* method).
Lessons in presence will be interactive and dialogic. Online individual activities will be tracked to certify attendance (at least 75% are mandatory).
From start, you will be asked to take an active and reflexive position, to keep a reflexive log that will be useful for the exam and to collaborate, also overcoming conflicts. The texts for the exam must be studied from the beginning and actively used to reflect, problematize and systematize knowledge.

Online and offline teaching materials

Diverse materials, readings, videolectures, and links will be uploaded in the Moodle platform of the course, as well as stories, video excerpts, and the record of lessons.
Other materials will be provided by the students through research activities.

Programme and references for attending students

The programme has 36 hours of didactics in presence and 20 online. It is articulated as follows:

1. Introduction to the systemic approach, concepts and methods
2. How to start a research? Research questions and literature review
3. Working with families in the socio-educational services, school and health agencies: service and user's typologies, programs
4. The contemporary family in a "post" world: parenthood, gender and intersectionality, social media, peer-learning
5. Group work: sources, data, analyses, presentations

Bibliography: (2 textbooks plus a collection of 4-5 research papers (the latter have to add up at least to 90 pages).

For students who are not fluent in Italian, here are some suggested books:

Burch, S., & Rembis, M. A. (Eds.). (2014). Disability histories (Ser. Disability histories). University of Illinois Press.
Butler-Wall, A., Cosier, K., & Harper, R. L. S. (Eds.). (2016). Rethinking sexism, gender, and sexuality (First, Ser. Ebsco academic collection). A Rethinking Schools Publication.
Cameron, G. (Ed.). (2014). Creating positive systems of child and family welfare : congruence with the everyday lives of children and parents. University of Toronto Press.
Coady, N., & Lehmann, P. (Eds.). (2016). Theoretical perspectives for direct social work practice : a generalist-eclectic approach (3rd ed.). Springer Pub. Company.
Dorr, C. (2014). Social work live : theory and practice in social work using videos. Oxford University Press.
Lishman, J. (2015). Handbook for practice learning in social work and social care, third edition : knowledge and theory (3rd ed.). Jessica Kingsley.
Mizzi, R. C., Rocco, T. S., & Shore, S. (Eds.). (2016). Disrupting adult and community education teaching, learning, and working in the periphery. State University of New York Press.
Quaid, S., Hugman, C., & Wilcock, A. (Eds.). (2022). Negotiating families and personal lives in the 21st century : exploring diversity, social change and inequalities (Ser. Sociological futures). Routledge.
Silver, L. J. (2015). System kids : adolescent mothers and the politics of regulation. University of North Carolina Press.
Travis, S., Stokes-Casey, J., & Kim, S. (Eds.). (2020). Arts education in action : collaborative pedagogies for social justice (Ser. Common threads : an anthology from the university of illinois press). University of Illinois Press.

Papers have to be analyzed, summarized, and studied for the exam. They can be in English and/or in other

languages too.

Warning: novels, films or websites cannot be brought as texts for the exam, but, as cultural objects, they can be used in group work.

Programme and references for non-attending students

The program and exam are **identical** for attending and non attending students. A questionnaire at the beginning of the course will identify attending or non attending students, to allow the constitution of groups.

"Attending" students are part of a team, complete all weekly tasks and follow at least the 75% of classes. Those who cannot keep this rhythm of work will define themselves "non-attending", but they can follow the course with their own rhythms and use forums to exchange ideas and questions, read the materials and follow the registered lectures.

How can non attending students achieve the course learning objectives?
The course program is the same, but working alone might hinder some learning objectives. Reading books is not enough. You need to do and/or analyse experiences.

Tips for non attending students: establish regular times for you to access the platform (e.g. a certain hour in certain days of the week); for each topic, start by thinking about your professional or personal experience; do the exercises in the book Re-inventare la famiglia; participate to forums.

Assessment methods

The exam is oral, after uploading a reflexive essay, i.e. a text answering the question "what and how did I learn?"; the experience of the course is analyzed with explicit reference to the concepts, to the acquired knowledge, skills and competences, the experience of the course (or personal self-directed study, for non attending students), dilemmas or probrlems that emerged, not least in group work, and how they were overcome. The written essay and the oral exam can be in Italian, English, French, or Spanish.

This exam modality aims at favoring personal learning, bridging theory and praxis, experience and concepts, favoring personal, critical and (self)reflexive thinking. Learning to write in a correct and effective way is important for an educator.

Evaluation is based on the learning objectives declared in this syllabus.

For the essay: knowledge, skills and competences are evaluated on a 3-level scale (scarce, adequate, optimal); there will be consideration of overall linguistic correctness (orthography, syntaxis, punctuation, vocabulary); academic appropriateness (argumentation, quotations from scientific sources, bibliography), conceptual clarity (concepts and language must mirror the readings and course), pertinence and richness of the addressed topics and quotations (ALL readings in bibliography must be used in depth and critically), and reflexive competences.

For the oral, same criteria apply, with two further aspects: the student's capacity to take the feedback and reflect on the learning experience overall and on the specific limits of the essay, and to answer in an articulated way questions on readings.

Practicalities is an important educational moment, since it offers a realistic feedback about the achievement of objectives.

The essay is uploaded in the "Task" folder of the e-platform within 10 days before the exam session, it receives a qualitative commentary by the teacher or a collaborator, and an evaluation on the 3-level scale for knowledge, skills and competences. Everybody can access the oral exam, no matter their evaluation.
With an evaluation of "scarce" on the knowledge criteria, there will be some questions on the readings.
The essay's evaluation is communicated the day before the oral session. In order to re-edit or re-write the reflexive essay, the student has to negtiate during the oral session with the examiner.

What are the most common critical issues? The essay shows if texts have been really studied and understood. The systemic model is counter-intuitive, simple commonsense does not apply, it may even go against common sense. Hence, superficial studying does not help, readings must be studied during the course, taking notes and developing one's own position. Avoid copy-and-paste from books or the internet: prof. Formenti uses an anti-plagiarism software that alerts on the rate of copying.

Some students show a scarce capacity to de-center themselves, to reflect critically, or to write academically. These capacities can be developed during the course, or even afterwards. So, do not worry: suggestions will be offered to you during evaluation to sustain small steps further in building these complex competences, which will be useful for the final dissertation and for your future job.

Features of t**he reflexive essay:** 6-8 numbered pages, WORD FORMAT, readable font, size 12, interline 1,5 - margins 2,5 on all sides. Cover and bibliography do not count.

Cover page must contain: degree course and name of course, teacher, academic year, student's name and code, title, optional image, attending/non attending student. The text can be enriched and personalized with images, graphics, poetic and literary inserts, etc. It must be accurate.

Where and when to deliver: The upload is possible until 10 days before the exam session. The repository in Moodle will be visible some days in advance. **WARNING:** avoid e-mailing copies to the teacher.

Office hours

Prof. Formenti receives only upon appointment (write an email), however for most issues related to the course the best thing to do is writing in the dedicated forum. Only in very exceptional and motivated cases it will be possible to do personalized interviews to prepare the exam (being non attending student is not such a case).
For the Erasmus incoming foreign students, it is possible to ask a meeting to orient them and decide the program together.

Programme validity

Programmes have 2 years' validity

Course tutors and assistants

Course's tutors are:

Davide Cino, laureato in Scienze Pedagogiche, dottore di ricerca

Ludovica Sebastiano, laureata in Scienze Pedagogiche

Other experts and members of the exam commission:

Valentina Calciano, pedagogist, educator, manager Lab'O

Antonella Cuppari, psychologist, pedagogist, PhD in education, manager of disability agencies

Andrea Di Martino, teacher, external collaborator

Silvia Luraschi, PhD, pedagogist, independent researcher, Feldenkrais teacher, counsellor

Sonia Mastroeni, pedagogist, coordinator of agency for elderly people

Chiara Morandini, educator, pedagogist, tutor of the Master on Residential Child Care

Martina Paoli, educator, pedagogist, expert of Residential Child Care and child and family services

Silvia Pinciroli, pedagogist, counsellor, trainer Lab'O, docente incaricata (laboratori)

Mara Pirotta, laureata in Scienze Pedagogiche, educatrice e pedagogista, consulente sistemica, tutor tirocini, docente incaricata (laboratori)

Andrea Prandin, pedagogista, consulente, formatore e supervisore sistemico

Alessandra Rigamonti, laureata in Scienze Pedagogiche, PhD, pedagogista, docente incaricata (laboratori), docente alla SUPSI (Lugano, Svizzera)

Maddalena Rossi, insegnante, collaboratrice esterna

Federica Vergani, laureata in Scienze Pedagogiche, pedagogista, psicomotricista, consulente sistemica

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS