UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Methodology in Urban Studies

2324-1-126R001

Learning objectives

This teaching scheme offers students the methodological foundations, which are crucial for implementing a successful empirical research. The module includes seminars both about methods and about techniques, particularly, but not exclusively, designed for spatial research.

Contents

The module is organised into two sections.
A. The first one offering a reflection on the methodological foundations for the empirical research, with a module on the research design and practice of doing urban research. In this module students will meet former Urbeur candidates, now doctors in Urban Studies, that present their own researches focusing on methods and techniques applied in the urban studies.
In this module, students will be also stimulated to confront and discuss about their research projects in fieri.
B. The second section is about techniques: Geographic Information System and spatial data, Big Data analysis and representation, Visual research methods and approaches and ethnography.
Modules are organised as follows.
A. Researching the urban: a practical guide (coordinator: Marianna d'Ovidio, University of Milan-Bicocca)
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Modules are organised as follows.
A. Researching the urban: a practical guide

(coordinator: Marianna d'Ovidio, University of Milan-Bicocca)
The research design
Methods and techniques
Concluding discussion
B1. Geographic Information System and spatial data (coordinator: Luca Daconto, University of Milan-Bicocca)
Critical cartography and society (L. Bagnoli)
Mapping the human city (M. d'Ovidio)
Spatial data and source (L. Daconto)
GIS - visualising and analysing spatial data (L. Daconto and S. Caiello)
B2. Visual research methods and approaches (coordinator: Valentina Anzoise, University of Milan-Bicocca)
Introduction (V. Anzoise)
Visual data (C. Mutti)
Visual methods and analysis (L. Ghirotto)
B3. Ethnography for Urban Studies (coordinator: Simone Ghezzi, University of Milan-Bicocca)
Introduction (Ghezzi, Quassoli, Coletto, Maneri).
Doing Ethnographic Fieldwork. Theoretical and practical issues (S. Ghezzi)
Doing fieldwork: challenges, risks & dilemmas (F. Quassoli)
Critical reading of ethnographies (S. Ghezzi)
Practices of ethnography (in the informal economy) (D. Coletto)
Discourse and content analysis (M. Maneri)

Detailed program

A. Researching the urban: a practical guide
(coordinator: Marianna d'Ovidio, University of Milan-Bicocca)
The module focuses on methodological foundations for the empirical research, dealing with the research design and practice of doing urban research.
In this module students will meet former Urbeur candidates, now doctors in Urban Studies, that present their own researches focusing on methods and techniques applied in the urban studies.
In this module, students will be also stimulated to confront and discuss about their research projects in fieri.
Seminars will be held in the weeks between March 11th and April 12th 2024.
The research design:

- From theory to research (G. Anselmi)
- Making comparison (V. Conte)
  Methods and techniques:
- Methods and techniques: interviews and focus groups (C. Nessi)
- Methods and techniques: Social Network Analysis (R. Vacca)
- Body's materialities and city's rhythms: notes on post-qualitative research (E. Petrilli)
  Concluding discussion
  Topic, audience, positioning in the field (A. Pratt)
  A number of other seminars (to be confirmed) can be added, following candidates needs or interests, and they can be for instance on practical and empirical research on comparison, or particular comparison techniques such as QCA or seminars discussing how to use particular techniques to research the urban.

B1. Geographic Information System and spatial data
(coordinator: Luca Daconto, University of Milan-Bicocca)

- 23 January
  10:00 – 12:00 Critical cartography and society. Facilitating spatial understanding through graphic representations
  Lorenzo Bagnoli

- 23 January 14:00 – 16:00 Mapping the human city
  Marianna d'Ovidio
- 24 January 10:00 – 12:00 Spatial data and source
  Luca Daconto
- 24 January 14:00 – 17:00 GIS - visualising and analysing spatial data I
  Luca Daconto and Simone Caiello
- 31 January 14:00 – 17:00 GIS - visualising and analysing spatial data II
  Luca Daconto and Simone Caiello

B2. Visual research methods and approaches
(coordinator: Valentina Anzoise, University of Milan-Bicocca)
date to be defined, approximately March 2024

- Introduction on visual methods, visual ethnography and other visual research techniques (Valentina Anzoise, University of Milano-Bicocca)
- Collecting, managing, sharing and using visual data for research in social sciences (Cristiano Mutti, University of Milano-Bicocca)
- Qualitative analysis and visual methods. Visual Grounded Theory and introduction to Nvivo software (Luca Ghirotto, University of Verona)

B3. Ethnography for Urban Studies
(coordinator: Simone Ghezzi, University of Milan-Bicocca)
Ethnography is part of the course "Qualitative techniques for social research". Six meetings are scheduled, the first of which will introduce course material, objectives and methodology to the graduate students. Starting from December, in each meeting a small group of PhD students will be assigned the presentation of an ethnographic volume (or the presentation of an empirical exercise); the rest of the students, who are not presenting, must read some articles that are related to the ethnography/exercise being discussed in class. Great emphasis will be put on the following topics: entering the field, building and managing social relations, techniques of ethnographic observation, taking field notes, dealing with cultural differences, building up a theoretical framework, writing an ethnography, and discussing theoretical debates.
All the reading material is included in a syllabus.
Programme:

- Lesson 0, 30 November 2023, h. 15:00 - 16:00
  Introduction to the module: course organization, reading package, assignments, guidelines
  Diego Coletto, Simone Ghezzi, Fabio Quassoli, Marcello Maneri
- Lesson 1, 14 December 2023, h. 14:00 - 17:00
  References (texts must be read in advance):
  Doing Ethnographic Fieldwork. Theoretical and practical issues.
  Simone Ghezzi
  Geertz, C. (1973) "Thick Description: Toward as interpretive Theory of Culture", in Interpretation of Cultures, New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-30;
  Sanjek, R. (ed.) (1990) "A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes", in Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 92-115.
  Pecacock, J.L. (2002) "Method", in The Anthropological Lens: Harsh Light, Soft Focus. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.85-112.
- Lesson 2, 9 January 2024, h. 10:00-13:00
  Doing fieldwork: challenges, risks & dilemmas
  Fabio Quassoli
  References (texts must be read in advance):
  Goffman A. (2014). On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City (Fieldwork Encounters and Discoveries), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
  Goffman A. (2009). "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto". In American Sociological review, Vol. 74: 339-357, online at http://asr.sagepub.com/content/74/3/339.
- Lesson 3, 19 January 2024, h. 14:00 - 17:00

Critical reading of ethnographies
Simone Ghezzi
References (texts must be read in advance):
Muehlebach A. (2012). The Moral Neoliberal. Welfare and Citizenship in Italy. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Available at the Unimib Library, call number: CDD 320.5130945 MUEA.MOR /2012
Muehlebach A. (2013). “On Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy”. In Cultural Anthropology, Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 59–82. ISSN 0886-7356, online ISSN 1548-1360.
Muehlebach A. (2013). “The Catholicization of Neoliberalism: On Love and Welfare in Lombardy, Italy”. In American Anthropologist, Vol. 115, No. 3, pp. 452–465, ISSN 0002-7294, online ISSN 1548-1433.

- Lesson 4, 8 February 2024, 10:30 – 13:30
  Practices of ethnographic observation (in the informal economy)
  Diego Coletto
  References:
  Goffman E., 1989, “On fieldwork”, in Emerson R.M. (ed.), Contemporary Field Research. Perspectives and Formulations, Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, pp. 153-158.
  Boels D. (2014), It’s better than stealing: informal street selling in Brussels, in International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 34, 9/10, pp. 670-693.
  Crossa, V. (2016), Reading for difference on the street: De-homogenising street vending in Mexico City, Urban Studies, 53(2):287-301.
  Information and details concerning the lesson and the empirical exercise of ethnographic observation will be given at the presentation of the Ethnography module.
- Lesson 5, 13 February 2024, h. 14:00 – 18:00
  Discourse and content analysis
  Marcello Maneri
  References (texts must be read in advance):
  Fairlough, N. (1989). Language and power, pp. 24-27, Harlow, Longman.
  Maneri, M. (2006). “L’analisi del discorso”, unpublished paper.

Prerequisites

none

Teaching methods

Lectures, laboratories, practical exercises

Assessment methods

Class discussion with instructor

Textbooks and Reading Materials

They will be presented by instructors during lectures

Sustainable Development Goals

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES