



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Political Philosophy

2425-1-E4001N086

---

#### Learning objectives

Introducing the basic issues of political philosophy and elaborating a case study on merit and meritocracy.

Primary aim of this class is not gaining some "skills" but philosophical knowledges and methods which are fundamental to understanding social phenomena. Obviously all the "skills" involved in this task are practiced, such as critical thinking, foundational analysis, ecc.

#### Contents

**Part one: foundations of political philosophy.**

**Part two: merit and meritocracy.**

#### Detailed program

**Part one: foundations of political philosophy.**

The birth of political philosophy in the Greek polis. The political philosophy of Plato. Aristotle's political philosophy. Political philosophy of Hellenism (with particular reference to Stoicism). The Christian world and the political philosophies of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas of Aquino. The Protestant Reform. Contractarianism: Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant. The French revolution and post-revolutionary liberalism: Constant, Mill, Tocqueville. Hegel and Marx. The current debate: Rawls, contemporary liberalism (Nozick), Communitarianism, the capacity approach (Sen), Michel Foucault's philosophy of power, Jurgen Habermas' political philosophy, Feminism.

## **Part two: merit and meritocracy. ``**

The second part applies the philosophical approach and the knowledges acquired to the issue of the so-called "meritocracy". Since in the public debate the "meritocratic" ideal is exalted almost without voices of dissent, the issue is very suitable for showing both the superficiality of this debate and the almost exclusive hegemony within it of "neoliberal" ideals (quotation marks are obligatory), and the intrinsic problematic nature of every political ideal. Through an analysis of the philosophical and sociological literature on the subject it will in fact be seen that the meritocratic ideal is mostly the object of sometimes radical criticism and in any case of cautious and circumstantial evaluations in the light of values ??such as social justice, freedom, etc.

## **Prerequisites**

None

## **Teaching methods**

The class amount to 63 hours, of which, approximately, 70% are made of theoretical lessons and 30% of interactive teaching (extensive discussion of topics).

## **Assessment methods**

*All students:* Written test. Oral test on demand for positive written test exclusively.

The test consists in one long question (two sides) and one short question (one side long) concerning part one, and one short question (one side) concerning part two.

No intermediate test is scheduled but at the end of every lesson a final discussion and questions addressed by professor will have the function of a daily intermediate test.

## **Textbooks and Reading Materials**

Petrucciani S., *Modelli di Filosofia Politica*, Einaudi, 2003

Cingari S., *La meritocrazia*, Ediesse, 2020.

Young, M., *L'avvento della meritocrazia*, Edizioni di Comunità, 2014.

Sandel M., "La Tirannia del merito", Feltrinelli, 2021.

Barrotta P., "I demeriti del merito", Rubattino, 1999.

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

---