UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Family Counselling: Theory and Practice (blended)

2223-1-F8501R005

Course title

Families, agencies and contexts: systemic pedagogical counselling across rights, participation and reflexivity

Topics and course structure

This course will teach you to work with families and/or professionals in socioeducational agencies, schools and health services, in order to promote the whole system's rights and wellbeing. We will consider the family as a network of complex interactions, that require observational, participatory and dialogic tools to be explored, accompanied, sustained and transformed. Learning to working in a personalized and participatory way as a family consultant and promoting co-design with family members and with a plurality of institutional actors requires communicational, relational, reflexive and research competences. It entails the capacity to take your own mobile and open positioning, awareness and critical eye.

To this end, the course focuses on the development of **reflexive systemic competences** and will ask you to engage personally in individual and group exercises, to develop critical reflection and reflexivity on your own cultural frameworks, presuppositions and prejudices, using creative writing, autobiography, autoethnography, analogic and aesthetic languages, and critical dialogue.

Classes will be taught with a blended modality; in-presence lessons will be recorded and uploaded on the e-platform. Streaming lessons will not happen, due to a pedagogical choice that privileges communication, but recognizing the needs of student workers.

Objectives

By constant participation to the course and its online activities, the following learning objectives are promoted:

Knowledge and understanding:

- main concepts of systems theory and their applications in education and counselling;
- learning from a systemic view: logical levels, transformation, structural coupling, collective mind;
- context analysis: the pedagogist's mandate, question, tasks, postures and relationships towards individuals/families, professionals, institutions, the professional community and knowing;
- reflexive analysis, in theory and practice, of a case study.

Skills:

- reading a situation with systemic lenses and methods;
- asking questions to open possibilities (e.g. during an interview or session);
- designing an intervention using aesthetic and reflexive practices (spiral model);
- teamwork to make hypotheses, critical analyses, challenge each other's perspectives, and co-design (v. case studies).

Competences:

- knowing how to act responsively in relation to the others and the here-and-now context;
- emotional self-awareness and reflexive positioning toward experience;
- learning to learn (transformative learning);
- caring (taking responsibility): for one's own work and learning, for the context, for oneself, the other, and the world (self-other-eco-education);
- transversal competences: language, writing, designing, ethical, relational, communicational.

Methodologies

The course applies a method for knowledge building based on students' experience and active exploration (learning by doing). Each topic is treated with (video)lectures, online activities, forums, and tasks to be delivered within established delays. In-presence didactic is interactive and dialogical.

Online individual activities are tracked to monitor students' work and give random feedback (not personalized). The final outcomes of teamwork (case study), simulating team functioning, will be presented in the classroom to demonstrate understanding and capacity of using the learned concepts.

To prepare the exam (reflexive essay), each student is invited to keep a loh/portfolio of their activities, to be used in reconstructing what has been learnt.

Online and offline teaching materials

Teaching materials are uploaded to the platform (video lectures, recorded lessons, readings, stories and film excerpts), some materials will be provided by the students themselves.

Programme and references for attending students

The course is in blended form, with 36 hours of in-presence lessons and 20 hours of online asyncronous activities (videolectures, weekly tasks). All students (attending or not) will be aggregated in teams. Not attending students who do not desire to be part of a group can signal it. The program and exam are identical for attending/not attending students and based on real competences, that are demonstrated in the final essay and oral examination.

The course is divided in 3 parts:

A) **Introduction to the systemic approach**, exploration of topics and systemic methods. Around 6 hours of lessons and 2 hours of online propedeutical activities.

B) **Reflexive competences: from practice to theory:** focused on witnesses and analisys of different typologies of users and services. Around 15 hours of lessons and 8 of individual/group activities.

C) **Team work on case studies:** group work, role playing and presentations with discussion in the class. Around 15 hours lesson and 10 teamwork.

Bibliography for the exam

The standard program for the exam entails 2 books and at least 5 research papers (in Italian and/or English). Students may propose an alternative program to the teacher.

Suggested books (choose 2 among these or propose a valid alternative)

Formenti L. Formazione e trasformazione. Un modello complesso. Raffaello Cortina, 2017.

Sclavi M., Arte di ascoltare e mondi possibili. Come si esce dalle cornici di cui siamo parte, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2003.

Luraschi, S. Le vie della riflessività. Per una pedagogia del corpomente. Armando, 2021.

Cino, D. (2022). Sharenting. I dilemmi della condivisione e la costruzione sociale della “buona genitorialità digitale”. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Secchi, G. Lavorare con le famiglie nelle comunità per minori, Erickson, 2015.

Formenti L. Re-inventare la famiglia. Guida teorico-pratica per i professionisti dell'educazione. Apogeo, 2012. (for those who did not attend Pedagogia della famiglia at Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione)

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

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. 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. 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. University of Illinois Press.

About papers:

See the reference lists uploaded in the e-platform or look for scientific sources to explore more deeply your interests. To allow personalized learning, it is possibile to agree motivated changes to the program with the teacher.

Programme and references for non-attending students

There is no difference in the program, bibliography or exam.

"Attending" students are those who attend at least the 60% of syncronous activities (in presence and webinars) and complete all the online activities (weekly tasks, group work).

Those who are unable to keep this constant rhythm of work can however follow the course with their own rhythms and use forums to exchange ideas and questions, read the materials and watch the recorded lessons. All the materials will be in the platform for at least one year.

Non attending students are self-directed learners; working alone makes it harder to achieve the objectives of the course. Reading books is not enough: it is necessary to appropriate them, to apply the ideas.

Some tips: fix weekly regular times for online work (e.g. a fixed time in fixed days of the week); cooperate with other students; start from your professional experience. For those who did not attend Family Pedagogy in the triennial course (BA): read and do the exercises from the book Re-inventare la famiglia.

Assessment methods

The exam is oral, and it is accessible after delivery of a reflexive essay.

What is a reflexive essay? A text which answers the question "what and how did I learn?" using arguments and academic evidence; the personal experience of the course is revised with explicit reference to the learnt concepts and knowledge, skills and competences signaled in the syllabus.

The essay, uploaded in the platform Moodle repository by 10 days before the exam session, receives a qualitative commentary and an evaluation of "competent/not competent" based on the course objectives. A "not competent" mark does not prevent from sustaining the oral examination, which is a discussion of the learning outcomes documented by the reflexive essay, and, if texts are insufficiently used inside the essay, some questions to assess study.

Evaluation is communicated online the day before the oral session. If a student decides to re-edit or re-write his/her text, he/she should discuss it during the oral session with the examiner.

The oral exam is a thorough discussion about the achieved learning outcomes and flares of the reflexive essay. All texts must be brought to the exam session.

Evaluation criteria: correctness and accuracy of the essay; knowledge and correct use of theories, within the

essay and during the interview; conceptual clarity and richness of quotations from the texts; basic skills and competences in reading experience with systemic, critical and reflexive lenses in the essay and oral discussion.

The format of this exam is based on a pedagogical model coherent with the course, it aims at favoring personal learning, bridging theory and praxis, experience and the studied concepts, pushing to develop critical and (self)reflexive thinking. Besides, learning to write in a personal, grounded, and effective way is necessary for a professional in pedagogy.

Evaluation of the reflexive essay: it is an important educational moment, since it offers a realistic feedback about the achievement of the course objectives.

Further information on exams

Warning: the reflexive essay is an academic text (argumentative style, correctly quoted sources, correct and complete footnotes, bibliography).

Features: 8-10 numbered pages, WORD FORMAT, free readable font, size 12, interline 1 e 1/2, 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 is it delivered:

The upload is within 10 days before the exam session. The repository in Moodle is visible some days before the deadline.

WARNING: avoid e-mailing copies to the teacher.

Office hours

Prof. Formenti receives upon appointment, please write an e-mail.

Programme validity

Programmes' duration is 2 academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Tutors of the course: Silvia Luraschi, Alessandra Rigamonti and Federica Vergani, social pedagogists and external collaborators of the Departiment.

Their role is to help with teaching and follow the online activities; other collaborators are involved in didactic

activities and act as external members of exam commissions:

- Andrea Prandin, social pedagogist, counsellor
- Mara Pirotta, social pedagogist, traineeship tutor, workshop teacher
- Silvia Pinciroli, social pedagogist, trainer Lab'O, workshop teacher
- Sonia Mastroeni, social pedagogist, coordinator
- Ilaria Denti, social pedagogist
- Valentina Calciano, social pedagogist, coordinator of Lab'O
- Andrea di Martino, school teacher, expert of myths
- Maddalena Rossi, school teacher, trainer

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS