



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Critical Events and Organizational Learning

2425-1-F8803N004

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to analyze complex critical events (e.g., accidents, disasters, misconduct, etc.) in order to facilitate organizational and institutional learning processes. Specifically, students will have acquired:

- the knowledge to develop learning processes of organizations and institutions;
- the knowledge of the theoretical methodological coordinates of analysis for the diagnosis of organizational problems;
- the ability to analyze organizational failures to understand how organizations foster, manage and react to unexpected events;
- the ability to understand and neutralize organizational scapegoating processes;
- the ability to perform organizational analysis, including case reading, and practical application;
- the ability to source, understand, use and critique secondary organizational literature.

Contents

Leading themes of the course are (1) the study of the set of interventions necessary to prevent accidents and critical events (incidents, misconduct, disasters, etc.) that can produce harm to people or property, and that result from erroneous actions, violations, and mishaps of an unintentional nature (safety management); (2) the study of organizational learning processes following these critical events, beyond the culture of blame. The course is structured as an in-progress investigation of topics such as:

- safety management in organizations: issues and methods;
- error management;
- organizational learning in complex systems;
- the construction of organizational scapegoats;
- organizational myopia: foresight and predictability in organizations;

- high reliability organizations;
- the role of organizational culture in learning processes.

Detailed program

The main topics of the course are (1) the study of the set of interventions needed to prevent accidents and critical events (incidents, misbehaviors, disasters, etc.) that can produce harm to people or property and that result from wrong actions, violations, and accidents of an unintentional nature (safety management); (2) the study of organizational learning processes following these critical events, beyond the culture of blame. The course is structured as an in-progress study of topics such as:

- safety management in organizations: issues and methods;
- error management;
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- high reliability organizations;
- the role of organizational culture in learning processes.

Prerequisites

Sufficient notions of logic and general culture.

Teaching methods

The Course will be divided 50% in didactics (lectures with use of slides, audio and video) and 50% in interactive teaching (exercises, subgroup work, presentation of case studies from which to develop individual and subgroup work, prepared and discussed during the course, etc.).

Assessment methods

Attending and non-attending students will be assessed through a written test based on open-ended questions regarding the course topics and the materials indicated in the "Reference Texts." No intermediate tests are scheduled.

The objective of the learning verification is to check the preparation on the examination program and the ability to reflect independently on the critical points of the program.

The evaluation criteria for the written test are:

1. language properties - appropriate use of terms;
2. precision in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to build connections between various topics;
4. completeness of the exposure given the time limits;
5. analytical skills in commenting on the texts selected for study texts.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Attending and non-attending students (complete study of both texts)

Catino M. (2014), *Organizational Myopia: Problems of Rationality and Foresight in Organizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Paperback edition).

Catino M. (2022), *Finding the culprit. The construction of the scapegoat in organizations*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
