UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Social Psychology of Communication

2526-2-E2004P044

Learning area

2: Psychosocial aspects underlying communication.

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course, students are expected to have acquired:

- a solid understanding of key theoretical models and empirical evidence related to the psychosocial processes involved in human communication;
- the ability to analyze the bidirectional relationship between communication and broader social phenomena;
- knowledge of different forms of communication within specific social contexts.

Applying knowledge and understanding

Students will be able to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways, specifically by:

- critically evaluating communication theories and models;
- applying fundamental theoretical frameworks to socially relevant communication issues;
- developing methodological competencies through the analysis of empirical research;
- identifying the role of social variables in everyday communication processes and proposing strategies for analysis and intervention.

Making judgements

The course is designed to foster independent thinking and critical judgment. Students will enhance their ability to collect and interpret relevant data in order to form reasoned opinions on social and scientific matters. This will be supported through:

- critical analysis of real-world communication cases, informed by theoretical models;
- classroom debates;
- collaborative group exercises.

Communication Skills

The course supports the development of effective communication skills in two main ways:

- indirectly, by increasing students' awareness of the psychological mechanisms underlying interpersonal and public communication, as well as social influence processes;
- directly, through structured classroom discussions that strengthen interpersonal communication, turn-taking, and group interaction dynamics.

Learning Skills

The course promotes the development of autonomous learning skills through:

- the introduction of active learning strategies, emphasizing critical engagement with theories, models, and research;
- activities that require students to apply theoretical concepts (e.g., persuasion) to real or simulated communication contexts (e.g., advertising, everyday social interactions), thereby enhancing their ability to connect theory with practice.

Contents

The course aims at providing a comprehensive survey of research and theory about the relation between social processes and communication. Specifically, it will analyse how social variables may affect communication and how communication is likely to influence social phenomena. Particular attention will be devoted to communication on public issues.

Detailed program

The course programme comprises:

- Fundamental theories and models.
- Verbal and non-verbal behaviour.
- Social influence and persuasive communication.
- Communication in social groups.
- Public and scientific communication.
- Risk communication.
- Communication and intergroup relations.

Prerequisites

No specific preliminary requirements are necessary. However, a solid understanding of the basics of Social Psychology will enhance comprehension of the course content.

Teaching methods

a) The course will integrate lecture-based teaching (80%) and interactive teaching (20%).
The course combines traditional lectures aimed at providing theoretical knowledge with interactive methods that seek to actively engage students. These include the analysis of key empirical studies in the field and group-based discussion. This approach encourages both critical reflection and the practical application of concepts learned in class.

b) Type of teaching activities: lectures.
The course consists of 28 lessons, each lasting 2 hours.

c) The course will be conducted entirely in person.

Assessment methods

The exam, lasting 90 minutes, will be conducted in written form and will include both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Specifically, it will consist of 14 multiple-choice questions (1 point each) and 3 open-ended questions (max 6 points each). Final scores exceeding 30 will be converted to 30 cum laude.

The questions will be aimed at ascertaining the effective acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply it. The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, summarize, create links, and critically interpret social phenomena.

Student performance will be evaluated according to the following scale:

30 with honors (cum laude): Outstanding performance, demonstrating excellent mastery of content along with exceptional critical thinking and expressive clarity.
30: Excellent performance, with comprehensive knowledge, well-structured reasoning, and clear, accurate expression.
27–29: Very good performance, showing thorough and satisfactory understanding, with generally accurate and appropriate expression.
24–26: Good performance, with adequate knowledge of key topics, though not fully comprehensive or consistently well-articulated.
21–23: Sufficient performance, reflecting a basic and sometimes superficial understanding; expression and structure may be lacking or imprecise.
18–20: Marginally sufficient performance, with limited and superficial knowledge; expression and argumentation may present significant gaps.
< 18: Insufficient performance, with inadequate or seriously flawed understanding and a lack of orientation within the area

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Lotto, L. & Rumiati, R. (2013, seconda edizione). *Introduzione alla psicologia della comunicazione*. Bologna: Il Mulino (capitoli 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15).
- A booklet with additional material will be available at C.C.B. Centro Copie Bicocca (address: Viale Sarca 198, Milano).
- Slides and supplementary material loaded on the elearning platform.

Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS