UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Relationship

2223-1-F8501R065

Course title

Philosophy of Relation: The ethical decision in relation: citizenship, inclusion/exclusion, digital mediations

Topics and course structure

What is the connection between our relationships with others and our individual choices and actions? On the basis of what considerations do we make and justify the choices we consider ethically right? How do you draw the boundaries between what is public and what is private? What makes the communities we inhabit a space for conversation or conflict, recognition or strangeness?
These questions cross transversally some areas of relationships that are increasingly critical for anyone working in and on society: old and new citizenship relationships, the phenomena of marginalization linked to cultural and religious diversity, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion connected to disability, the growing social centrality of digitally mediated interactions.
In answering these questions, moral philosophy offers conceptual resources, interpretative approaches and individual and group decision models that can be useful for making ethically responsible choices in the various contexts of civic engagement and professional educational activity.

EXPECTED LEARNING RESULTS

Knowledge and understanding

At the end of the course, the student will know the concepts underlying the main philosophical models of understanding the social relationship, with reference to their origin in the work of classical and modern authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant. He will be able to distinguish between deontological, consequentialist and virtue ethical models and between ethical and legal dimensions. He will be able to appreciate the ethical-political relevance of the concepts of social practice, public reason, social imaginary.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding

At the end of the course, the student will be able to analyze the emerging criticalities within the relations of citizenship, the dynamics of exclusion based on cultural and religious difference and the condition of disability. Explain the ethical issues emerging within cases drawn from experience of civic and professional engagement in the field. Decide, individually and in groups, on the course of action to be taken in the face of ethically problematic and dilemmatic situations.

Autonomy of judgment

At the end of the course, the student will be able to offer ethical justifications for their social conduct and to reflectively evaluate their role as a professional in the field of education in the light of a plurality of ethical-political ideals and values.

EXTENDED COURSE PROGRAM

The course program is divided into sections which, in succession, make up the proposed path.

1. The individual and collective ethical decision
This introductory section identifies some fundamental philosophical issues for understanding the specificity of the ethical decision, in particular within the relationship between the individual and the community. Starting from the problematization of some conceptual distinctions used in this area (principles and consequences, utility and virtue, public and private, freedom and equality, justice and the common good), we consider the reflection on the social bond of some classical authors (Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant) and some typical concepts of the contemporary philosophical and sociological debate (social practice, public reason, social imaginary) are examined.

2. The civic relationship
This section examines a first area of relations that manifests emerging criticalities in contemporary democratic societies: that of citizenship relations. Starting from some passages of Aristotle's Politics, the fundamental traits of social action typical of the citizen will be problematized, placed between the cooperative relationship and the deliberative relationship. Discussing some examples of the contemporary crisis of democratic citizenship (difficulties in integrating new citizens, disaffection for democratic processes, the rise of authoritarian movements, polarization of political opinions) we will look for some possible response strategies in the texts of authors such as Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum and Michael Sandel.

3. Inclusion and exclusion relationships
This section examines a series of relationship areas where the ethical problem of the threshold between inclusion and exclusion arises: the status of stateless person and refugee, discrimination on a cultural and religious basis, care relationships in the context of disability. In relation to these issues, the philosophical reflection on totalitarianisms and authoritarianisms, the crisis of multiculturalism, the affirmation of intercultural and post-century paradigms, the model of ethics of care will be examined. We will discuss some concrete cases of regulatory controversy on religious clothes and symbols in schools and on food prohibitions in public canteens. The texts of philosophers and philosophers such as Charles Taylor, Jocelyn Maclure and Eva Feder Kittay will provide theoretical and practical insights to discuss some ethically problematic cases drawn from the field experience of educators and social workers.

4. Technological societies and digital intermediations
In this section we will propose a preliminary philosophical reading of the impact of information technologies on social life, with particular attention to the phenomena of disintermediation and remediation of relationships that are taking place due to the internet in various fields: information, education, life politics. Some texts by Luciano Floridi and Byung-Chul Han will offer useful suggestions to discuss the ambivalent way in which the growing technological mediation of social relations is modifying the relationship between individuals and society, poised between an ideal of universal transparency and participation and the multiplication of opaque and problematic practices from an ethical and political point of view. The potential and ethical problems of the training proposals on digital citizenship will be considered.

Conclusions: Towards an ethical profile for the pedagogist
In the latter, a short section of the course, the public is asked about the role of the educator from a systematic and reasoned analysis of the ethical charters and codes of conduct of the Italian associations of pedagogists and educators. In a confrontation with the international debate on the ethics of the educational and care professions, the course will end by trying to outline some open perspectives on the ethical responsibility of the pedagogist.

Objectives

The course aims to provide philosophical tools to analyze the difficulties and dilemmas of ethical decisions within some areas of social relations in constant transformation. In particular, students are offered a path that considers the specificity and criticalities of citizenship relationships, investigates the value choices underlying the phenomena of inclusion and exclusion from community life and, finally, problematises the impact of information technologies. on individual and collective choices. In particular, starting from the analysis of ethical cases and public disputes, the aim is to develop, individually and in groups, the capacity for ethical reflection and deliberation in these areas.

Methodologies

The course uses a combination of different teaching methods, including:

- Frontal lessons
- Open questions and discussions
- Group exercises (analysis and discussion of cases)

The teaching language of the course is Italian, but the professor is available to support English-speaking and French-speaking international students outside of the lessons and the entire bibliography of the course is also available in English. The final exam for international students is also available in English and French.

Online and offline teaching materials

The materials used during the course will be made available to students in parallel with the lessons.
For non-attending students, audiovisual materials will also be provided to support the choice of texts and their study.

Programme and references for attending students

The bibliography of the course includes a reading of your choice for each of the sections of the course. For those attending, the study of these texts is accompanied by the study of the materials used in class. The texts will all be presented during the course, thus facilitating the choice according to the interests of each. No preliminary reading is required for the course itself.

1. For the section "The individual and collective ethical decision"

Michael Sandel, *Justice. What's the Right Thing to Do?*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2010, ch. 1,9-10.

2. For the section "The citizenship relationship"

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Penguin, New York 2006, ch. 2-3, 8, 16, Appendix.

OR

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1998, Introduction and ch. 1-4.

3. For the section "Relationships of Inclusion and Exclusion"

Jocelyn Maclure, Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2011.

OR

Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor. Essays on Women, Equality and Dependency*, Routledge, London and New York 2020, Introduction and ch I, II, VI.

4. For the section “Technological Societies and Digital Intermediations”

Byung-Chul Han, *The Transparency Society*, Stanford University Press, Redwood 2015.

OR

Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm. Digital Prospects*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA 2017.

OR

Luciano Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution. How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, ch. 1,3,4.

Programme and references for non-attending students

Programme and course bibliography for non-attending students is the same as for attending students. Audiovisual materials will be available to support the non-attending students in choosing and approaching the books in bibliography.

To support the understanding of the course framework for non-attending students, it is possible to read:

5. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, Anansi, Toronto 1991.

Assessment methods

Learning assessment procedures: The evaluation takes place through a final oral exam structured in four questions, each verifies a specific learning area, as follows: a question on the section of the introductory course dedicated to ethical decision, a question on the section dedicated to the relationship of citizenship, a question on the section dedicated to the relations of inclusion and exclusion, a question on the section dedicated to technological societies and digital intermediations.

The final exam for international students is also available in English and French.

Evaluation: The final mark is expressed out of thirty and takes into account, according to a weighted average, the evaluation of three aspects:

a) Knowledge of the basic theoretical elements (40%);

b) Ability of argumentation and analysis applied to themes and cases (35%);

c) Properties of language and exposure during the interview (25%).

Office hours

The teacher is available to students to arrange a meeting by appointment, in person or remotely.

Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

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Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS