



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Critical Events and Organizational Learning

2324-1-F8803N004

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding:

At the end of the course the students will have acquired:

- the knowledge to develop learning processes of organizations and institutions;
- knowledge of the theoretical methodological coordinates of analysis for the diagnosis of organizational problems;
- the ability to analyze organizational failures to understand how organizations foster, manage and react to unforeseen events;
- the ability to understand and neutralize the processes of organizational scapegoating;
- the ability to perform organizational analysis, including case reading, and practical application;
- the ability to find, understand, use and criticize secondary organizational literature.

Contents

The main theme of the course is the study of organizational learning processes from critical events (errors, accidents, misconduct, disasters, business scandals) with particular reference to the management of uncertainty, the unexpected and myopia in organizations. The course is structured as an investigation in progress on topics such as: - Organizational learning in complex systems. - Scapegoating in organizations. - Organizational sensemaking. - Organizational myopia: prediction and predictability in organizations. - The management of the unexpected in organizations. - Highly reliability organizations. - The role of organizational culture in learning processes.

Detailed program

The course aims to provide students with tools and concepts for in-depth analysis and for a critical understanding of the processes of organizational learning from failures and management of uncertainty in complex organizational contexts. Through a review of the main theories, case analysis and subgroup study activity, we will analyze the factors that hinder or favor the management of the unexpected and organizational learning within complex organizations. Particular attention will be paid to the construction of "organizational scapegoats".

It is a set of themes and problems that have become increasingly relevant for organizations that find themselves operating in complex environments. By analyzing failure and success cases, students will be able to familiarize themselves with organizational theories under conditions of uncertainty and share the main tools for formulating and implementing learning and change strategies. The characteristics and requirements of High Reliability Organizations (HROs) will be presented, able to conduct operations with low error rate for long periods of time, learning from negative events, able to act in advance and to contain the unexpected.

During the course some thematic focuses will be realized in order to develop with the students activation simulations of the concepts and tools studied, also through the analysis of educational cases.

Prerequisites

Sufficient notions of logic and general culture.

Teaching methods

Lectures with the use of slides, audio and video.

Presentation of case studies from which to develop individual and sub-group work, prepared and discussed during the course.

Meetings with scholars and experts to explore specific topics.

Assessment methods

Attending and non-attending students will be assessed through a written test based on open questions regarding the topics of the course and the materials indicated in the bibliography. The evaluation criteria for the written test are:

1. language properties - appropriate use of terms;
2. precision in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to build connections between various topics;
4. completeness of the exposure given the time limits;
5. analytical skills in commenting on the texts selected for study texts.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Attending and non-attending students (complete study of both texts)

Catino M. (2014), *Organizational Myopia: Problems of Rationality and Foresight in Organizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Paperback edition).

Catino M. (2022), *Trovare il colpevole. La costruzione del capro espiatorio nelle organizzazioni*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
