



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Representations and Cultural Practices

2425-2-E4001N116

Learning objectives

The aim of the course is to provide students with a set of theoretical and practical tools to understand and analyse *the social organisation of contemporary cultural worlds* in their practical and discursive dimensions.

Contents

The course is divided into four parts. In the first part, the main contemporary theories related to the *field of cultural studies* will be presented, with a focus on the role of *power*. In the second part, we will focus on the processes of *construction of boundaries*. In the third part we will study closely the logics and social organization of creativity, through an in-depth study of the worlds of art and science. In the fourth part, through an in-depth monograph, we will try to test the analytical categories discussed in the first three parts.

Detailed program

The course is divided into four parts. In the first three parts, the main contemporary theories related to the field of cultural studies will be presented through critical analysis of contributions from different disciplines, from sociology to anthropology, from philosophy of social sciences to cultural history.

- The first, will address the question of the interpretation of social action, with an analysis of the relationship between the cultural construction of bodies and symbolic power. We will ask what it means to talk about "individual behavior" and to what extent we are free to act and intervene collectively to modify certain courses of action.
- The second will be devoted to the deconstruction of the concept of cultural identity, paying attention to the so-called *boundary-work* and the related role played by power mechanisms at the subjective and

institutional levels. Here we will delve into the theme of the mask, cultural difference and visual representations of categories of belonging.

- The third will be concerned with interpreting two specific fields of cultural production, addressing the critical analysis of artistic and scientific forms of knowledge. Here we will be concerned with comparing the different modes of "social organization of truth" produced within these two social fields.
- The fourth part of the course, will be devoted, on the other hand, through in-depth studies, exercises and collective discussions, to the analysis of cultural representations and practices related to the theme of comedy and humor. The aim, in this case, will be to critically discuss the state of the art of cultural research on this particular contemporary phenomenon, in the Italian and international sphere and, therefore, to test the analytical categories discussed in the first part of the course.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of the main theories and issues in the cultural sociology and communication processes

Teaching methods

Lecture in class; seminar activities; discussions about texts and audio-visual material. The Course consists of 56 hours, of which approximately 60 percent is by didactic delivery (lectures with use of slides, audio and video) and 40 percent by interactive teaching (exercises, subgroup work, presentation of case studies from which to develop individual and subgroup work, prepared and discussed during the course).

Assessment methods

The examination will be conducted in two possible ways:

- -A written test with open-ended questions (very short essays) administered at the end of the course and related to the handout distributed at the beginning of the course, which will consist of the texts listed in the bibliography and may be preceded by a public presentation of a group project work to be carried out during the course, in the forms described in the classroom.
- -A written test with open questions (very short essays) from the texts marked in the bibliography, which will not be discussed in their details during the course.

In both cases, the evaluation criteria will be geared toward checking the adequacy of the concepts illustrated in relation to the demands of the questions, the accuracy of the socio-cultural vocabulary and the expository clarity of the short essays.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Texts discussed during classrooms

Handout 'Cultural Representations and Practices, A.A. 2024-2025' (which will be available shortly before the beginning of the course, at the Fronteretro copy shop, Viale Sarca 191), which includes the following essays (or

partial extracts).

The analysis of contemporary cultural worlds

1. Spillman, L. (2022). *Sociologia culturale*. Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 11-33.

a. Individual, behaviour and power: social practice

2. SCHUTZ, A. (1955) *Don Chisciotte e il problema della realtà*, Roma, Armando, pp. 25-59, ed. or. in *Collected Papers*, vol.II, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971 (1955).
3. DOUGLAS, M. (1966) *La contaminazione nella sfera profana*, in *Purezza e pericolo*, Bologna, il Mulino, pp.57-73, ed. or. in *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Book, 1970.
4. ELIAS, N. (1982) *Mutamenti dell'aggressività come piacere*, in *Il processo di civilizzazione*, Bologna, il Mulino, pp. 351-368, ed. or. *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp., 1969
5. BOURDIEU, P. (1997) *La conoscenza col corpo*, Milano, Feltrinelli, pp.145-171, ed. or. in *Meditationes Pascaliennes*, Paris, Editions de Seuil.
6. FOUCAULT, M. (1975) *I mezzi del buon addestramento*, in *Sorvegliare e Punire*, Torino, Einaudi, pp.186-212, ed. or. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard.

***b. The dilemma of cultural identity**

7. HALL, S. (1996) *Chi ha bisogno dell'identità?*, Milano, il Saggiatore, pp.1-17, ed. or. in Hall, S. e du Gay, P., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage,.
8. SAID E. W. (1999) *Una geografia immaginaria e le sue rappresentazioni: orientalizzare l'Oriente*, in *Orientalismo*, Milano, Feltrinelli, pp. 56-78, ed. or. *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978
9. HOBBSAWN, E.J. (1983) *Come si inventa una tradizione*, Torino, Einaudi, ed. or. in Hobsbawn, E.J. e Ranger, T., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, pp. 3-17.
10. PIZZORNO, A. (2005) *Saggio sulla maschera*, in "Studi culturali", N.1, pp.85-109
11. GOFFMAN, E. (1977) *La ritualizzazione della femminilità*, ed. or. *La ritualisation de la féminité*, in "Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales", 14, pp. 37-50.

c. Art and science: creativity as practice and representation

12. BAXANDALL, M. (2001) *L'occhio del Quattrocento*, in *Pittura ed esperienze sociali nell'Italia del Quattrocento*, Torino, Einaudi, pp. 41-103 (estratti), ed. or. *Painting and Experience** in *Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford University Press, 1972
13. FINE, G.A. (2006) *Attraverso un vetro scuro. Le previsioni meteorologiche e le promesse del "lavoro sul futuro"*, in "Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa", N.2, pp.215-247
14. BOURDIEU, P. (2003) *Un mondo a parte*, in *Il mestiere di scienziato*, Milano Feltrinelli, pp.47-106 (estratti), ed. or. *Science de la science et réflexivité*, Paris, Raison d'agir, 2001.

Cultural practices and representations of humor*

15. FINE, G. A. (1983). *Sociological approaches to the study of humor*, in *Handbook of Humor Research: Volume 1: Basic Issues*, pp. 159-181.
16. LE BRETON, D. (2019). *La disciplina del riso*, in *Ridere: Antropologia dell'homo ridens*. Raffaello Cortina Editore.
17. LOCKYER, S., & PICKERING, M. (2001). *Dear shit-shovellers: Humour, censure and the discourse of complaint*. *Discourse & Society*, 12(5), 633-651.

Texts not discussed during classrooms

- GIGLIOLI, P. P. (2007), *Da Parsons a Ricoeur passando per Bali*, in *Aut Aut*, n.335, pp. 37-55
- GOFFMAN, E. (2001) *Asylums. Le istituzioni totali: i meccanismi dell'esclusione e della violenza*, Torino, Comunità.

Also, one of the following:

- SENNETT, R. (2006). *Il declino dell'uomo pubblico*. Bruno Mondadori.

TODOROV, T. (1984). La conquista dell'America: il problema dell' "altro". Torino. Einaudi.
BURKE, P. (1993). La fabbrica del Re Sole. Milano. Il Saggiatore.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES |
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | CLIMATE ACTION
