UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Anthropology of The Contemporary

2526-3-E2001R027

Course title

Anthropology of contemporaneity

Topics and course structure

Contemporary anthropology is a critical form of study and understanding of reality. In their first year, students on the degree program have already studied the fundamental elements of the discipline, namely the theories and methodologies developed since the second half of the 19th century to understand the processes of identity construction and social difference in the contemporary world.
The course includes
1) An in-depth study of a specific topic in cultural anthropology: the cultural construction of subjectivity.
2) Practical learning of fundamental elements of ethnography: data collection, field research, reporting, and analysis of material.

The study of Philippe Bourgois' *text In search of Respect: Selling crack in el Barrio* (the 'drug economy' as drug dealing, consumption, urban ghettoization, discrimination, internalization of hierarchy, stigma, class relations, colonial legacy) and of the articles presented from time to time in the course handouts (currently being developed: the course notes will take into account classroom discussions) will allow students to familiarize with some important theories concerning the study of the embodied subject. Concepts such as habitus, structural violence, symbolic violence, anthropopoiesis, gynecopoiesis, self-care, social suffering, imagination, and others will be analyzed and demonstrated in the concrete context of specific ethnographies.
Parallel to the study, the course features a practical part of ethnography. Students will be introduced to the fundamentals of ethnography as a research method and will be asked to carry out specific exercises, which will then be discussed in class. Attendance is essential for this part of the course and will be included in the exam. Those who are unable to attend are required to study the handouts uploaded to the e-learning page.
The course has a strong focus on putting analytical concepts into practice. Ethnographic exercises are part of the classroom training but also require independent work. Students who do not attend will pay particular attention to

the methodological aspects of the texts covered in the exam.

Objectives

Through regular and participatory class attendance, this course features the following targets:
Knowledge and understanding: the course aims to provide students with an understanding of a fundamental area of cultural anthropology, namely the study of the transformation of the body, through the analysis of some discipline-specific notions such as habitus, structural violence, symbolic violence, anthropopoiesis, gynecopoiesis, self-care, social suffering, and imagination. More precisely, the course aims to delve into the theoretical paradigm of symbolic violence and anthropopoiesis and the methodological specificities of anthropology such as field research, decolonisation of gaze, data collection and its restitution.
Ability to connect different models and ideas: Through the proposed lectures and readings, students will be provided with the disciplinary tools necessary to understand the processes of construction of bodily identities and to develop the ability to confront cultural diversity in its contemporary expressions: diversity of appearance, class, gender, ability and health.
Ability to apply knowledge and models: Students will acquire knowledge useful for critical reflection on the complexity of the contemporary world. The practice of ethnography and in-depth study of technical aspects such as interviewing, dialogue and restitution will enable them to develop skills of observation and interpretation of everyday life contexts.
Autonomy of judgment and communication skills will be strengthened during the lectures, and stimulate students to formulate their own opinion and argue it effectively. Learning skills will be encouraged through active participation in lectures and classroom discussion.

Methodologies

Classical lectures 50% : lectures with use of Power Point will cover the main topics, followed by in-classroom debates (online on two furtherly announced dates). Case-studies drawn from the history of the discipline are side-by side with those illustrated in the reading list. Audio-visual materials will be shared during the course.
Interactive learning: 50% Data collection and writing exercises with classroom discussion of the results sum up to 50% of the course.
Online lessons: 5 online lessons will cover fundamental topics. The dates will be announced on the course web page.

Online and offline teaching materials

All teaching and learning materials will be specified during the course and uploaded to **the course page,** which both attending and nonattending students are reuqired to control regularly.

Programme and references

Reading list
Bourgois., P., In search of respect. Selling crack in el Barrio.
Ingold, T., Anthropology. Why it Matters. Wiley and Sons, 2018.

Wacquant, L., Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity, Duke U.P, 2009.

Handout from the course, uploaded online for registered students.

Assessment methods

The exam will be **oral only**.
Oral exam on the course content aimed at assessing the knowledge acquired through critical study of the texts included in the exam program and active participation in the activities proposed during the course (for attending students only). There will be no ongoing assessments.
The choice of an oral interview as the examination method is consistent with the objectives of the course, as it allows, thanks to a communicative dialogue situation, interaction with the student to assess their critical understanding of the course topics and the connection between theory and practice. There will be no ongoing assessments.
Assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors: the level bands are as follows

1. Low Level (0-17/30): Unsatisfactory
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts proposed.
   Ability to apply knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on the authors/topics examined in the texts; able to summarize the contents of the texts presented only to a very limited extent, unable to contextualize and compare them.
   Autonomy of judgment: lacks critical thinking and autonomy of judgment; depends exclusively on information provided by the instructor or the critical bibliography.
   Communication Skills: oral expression is halting, approximate, and stereotyped; shows poor command of the specific language of the discipline.
   Learning Skills: has limited ability to rework knowledge and relate it to their own experience; shows little awareness of the usefulness of the discipline.
2. Average Level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, albeit with some gaps, inaccuracies on specific but non-essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of the texts.
   Ability to Apply Knowledge: is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify in the texts the general considerations on the authors/topics examined, when prompted by the teachers; is able to summarize the texts presented in a reasonable manner, interpret them, contextualize them, and compare them correctly.
   Autonomy of Judgment: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to repeating the opinions of others.
   Communication skills: expresses themselves clearly and with sufficient precision, demonstrating a reasonable command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers depending on the communicative situation.
   Learning skills: demonstrates a reasonable ability to rework knowledge and link it to their own experience; has a partial awareness of the usefulness of the discipline.
3. High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates in-depth and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes the proposed texts without hesitation.

Office hours

Appointment requested via written email to the teachers.

Programme validity

Syllabus is to be held as good for the academic year of the first inscription and the following year (2 years in all).

Course tutors and assistants

Daniele Coccia
Roberto Rizzo

Sustainable Development Goals

REDUCED INEQUALITIES