UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Antropologia Politica

2223-2-F0101R003

Course title

The political anthropology of colonialism and its long-term consequences

Topics and course structure

Colonialism, which started in the late 15th century with the discovery of the Americas, is one of the fundamental social, cultural, and political forces that shaped our contemporary world. It is also one of the most discussed (and controversial topics) of political anthropology. The development of the discipline is rooted in the colonial enterprise, as a response to the growing interest for “other” people and cultures that grows in parallel to the expansion of European countries since the age of discovery. But anthropology has also provided a strong analytical critique of colonialism, which addresses the processes, languages and practices of domination, the exploitation of human and natural resources and their redistribution to the benefit of colonizing societies, the construction of racial and cultural hierarchies that positioned the colonizers ahead of the colonized. The anthropological gaze uncovers the everyday practices of resistance of the colonized, as much as the alliances, complicities and interrelations that supported the administration of colonial territories. It questions the legacies of colonialism, and the continuities that hide behind the historical fracture created by decolonization.
The course introduces to the colonial roots of anthropology, explains the anti-colonial critique and the concept of neo-colonialism, and considers some of the theoretical tools of the anthropology of colonialism . Through the analysis of concrete case-studies, it uncovers colonial racial anxieties and the contradictions of humanitarian initiatives aimed at protecting the indigenous population. Being a second year course, it partly bases on the knowledge students acquires during the first year through other fundamental courses.

Objectives

Thanks to the constant and participatory attendance to classes, the course advances the knowledge and understanding of colonization as a historical process, and of the perspectives developed by political anthropology to analyse it critically, with a focus on the post-colonial debates promoted by intellectuals from the Global South;
it strengthens the under-standing of the transversality of politics in regards with different dimensions of human experience, and in the perspective of both dominant and subaltern groups;
it enhances student's capacity to develop their own point on view on the knowledge acquired in class and thanks to individual study.

Communication skills, learning abilities and the capacity of autonomous thought will be increased through discussions of theoretical and practical issues.

Methodologies

The course applies different methodologies: lectures, class discussions on selected articles, slides, audio-visual materials provided by the professor or autonomously proposed by the students; participation of researchers that present their work in progress.

Online and offline teaching materials

Attending classes is a dynamic experience. The course will develop thanks to the collaboration between professor and students in the reading and analysis of the texts selected for discussion as much as through proposals of integration. The course moodle platform is a point of reference for both attending and not-attending students.

Programme and references for attending students

Classes are in italian. If you understand and speak it fluently, consult the program for attending students in the Italian section of this syllabus; if not, consult the section below for not-italian speaking students.

Programme and references for non-attending students

THIS PROGRAM IS MEANT ONLY FOR STUDENTS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ITALIAN (solo per studenti che non parlano l'italiano)
1- John Gledhill- Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics, London 2000
2- J. Goody, The Theft of History (2006)
3- Two books in the following list
A. Mbembe, On the Postcolony (2001)
N. R. Hunt, A Nervous State: Violence, Remedy, and Reverie in Colonial Congo (2016)
A. L. Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Coloniale Rule (2002)
N.B. Dirks, Castes of Mind. Colonialism and the Making of Modern India (2001)

Assessment methods

Italian speaking students, who attend classes, can consult the Italian section of this website which explains the modalities of evaluation for students attending classes.

Students who do not speak italian will be evaluated through an oral interview in english meant to assess the understanding of the texts books; the presentation of contents in a clear and synthetic way; the ability to critically analyse, re-elaborate and making connections between assigned texts. Students may start the ex-am by proposing a theme which they consider transversal to what learnt through classes and by individual study.

Office hours

E-mail appointment

Programme validity

Two years

Course tutors and assistants

Raul Zecca Castel

Gabriele Masi

Elia Vitturini

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES