UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Anthropology

2425-2-F0101R003

Course title

Political Anthropology

Topics and course structure

WORK:
Political anthropology addresses the issue of power as a fundamental component of human life. After a brief introduction to this field of study and its key research interests, the course will follow the thematic thread of work: what kind of contribution has anthropology made to the understanding of human work? What are the lessons learned from small-scale societies? To what extent does political anthropology enrich our understanding of work? The 'original opulent society', forced/free labour, and the subjectivity of workers are some of the aspects we will consider. As anthropologists, we will also try to reflect on the configurations of the human that emerge from contemporary economic systems and socio-political conjunctures. What dimensions of coercion are hidden in our supply chains? How, and through which case studies, does anthropology address the issue of precarity? Is slavery making a comeback?

An on-line seminar italian will introduce to the developments of political anthropology and to a selection of key-concepts. Seminar times and modalities will be communicated at the beginning of the course both in class and via the notice board.
The course can be borrowed by students in their first year of the Master's degree in Artistic Languages for Education

Objectives

For the students of the master course in anthropological and ethnological sciences:

Through this course, we intend to PROMOTE:

The knowledge and understanding of power and labour as historical processes, and of the perspectives developed by political anthropology to critically analyse it, with a focus on the debate ushered by intellectuals from the Global South. The ability to grasp the transversality of the political dimension and to apply knowledge and skills for problem solving in both concrete contexts and unforeseen situations, considering the perspective of both dominant and subordinate groups. This will help develop the ability to analyse different professional contexts and to elaborate original reflections and projects that can meet their needs.
Communication skills, autonomy of judgement and learning skills will be enhanced through discussions on theoretical and practical issues that help students monitor the adequacy of their knowledge and skills, identifying any areas that need to be streghthened.

For students of the master's degree in artistic languages for education:

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Methodologies

The course consists of 19 lectures (18 of 3 hours, 1 of 2 hours), which may begin in lecture mode and then develop in interactive mode (and vice versa).

We will use a variety of methodologies: lectures, class discussions on materials such as texts (including those scheduled for the examination), slides, audio-visual documents provided by the lecturer or autonomously proposed by the students, participation of researchers presenting work in progress, ethnographic exercises in selected contexts. English or Italian will be used variably according to the language skills of the class.

Of the 56 hours of the course, 50 will be in presence (and streaming), 6 will be completely remote. Only the narrative parts of the lessons will be recorded and made available on the moodle platform.

Online and offline teaching materials

Attending classes is a dynamic experience. The course will develop thanks to the collaboration between professor and students in the reading and analysis of the texts selected for discussion as much as through proposals of integration. The course moodle platform is a point of reference for both attending and not-attending students.

An online seminar introduces to developments in political anthropology and provides support for attending and non-attending students: modalities and times will be communicated at the beginning of the course

in class and via the moodle platform.

Programme and references

Classes are in italian. If you understand and speak it fluently, consult the program in the Italian section of this syllabus; if not, consult the section below for not-italian speaking students.

THIS PROGRAM IS MEANT ONLY FOR STUDENTS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ITALIAN (*solo per studenti che non parlano l'italiano*)
1- John Gledhill- Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics, London 2000
2- J. Suzman, Work: a history of how we spend our time (2020)
3- The collection of articles made available on the moodle platform by the end of the course
4- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins (2021)

Assessment methods

Oral exam:
The evaluation will be based on the understanding of the reading materials; the presentation of contents in a clear and synthetic way; the ability to critically analyse and re-elaborate, making connections between assigned texts. Students may start the exam by proposing a theme that they consider transversal to what learnt in classes and by individual study. Questions to verify the knowledge acquired will follow.

Office hours

E-mail appointment

Programme validity

Two years

Course tutors and assistants

Raul Zecca Castel

Gabriele Masi

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES