



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Consulenza Familiare: Teorie e Pratiche (blended)

2324-1-F8501R005

Course title

Families, agencies and contexts: systemic counselling as a reflexive practice

Topics and course structure

This course will teach you how to work with families and professionals in socioeducational agencies, schools and health services, in order to promote everybody's rights and wellbeing. The approach is ecosystemic and critical: it means that pedagogical counselling goes beyond the relationship with a single person, to take care of human systems, that is the interdependence of parts and circularity of actions and interactions. The professional too is part of complex cycles of interactions, to which (s)he contributes and from which (s)he is constrained. That's why critical reflexivity helps us to see ourselves in relation to others and context, sustains us in taking position and helping others to do the same, especially when they have no voice. Finally, it offers tools for dialogic and transformative intervention.

During the course, we will consider families, work teams and organizations as networks of complex interactions, requiring observational, participatory and dialogic tools to be explored, accompanied, sustained and transformed. As a pedagogical counsellor, you will need to learn working in a participatory way to promote co-design, with family members as well as with a plurality of institutional actors. This requires knowledge of the first level work (educational) and the development of communicational, relational, reflexive and research competences, that are proper to the second level of intervention (pedagogical, organizational, for coordination, training and supervision). The course aims at enhancing your capacity to read the systems and to adopt a mobile and open position, awareness and critical eye. To this end, the course focuses "thinking in stories", Gregory Bateson's idea that will help us to shape the reflexive systemic competences and will ask you to engage personally in individual and group exercises, to develop your awareness and creativity in recognizing your own cultural frameworks, presuppositions and prejudices and trying to transform them in a useful direction for your professional development.

Objectives

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

Knowledge and understanding:

- of the main concepts of systems theory and their applications in education and counselling;
- of learning from a systemic view: relationship to knowledge, logical levels, structural coupling, collective mind, transformative learning;
- of the context: analysis of the pedagogist's mandate, question, tasks, postures and relationships with individuals, families, professionals, institutions, the professional community;
- of "thinking in stories": hypothesization and reflexive analysis of a concrete situation (case study).

Skills (knowing to do):

- reading a situation with systemic lenses and methods;
- asking questions to open possibilities (e.g. during an interview or network session);
- designing a counselling intervention using aesthetic and reflexive practices (spiral model);
- teamwork to multiply stories, make hypotheses, and co-design.

Competences (reflexivity as a meta-competence):

- 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, oneself, the other, and the world;
- cross-sectional competences: language, writing, designing, ethical, relational, communicational.

Methodologies

The course is taught with a blended modality: it means that 20 hours out of 56 are online, so around 3 hours a week of self-directed work (videolectures and exercises), to facilitate learning for students who cannot attend regularly. To this end, lessons in presence will be recorded and uploaded to the elearning platform.

The work in the classroom will be dialogic and participatory, with several group activities and role plays. Group work in the classroom simulates a team; it will bring to a final analysis of a situation (story) brought by a student (case study), to verify the understanding and capacity of using systemic concepts and methods.

The course applies a method for knowledge building based on students' experience and active exploration (learning by doing). Each topic is presented with (video)lectures and reading/writing tasks to be uploaded within established deadlines. We will use writing (creative, autobiography, autoethnography, academic), analogic and aesthetic languages, critical dialogue and peer-to-peer feedback.

To prepare the exam (reflexive essay), each student is invited to keep a log/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), some materials will be provided by the students themselves.

Programme and references

The course is in blended form, with 36 hours of in-presence lessons and 20 hours of online asynchronous activities (videlectures, weekly tasks). All students (attending or not) will have the same program and exam.

The course is articulated in 3 parts:

A) **Introduction to the systemic approach**, exploration of topics and systemic methods.

B) **Working with the system in different contexts**, group activities and role plays on different aspects of the pedagogical job with different typologies of users and services.

C) **Thinking in stories**, group work on a concrete situation (story). Presentations and discussion in the class.

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 possible to agree motivated changes to the program with the teacher.

Assessment methods

****The exam is oral, 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, however it is not an academic essay; 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 on a level scale. A low evaluation 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 limits of the reflexive essay. All texts must be brought to the exam session to allow consultation.

Evaluation criteria are: 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 evaluation of the reflexive essay is formative: it offers a realistic feedback about the achievement of the course objectives declared in the syllabus. The final mark will consider both the quality of the reflexive essay and of the oral session.

Warning: the reflexive essay is not an academic text but personal (written in the first singular person, self reflexive); however, it is not about subjective opinions, but bringing arguments, using all the publications in the bibliography. Sources must be quoted in a correct academic way. Bibliography has to be correct and complete (2 books, 5 research papers, it can contain extra sources too).

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: please avoid e-mailing copies to the teacher, avoid using Moodle Messenger (the teacher does not read it). If you have questions on the course or exam, please use the general forum in Moodle.

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 are:

Antonella Cuppari, PhD, psychologist, pedagogist, responsible disability services
Federica Vergani, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, psychomotor therapist

Other collaborators and examiners:

Valentina Calciano, pedagogist, coordinator Lab'O
Davide Cino, PhD, fellow researcher
Andrea Di Martino, teacher, external collaborator
Marcella Lisi, pedagogist, coordinator "Signori bambini" service for children and families
Silvia Luraschi, PhD, pedagogist, independent researcher, Feldenkrais teacher, systemic counsellor
Sonia Mastroeni, pedagogist, external collaborator
Chiara Morandini, pedagogist, external collaborator
Martina Paoli, pedagogist, external collaborator
Silvia Pincioli, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, trainer Lab'O, lecturer (laboratories)
Mara Pirotta, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, traineeship tutor, lecturer (laboratories)
Andrea Prandin, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, trainer and supervisor
Maddalena Rossi, teacher, external collaborator
Ludovica Sebastiano, PhD student, pedagogist

Sustainable Development Goals

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