UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Organizational Change

2425-2-F6302N001

Learning objectives

The course explores the problem of organizational change in complex, technologically dense environments and characterized by uncertainty, through case analysis, research materials and original in depth studies. The development of skills to analyze and discuss scientific literature, data and cases is a specific educational objective of the course, as is the development of new knowledge about organizational change. Students are required to be both independent and have a critical approach in dealing with the issues being studied.

Knowledge and understanding:
At the end of the course, students will have acquired knowledge and skills concerning the following:

- organizational analysis, including in-depth study, case analysis and practical application of theory;
- use of the main methodological and theoretical tools to analyze organizational problems through in-depth studies and discussion of cases;
- analysis of how organizations foster, manage and respond to change, especially through technology adoption and use;
- finding, understanding, using and critically reasoning on the reference organizational literature;
- understanding the change of organizations and institutions, particularly in technologically dense environments.

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Contents

The main topic of the course is the study of organizational change processes with particular reference to the management of uncertainty in relation to digital transformation processes. It will looks at the adoption of innovative technologies as an opportunity for learning and change in organizations by adopting an analytical and non-prescriptive perspective which therefore looks at technology in its instrumental dimension of the process of regulation of the organizational action and the decisions that are connected to it.

The course is structured as an 'in progress' investigation on topics such as: organizational change in complex environments, resistance to change, inertia and uncertainty, the relationship between organizational change and the adoption and use of advanced digital technologies (e.g. robotics, industrial internet, etc.) in complex environments (e.g. healthcare organizations, advanced smart manufacturing).

Detailed program

The course aims at providing students with tools and concepts for the in-depth and critical analysis of organizational change processes in complex environments. In the first part of the course, the theoretical foundations about the organizational change's topic are laid for then addressing the relationship between organization, environment and complexity, by deepening the issues of the resistance to change and the organizational inertia. Some conceptual frameworks for the analysis of digital transformation and its organizational implications will be provided. In particular, the course will look at technology and its role for organizational change by first unpacking the very concept of technology starting from some of its classic and contemporary definitions and typologies and second by delving into how complex organizations adopt advanced technologies to deal with change.

Prerequisites

Sufficient notions of logics and general culture, basic knowledge of business organization.

Teaching methods

Lectures, case analysis, in depth studied, prepared and discussed during the course.
The course consists of 48 hours, with approximately 50% dedicated to traditional teaching methods (lectures utilizing slides, audio, and video) and 50% to interactive learning (exercises, group work, and case studies). A portion of the lessons may be delivered remotely, accounting for no more than 30% of the total hours of the entire course.

Assessment methods

Students will be assessed through (1) an individual written test based on "open questions" regarding the texts and the reading package (collection of articles, books and other materials) provided during the course, (2) a project work* aimed at deepening some central themes of the course.

More precisely, the evaluation criteria for the written test are:

1. property of language - appropriate use of terms and concepts;
2. accuracy in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to connect different topics;
4. completeness of the presentation, given the time (test duration) and space (pages available) limits.

Midterm assessments are planned.

Please note that at the time of ending of classes (December 2024) the detailed program (with references to the textbook and cases/furher materials) will be available on line. It will remain valid for all the exams of the current academic year.
*The project work is aimed at those who choose to follow the participatory path (a), while the standard path (b) involves an assessment based solely on a written exam in the classroom.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The bibliographic tentative list could be:
Catino M. (2014), Organizational Myopia: Problems of Rationality and Foresight in Organizations, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Paperback edition).
Plesner, U., Husted, E. (2022) 'L'organizzazione digitale', Il Mulino, Bologna
Further materials and readings provided during the course by the teacher [reading package] will be available online through the e-learning system and/or through the Milano-Bicocca University library.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION