



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultural Research: Methodology and Techniques

2425-2-E4001N115

Learning objectives

The course will offer a set of epistemological principles, conceptual tools, research methods and technics which allow the students both to develop the basic skills for projecting and carrying out empirical investigations on cultural topics, processes and phenomena and to investigate social questions, processes and phenomena from a culturalist approach. The course will pay particular attention to the conceptual and analytical categories of body and space as research object and research tool.

Contents

The course is divided in two parts: the first one focuses on the main methods and technics of cultural research dealt with from both a sociological and interdisciplinary perspective, considering especially the categories of body and space as research tool to analyse various case studies; the second part will be devoted to the planning and development of research project based on the categories of body and/or space.

Detailed program

The course is structured in two parts. In the first part the course will provide some analytical and conceptual key-categories for identifying and analyzing cultural phenomena, objects, and texts to use in the different research phases. Furthermore, the students will be introduced to the main methods and techniques of qualitative research and analysis such as: narrative interviews, life stories, (auto)biographic methods; focus group; participant observation and observant participation (according to the methodological principles of sensory ethnography), embodied ethnography, (audio)visual, analysis; grounded theory, field analysis and digital ethnography. While privileging qualitative research methods and techniques the students will also face mixed methods research designs. The aim of this approach is to highlight the nexus between empirical research and theorization in the

different research phases, from the choice of the research object, the construction of a research question, the choices of research techniques and methods according to the research questions, the coding and analysis of the empirical material, the communication and writing of the research outputs.

In the second part the students will start their research project and will present in class the projects progress. The research project should deal with the concepts of body and/or space either as analytic category, or as research tool or research object. The research project should consider one of the following research fields: memory dynamics and conflicts; the spatialization processes in the (urban) places and the building there of urban subcultures and idiocultures; body narratives and (auto)biographies especially in social media; the role of body in the construction of social inequalities within intimate/private relationships and in the workplace; the production, circulation and reception of knowledge and cultural objects with a focus on popular music and comics.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledges of the qualitative and quantitative research methods and main topics of cultural sociology

Teaching methods

Frontal lessons: about 30% of the course with slides and collective discussion)

Interactive lessons: seminars; lab sessions on audio-visual materials; presentations and group projects (about 70% of the course).

Lectures will be recorded just in case it includes audiovisual material required for presentations and group projects

Assessment methods

Written exam with open questions. The aim is to assess:

1. the comprehension degree of the issues dealt with in the course
2. the knowledge degree of the issues dealt with in the course
3. the argumentative skills
4. the clarity of exposition
5. the accuracy of sociological terminology
6. The capability of planning a research design from a cultural sociological approach.

In alternative to the written exam, students who started to work on their research projects in class may present a research paper, that should be sent up to two days before the final exam date. If the research report is the result of a collective project work, it shall be possible to identify the individual contribution of each student.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1a. Santoro, M. e Grüning, B. (2024), *Società e Cultura*, Roma, Carocci

or

1b. Grüning, B. and Scavarda, A. (2025), *Sociologia del fumetto. Concetti, metodi e pratiche per la ricerca e la*

comunicazione sociale (working title), Roma, Carocci.

2. Reading material '2024-2025' available at the 'Copisteria Fronteretro', Viale Sarca 191 (to reserve it: <https://www.fronte-retro.it/dispense.html>). This includes the following reading assignments:

- Creswell, J.W. (1994). *Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oak: Sage. (cap. I)
 - Demazière, G. & C. Dubar, C. (2000). *Dentro le storie*. Milano: Cortina Editore. (I parte)
 - Thanem, T. & Knights, D. (2019), *Embodied research methods*, London, Sage (chapters 1, 2)
 - Rose, G. (2022), *Visual methodologies* (introduction and chapter 4)
- Further suggested readings will be provided during the course

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION
