



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultural Anthropology

2425-1-E2001R007

Course title

Cultural anthropology

Topics and course structure

This course is an introduction to cultural anthropology. Born as the study of "exotic" societies in a colonial setting, anthropology has progressively taken the form of **a critical study of social and cultural realities. The discipline questions the processes of construction of identity and social difference in the contemporary world.**

The course aims to familiarize students with the founding categories of cultural anthropology. Particular attention will be paid to the **methodological principles of ethnography** studied through an approach to the major theoretical currents and the main thematic areas of the discipline.

Using some ethnographic texts and documentaries, the course will introduce students to the main areas of investigation of cultural anthropology: social organization, gender and sexuality, power, violence, resources and exchange. During the lessons some founding figures of the discipline will be presented.

Students will approach the methods of ethnographic research whose main objective is to document discourses and practices (but also emotions, sensations, etc.) appropriate in a given socio-cultural context, capturing the actors' point of view and identifying the forces that act on their existences.

The key parts of the texts of the exam program will be presented in class, also offering insights that are not contained in the exam texts but which can help their full understanding.

Objectives

This teaching, coupled with a constant and participatory attendance of the lessons, intends to PROMOTE the following learning objectives:

Knowledge and understanding: the course aims to provide students with solid basic knowledge in cultural anthropology, presenting some constituent notions of the discipline such as culture, cultural relativism, ethnicity, body, power, gender, etc. The course also intends to present the main theoretical paradigms and methodological specificities of anthropology such as field research, decentralization of the gaze, data collection and their restitution.

Ability to relate different information and models: Through the lessons and the proposed readings, students will be provided with the tools for understanding the processes of construction of identities and differences and for developing an attitude towards comparison with different cultural realities.

Ability to apply knowledge and models: Students will acquire knowledge useful for critical reflection on the complexity of the contemporary world. Furthermore, familiarity with the methodological principles of ethnography will allow them to develop observation and interpretation skills of everyday life contexts. During the lessons, independent judgment and communication skills will be strengthened, stimulating students to formulate their own opinion and present it effectively. Learning ability will be encouraged through active participation in lessons and discussion in the classroom.

Methodologies

Presentation of case studies from the history of the discipline. Presentation of exam texts. Watching audio-video materials.

Lessons will include a part in delivery mode in which the concepts are exposed and a part in interactive mode to involve students more actively (exercises in class or discussion of the concepts exposed).

The lessons will be in Italian.

All lessons are in person. In the event of public transport strikes or other unforeseen problems, there will be the possibility of delivering a maximum of two lessons remotely (synchronous mode, on a time and date that will be agreed and communicated in class and on the course's e-learning page).

Online and offline teaching materials

The material will be available during the teaching period.

Programme and references

1. Fabietti, U. 2023. Elementi di antropologia culturale. Mondadori. **Forth Edition**. The entire text **except**: part two; chapters 2 and 3 of part three; chapter 2 of part six.
2. King C. 2020. La riscoperta dell'umanità. Come un gruppo di antropologi ribelli reinventò le idee di razza, sesso e genere nel XX secolo. Einaudi.

3. Staid A. 2022. Essere natura. Uno sguardo antropologico per cambiare il nostro rapporto con l'ambiente. Utet.
4. One book to choose from the following:
 - Santanera G. 2024. Diritti mediati. Antropologia digitale e domanda di asilo politico in Italia. Milano. Ledizioni.
 - Vignato S. 2020. Le figlie delle catastrofi. Un'etnografia della crescita nella ricostruzione di Aceh. Ledizioni.
5. Course notes or alternatively both texts indicated in point 4

Assessment methods

Type of exam: **oral exam**: discussion and questions on the topics covered in class and on the exam texts.

There are no intermediate tests during the course.

Evaluation criteria: the student's knowledge of the fundamental concepts and authors of the discipline, the understanding of the ideas and the familiarity achieved with some theoretical issues and, finally, the ability to actively use the acquired knowledge will be evaluated. Active participation in debates and collective activities will also be calculated in the final grade.

Required knowledge:

- **attending students** are required to report on the material shared and discussed in class and to study the texts in the exam program. There are no parts of texts to be excluded unless specified in the syllabus. The fact that some chapters are not explained in class does not authorize the student not to study them.
- **non-attending students** are required to report on the material shared on e-learning (if there is any) and to study the scheduled texts. There are no parts of texts to be excluded unless specified in the syllabus. The fact that some chapters are not explained in class does not authorize the student not to study them.

Office hours

By appointment (arranged either by email or before the start of the lesson)

Programme validity

The program is valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | LIFE ON LAND |
PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
