



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Sociology of Language

2526-3-E4001N091

Learning objectives

The course examines language, both as an object of research and as a tool for the analysis of social phenomena.

Knowledge and the ability to understand:

By the end of the course, students will have acquired a solid critical understanding of:

- the main approaches to the study of language in interaction and different social contexts;
- the use of language as a practical resource and object of empirical research;
- the influence of gender, social class, age and processes of racialization on the production and use of language and discourse in everyday contexts.

Applied knowledge and understanding:

Students will learn to apply the concepts and methods of analysis presented during the course, such as the relationship between language and gender and keyword analysis, so as to understand and contextualise contemporary issues related to the sociology of language.

Independent thinking:

The course encourages students to adopt a critical and independent approach to studying the relationship between language and contemporary social phenomena, enabling them to develop their own scientifically informed views on key issues regarding the sociology of language.

Communication skills:

By the end of the course, students will be able to contribute critically to the main debates in the sociology of language, both orally and in writing.

Learning skills:

The course fosters students' learning skills and their interest in the sociological dimensions of language through continuous dialogue with the lecturer during lectures and class activities (e.g. films, debates, presentations). By the end of the course, students will be able to incorporate the theme of language into their future research projects, in

terms of theory, methodology and empirical research.

Contents

The course provides students with an introduction to the main theoretical and methodological reflections on language in the social sciences, from the linguistic turn to critical discourse analysis. It examines the relationship between language and knowledge, social practices, power and ideology. In particular, the course considers how issues of gender, age, class and race have transformed language into an important terrain of conflict and negotiation in contemporary societies.

Detailed program

The first part of the course provides an overview of the principal theoretical issues (structure, action, inequality, distinction, power, discourse, ideology) and methodological approaches (such as ethnomethodology, critical discourse analysis, and the cultural-materialist approach to the study of key words) at the centre of the sociology of language. In addition, the course examines the study of language in relation to lexical use, social interaction, social knowledge, and social practices. The second part of the course is devoted to an in-depth study of contemporary language as a field of conflict and negotiation. In particular, the course addresses the relationship between language and four thematic areas: gender, cities, power and migration.

Prerequisites

There are no special requirements, but it is desirable that students have a good grounding in the notions and analytical approaches that characterise the sociology of cultural and communication processes.

Teaching methods

The language of delivery is Italian. The 56-hour course will consist of the following two teaching methods:

- frontal teaching (approximately 60% of the course), including lectures with the use of Power Point and the projection of audio-visual material;
- interactive teaching (approximately 40% of the course), including student discussion of readings and videos shown in class, debates in the classroom on themes related to the sociology of language; individual and group presentations on topics related to the course.

Most of the lessons (approximately 85%) will be delivered in the classroom. Approximately 15% of teaching hours (up to a total of 8 hours) will be conducted remotely, including through the assignment of readings and audio-visual material.

Assessment methods

The assessment method is by written exam which is divided into three parts. The first part (20% of the final mark) consists of 10 multiple-choice questions on the content of the course slides. The second part (20% of the final mark) consists of an open question on one of the selected exam texts, which will assess the ability of the student to accurately summarise arguments in these texts. The third part (60% of the final mark) will consist of a written essay on one of the four topics (gender, city, power or migration). In this last part, assessment will focus on the students' critical understanding of the course topics, their discussion of appropriate examples, demonstration of their reading from the bibliography and their ability to apply theories and perspectives from these readings to contemporary social phenomena

In addition, attendance and participation in lectures and classroom activities (discussion of readings; debates on issues related to the course)

Further information about the exam will be available in the slides entitled 'Informazioni sull'esame' which will be uploaded onto the course's e-learning platform.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Some of the reading material for the exam (10 texts that are not available in electronic format) will be included in the handout 'Sociologia del Linguaggio a.a. 2025-2026', available from the start of the course at the Fronteretro photocopy shop in Viale Sarca 191. Contact information and details for home delivery requests are available on the shop's website.

The other exam texts (those available in electronic format) will be uploaded to the E-learning platform in the 'Bibliografia di riferimento' section.

A complete list of exam texts for the exam, both in the handouts and on the e-learning platform, will be available in the 'Bibliografia di riferimento' section from March 2026.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES
