UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Philosophy

2425-2-E3901N051

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide an introduction to the most relevant concepts and themes of political philosophy and to guide the understanding of the philosophical-political issues most relevant to the existence and functioning of social services and social work.

Contents

The course will be structured in two parts:
The first, curated by Prof. Giorgia Serughetti, will provide an overview of the fundamental problems, concepts theories and currents of political philosophy, with a general introduction to the discipline and an articulation into thematic sections.
The second part will be devoted to two in-depth focuses:

1. together with Prof. Roberto Miraglia, the problem of freedom and thus the limits that should be placed on political and social power will be addressed, particularly through the reading of J.S. Mill's 'On Liberty'.
2. together with Prof. Giorgia Serughetti we will explore the philosophical-political foundations of the welfare state, that is, the concepts and theories that have historically offered the basis for legitimizing state intervention aimed at ensuring the welfare of citizens.

Detailed program

The first part of the course (Prof. Serughetti - 28 hours) aims to provide an overview of the fundamental problems, concepts theories and currents in political philosophy. After a general introduction to the discipline this overview will be divided into 4 thematic sections.

The first section will address the most classic problem of political philosophy, namely that of the legitimacy of political power (sovereignty). Pivoting on the classical opposition between two strands (Aristotelian-Hegelian and contractualist), the main responses philosophers have given to the classical problem of political obligation ('why and under what conditions must I obey a power?') and related questions such as the meaning and function of social life will be shown.
The second section will deal with the question of justice. Starting with the classical definitions, the lectures will follow the vicissitudes of the discussion on this issue that lead to Rawls' theory, i.e. the cornerstone of the contemporary debate. In the tension between (re)distributive justice and freedom, the philosophical roots of oppositions that often animate the public debate will be shown.
The third section will examine the fundamental concepts of equality and freedom and compare the main contemporary political theories: liberalism, socialism, democracy. This will also provide an understanding, with the contribution of philosophy, of the political landscape of the present.
The concluding section will give space to philosophical-political theories that offer different and alternative perspectives on classic problems in this field of study, particularly feminist theories.

In the second part:
Lectures given by Prof. Miraglia (14 hours) will explore the problem of freedom and thus the limits that must be placed on political and social power. Starting from the Aristotelian idea of the political sphere as the prerogative of free and equal individuals, the developments that the idea of freedom has had in modernity will be shown, starting from the tradition of classical liberalism, passing through the reflections of J.S. Mill – whose 'On Liberty' will be given a guided reading – up to the libertarian addresses and their apology for the minimal state.
The lectures given by Prof. Serughetti (14 hours) will delve into the philosophical-political foundations of the welfare state, i.e., the concepts that have historically offered the basis of legitimacy for state intervention aimed at ensuring social inclusion and protection for citizens from the negative externalities of capitalism: unemployment, inequality of income, wealth, health, education, and opportunities for participation. Attention will thus be brought to 1) the principle of solidarity, as the foundation of economic, political and social obligations aimed at ensuring the well-being of citizens, and as an essential component of a constitutional democratic system; 2) the relationship between this concept and that of 'care,' at the center of much feminist political reflection, as a notion capable of both expanding the boundaries of welfare and redrawing the form and substance of democracy.

Prerequisites

No special skills are required, but interest in discussing current issues of public interest, willingness to learn, passion for argumentation and active participation in the classroom.

Teaching methods

The teaching consists of 56 hours, of which approximately 70 percent is by didactic delivery (face-to-face lectures with use of slides) and 30 percent is by interactive teaching (viewing and discussion of films, presentation and discussion of case studies, interactive seminars with guests).

Assessment methods

The examination will consist of a written test with open questions.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. Stefano Petrucciani, *Modelli di filosofia politica*, Einaudi, Torino 2003.

2. John Stuart Mill, *Saggio sulla libertà*, qualsiasi edizione.

3. A title of your choice from the following:
   Alessandro Volpe, *Solidarietà. Filosofia di un'idea sociale*, Carocci, Roma 2023.
   Joan Tronto, *Who cares? Come ripensare una politica democratica*, Castelvecchi, Roma 2023.

Sustainable Development Goals

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