UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Peoples and Cultures of Latin America

2223-2-F0101R068

Course title

Cultures and Societies of the Americas

Topics and course structure

The course analyses the social construction of the categories of 'land/territory', 'ethnicity/race' and 'nature/environment' in Brazil, paying particular attention to the Amazon area, but also drawing appropriate connections with other North and South American contexts. It will discuss not only the political role that these concepts assume in the identity and territorial claims of indigenous peoples and quilombos (predominantly rural communities of descendants of African slaves), but also some characteristic features of the cosmologies of these groups.

The course consists of three main thematic cores.

1. Firstly, the so-called 'indigenous question' will be discussed through an in-depth examination of the colonial and contemporary territorial dynamics of Brazil's indigenous communities. The social role of anthropologists in the territorial claims of these groups will also be discussed. Finally, the theme of identity construction processes will be explored, paying particular attention to the ways in which the boundary between human and non-human is constructed.

2. Secondly, the way in which the "racial" question (on the one hand, the policies of "whitening"; on the other, the ideology of racial democracy and mestizaje) has taken shape in Brazil will be analysed, comparing it with the US case. We will then see how it was intertwined with the territorial claims of the Quilombolas communities. Finally, we will mention the issue of socio-environmental justice.

3. Finally, starting from an anthropological deconstruction of the nature-culture dichotomy, we will show how the sense of belonging to a territory is closely linked to specific local cosmologies that imply contextually

variable ways of conceiving the relationship between the human and non-human worlds. These issues will be discussed from the ontologies of Philppe Descola, in dialogue with the perspectivism of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and more recent multispecies approaches.

Objectives

Through this teaching, with constant and participative attendance of lessons, we intend to PROMOTE the following learning, in terms of
Knowledge and understanding
Students will acquire specific competences both on ethno-racial and territorial issues that characterise the Brazilian context and on the cosmological specificities of indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, especially in the Amazon area, paying particular attention to their implications in the critique of the nature-culture dichotomy.
Ability to relate differentiated knowledge and models.
Students will learn to relate different knowledge and models related to social, ethnic, racial, territorial and environmental categorisations specific to the Brazilian context with those of other areas of the Americas.
Ability to apply knowledge and models
Students will learn to apply knowledge and models learned during the course to the analysis, from a comparative perspective, of the cultural, social and political dynamics of other areas of the world.

Methodologies

The course makes use of a variety of methodologies: lectures, class discussions on materials such as texts (including those scheduled for the examination), slides, audiovisual documents provided by the lecturer or autonomously proposed by the students; participation of researchers presenting current research.

Online and offline teaching materials

Additional teaching materials to the scheduled texts (background articles, documents, films) will be made available on the course page.

Programme and references for attending students

1. A selection of articles will be made available on the teaching e-learning page at the beginning of the course.
2. Bollettin P., 2020, *Identità e trasformazione. Processi del divenire in una popolazione amazzonica*, Padova, Cleup.
3. Descola P., 2021, *Oltre natura e cultura*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina. Solo le parti di seguito indicate: Introduzione; Parte prima: cap. 1, cap. 2; Parte seconda: cap. 4, cap. 5; Parte terza: cap. 6, cap. 8, cap 9, cap. 10; Parte quarta: cap. 11.
4. Tassan M., 2017, *Amazzonia incantata. Luoghi, corpi e malattie in una comunità afro-discendente del Brasile*, Roma, CISU.

It is advisable to read the texts in the order proposed.

Unless otherwise indicated, the book should be read in its entirety.

Erasmus students may contact the lecturer to establish a bibliography entirely in English.

Programme and references for non-attending students

1. A selection of articles will be made available on the teaching e-learning page at the beginning of the course.
2. Bollettin P., 2020, *Identità e trasformazione. Processi del divenire in una popolazione amazzonica*, Padova, Cleup.
3. Descola P., 2021, *Oltre natura e cultura*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina. Solo le parti di seguito indicate: Introduzione; Parte prima: cap. 1, cap. 2; Parte seconda: cap. 4, cap. 5; Parte terza: cap. 6, cap. 8, cap 9, cap. 10; Parte quarta: cap. 11.
4. Tassan M., 2017, *Amazzonia incantata. Luoghi, corpi e malattie in una comunità afro-discendente del Brasile*, Roma, CISU.

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Assessment methods

Type of test
Oral examination
Evaluation criteria
The examination consists of an oral test aimed at verifying the knowledge acquired through the critical study of the texts included in the examination programme and the work carried out in the classroom (the latter only for those attending). The acquisition of the specific disciplinary language and the ability to make appropriate connections between the course topics will also be assessed.

The exam can be performed in English by foreign/Erasmus students.

Office hours

On appointment by e-mail.

Programme validity

Two academic years. This year's programme can therefore be carried over to the winter session in February 2025

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

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