UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Designing and Managing Cultural and Arts Organizations

2526-2-F5702R019

Course title

Organization and management of cultural and artistic institutions

Topics and course structure

The course focuses on the internal organizational dynamics of cultural and artistic institutions, adopting a perspective that places individual and collective behaviors, professional relationships, learning processes, and paths of change at the center. The aim is to understand how cultural organizations operate not merely as administrative or productive structures, but as living environments shaped by visions, identities, conflicts, and transformations.
The course begins with an analysis of the organizational culture specific to the cultural and artistic field, exploring how values, practices, and leadership styles influence the design and management of activities. It then delves into topics related to organizational behavior, with particular attention to motivational mechanisms, communication processes, and group dynamics within cultural institutions—contexts often marked by a multiplicity of roles and a strong relational dimension. Another key area of inquiry is human resource management, examined in light of its specificities within the cultural sector, which is characterized by hybrid work forms, flexible professional profiles, volunteer involvement, and atypical collaborations. Central themes include training, skills development, team coordination, and the creation of sustainable work environments. Subsequently, the course dedicates considerable attention to the topic of organizational learning, regarded as a strategic element for the vitality and innovation of cultural institutions. The learning modes through which organizations acquire shared knowledge, reflect on their own practices, and foster change—through collaboration, mentoring, participatory processes, and generative leadership—will be critically examined. Finally, the course addresses the challenges of organizational change processes, analyzing tools and approaches to interpret internal contexts, manage resistance, and engage stakeholders in transformative trajectories aligned with emerging needs and evolving modes of cultural production and participation.
The teaching approach is highly participatory: theoretical lectures are interspersed with case study analysis, simulations, design exercises, and dialogues with professionals in the field. When possible, the course is enriched

by field experiences, allowing students to observe real organizational processes and critically reflect on professional practices.
The course is taught in Italian.

Objectives

This course aims to provide students with both theoretical frameworks and practical tools to understand, analyze, and manage the internal organizational processes of cultural and artistic institutions, with particular emphasis on the human and relational dimensions that characterize these environments. The overarching goal is to foster a critical awareness of cultural organizations as complex social systems shaped by dynamics of cooperation, conflict, learning, and transformation.
Through the analysis of organizational models, case studies, and professional practices, students will be guided to recognize the significance of individual and collective behavior in shaping an organization's identity and effectiveness. They will be encouraged to reflect on how organizational culture, leadership, communication, group dynamics, and the enhancement of skills affect workplace well-being, the quality of decision-making processes, and the cultural and social impact of the institution. An additional aim of the course is to develop students' capacity to interpret the ongoing changes in the cultural sector—related to digitalization, evolving models of cultural engagement, and the growing emphasis on sustainability and inclusion—as opportunities for organizational learning. Students will be trained to perceive change not as a threat but as a managerial and strategic challenge requiring vision, adaptability, collaboration, and innovation. This perspective embraces the complexities of the contemporary cultural landscape, which increasingly demands the ability to think systemically and, at times, paradoxically.
The educational pathway also seeks to strengthen students' independent judgment, communication skills, and sense of responsibility in relation to their future roles within the cultural field. They will be encouraged to cultivate an integrated vision of managerial and economic competencies alongside relational and ethical ones, which are essential for working with awareness and creativity in constantly evolving cultural contexts.
Through active participation in the course, students are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding:
Understand key theories of organizational behavior as applied to cultural and artistic institutions
Comprehend the dynamics of organizational culture and their impact on roles, identities, and professional practices
Acquire tools for human resource management in complex and non-standardized cultural contexts
Recognize cultural organizations as continuously learning systems open to change
Applying knowledge and understanding:

Apply analytical tools to observe and interpret the internal dynamics of a cultural institution
Translate theoretical concepts into effective managerial and relational practices
Design interventions aimed at improving communication, leadership, coordination, and learning within cultural teams
Integrate managerial, relational, and artistic knowledge in the planning and evaluation of cultural activities

Autonomy in judgment
Develop a critical perspective on dominant organizational models and managerial choices
Independently assess the human, social, and ethical implications of management decisions
Devise original, context-sensitive solutions to complex organizational challenges
Reflect consciously on one’s professional role within cultural organizations
Communication skills
Communicate clearly, effectively, and appropriately across different professional and organizational contexts
Adopt language registers suited to various interlocutors (colleagues, managers, stakeholders, audiences)
Manage complex communication dynamics by promoting active listening, mediation, and cooperation
Use organizational and cultural language as a strategic tool for management and value creation
Learning skills
Develop personal methods of reflective, improvement-oriented learning

Enhance self-directed learning and ongoing professional development
Identify and leverage learning opportunities within work experiences and group processes
Actively promote and participate in shared organizational learning practices

Methodologies

The course consists of 19 sessions (18 sessions of three hours and 1 of two hours, for a total of 56 hours of instruction). A blended teaching approach is adopted, aimed at integrating the acquisition of theoretical knowledge with the development of analytical, relational, and project-based skills. Classes alternate between lecture-based instruction and participatory learning, combining frontal teaching, guided discussion, individual work, and cooperative activities. A dialogic structure encourages continuous interaction between instructor and students, fostering an open environment for discussion, critical reflection, and the exchange of experiences. Each session incorporates a variety of materials: theoretical and legal texts, case studies, current articles, videos, podcasts, project documents, simulations, and professional testimonies. Some sessions will be dedicated to collective analysis of real-world situations drawn from the cultural sector, with the aim of developing organizational observation and interpretation skills.
Throughout the course, individual and group exercises will be proposed, enabling students to apply theoretical concepts and simulate roles and dynamics typical of professional work in the cultural field. Particular emphasis will be placed on metacognitive reflection concerning learning processes and the development of transversal skills such as active listening, negotiation, conflict management, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Where possible, the course will be enriched by contributions from cultural practitioners, institutional leaders, management experts, and facilitators of participatory processes, who will be invited to share their experiences. In addition, short field visits or observational sessions may be organized to connect theoretical content with the operational realities of cultural contexts.
To support accessibility, a portion of the lessons and course materials will be made available in digital format via the course’s e-learning platform. Targeted support will also be provided for non-attending students or those with specific needs.

Online and offline teaching materials

All materials, resources, and tools used during the course are made available on the course's e-learning platform.
The instructor provides dedicated materials to support non-traditional students in their study and exam preparation. These include short recordings (introducing the syllabus, exam bibliography, exam organization, and guidelines for the oral exam), as well as summaries of key concepts and topics covered in class. Additionally, the instructor shares online video resources—such as interviews with authors, conferences, documentaries—and recommends relevant websites. Upon request, the instructor is available to organize a remote review session at the end of the course. This session will recap key topics, reinforce guidance for exam preparation, and address students' questions or concerns.
Both attending and non-attending students are strongly encouraged to register on the e-learning platform in order to access supplemental and in-depth study materials.

Programme and references

Option 1:
Solima, L. (2018). Management per l'impresa culturale (pp. 1-274). Carocci.
Dubini, P., Montanari, F., & Cirrincione, A. (2017). Management delle aziende culturali. Egea.

Option 2:
Byrnes, W. J. (2022). Management and the Arts. Routledge.

To ensure effective accessibility for international students participating in the Erasmus program, Option 2 provides an English-language textbook. In addition, to promote full comprehension of the course content and foster equitable and informed participation, students are also allowed to take the final examination in English.
Please note: An integral part of the required reading includes a selection of materials made available on the course's e-learning platform. These include scientific articles, journalistic pieces, and case studies, all of which are essential for exam preparation.

Assessment methods

Type of assessment: Oral examination in Italian. No intermediate tests are scheduled.
This dialogic format has been chosen as it aligns with the course's educational objectives and is particularly suited to assessing students' comprehension, critical reflection on course content, and command of appropriate expressive registers.
Assessment criteria:

The oral examination will assess the student's level of knowledge, understanding, and critical re-elaboration of the topics covered during the course, including all readings (Option 1 / Option 2) listed in the bibliography, as well as supplementary materials discussed in class (slides will be made available via Moodle). Additionally, the student's ability to apply the concepts and tools used during in-class activities or acquired through the readings will be evaluated.

Students are expected to respond to questions in a relevant, clear, accurate, and well-argued manner, making appropriate use of disciplinary terminology.

Evaluation will be based on the Dublin descriptors, according to the following performance bands:

1. Low level (0-17/30): Insufficient
   Knowledge and understanding: superficial or confused grasp of key course concepts (e.g., organizational learning, systems thinking, organizational culture); absence of references to case studies or inability to relate them to theoretical models.
   Application: poor ability to transfer knowledge to concrete situations in the cultural sector; responses are generic and descriptive, lacking managerial or project-based awareness.
   Autonomy and critical thinking: no personal elaboration; inability to recognize tensions or issues related to cultural governance.
   Communication: approximate, imprecise language; disorganized presentation; inadequate use of sector-specific terminology.
   Learning: no reflection on one's role within the cultural context; lack of awareness of the relational and organizational processes studied.

2. Intermediate level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
   Knowledge and understanding: students demonstrate a structured knowledge of the course content, though with some gaps or oversimplifications; they are able to identify the main organizational models and relational dimensions discussed.
   Application: There is evidence of the ability to connect course concepts to familiar or previously discussed examples. However, uncertainty remains in offering original analyses or insights stemming from personal reflection and re-elaboration. Overall, the response aligns correctly with course content, without displaying particular distinction or depth.
   Autonomy and critical thinking: students attempt to problematize issues, though such efforts may be limited; personal elaboration of course content is present but partial.

Communication: The exposition is clear and coherent; however, while the language used is appropriate, it tends to be formulaic or repetitive.
Learning: students show a moderate ability to connect course content to their own experiences or real-life contexts; an initial awareness of the professional dimension involved in managing cultural organizations is evident.

3. High level (25-30/30): Distinction-Excellent
   Knowledge and understanding: thorough and nuanced mastery of the course topics (e.g., generative leadership, organizational learning, relational dynamics, institutional transformation); ability to connect strategic vision with cultural sensitivity.
   Application: autonomous analysis of real-world cases and a proactive attitude; relevant and creative application of theoretical models to current organizational scenarios (e.g., digitalization, hybrid work, cultural sustainability).
   Autonomy and critical thinking: original interpretation of organizational dynamics; critical insight and ability to reflect on the emerging tensions and paradoxes between structure and creativity.
   Communication: fluent, precise, and professionally appropriate language; well-structured and well-argued presentation, demonstrating awareness of both context and theoretical frameworks.
   Learning: strong awareness of one's own learning trajectory; ability to interpret organizational culture as a space for negotiation and learning; deep reflection on one's future role within cultural institutions.

Please note: Students with PUOI certification (Piano Universitario per l'Inclusione) must email the relevant documentation to the instructor before the exam. In addition to accommodating certified PUOI requests, the instructor is available for any clarification regarding course topics and offers one-on-one consultations by appointment, either in person or remotely.

Please note: Oral examinations will be conducted in the order of registration. Each interview will last approximately 15 to 25 minutes. Students are expected to be thoroughly familiar with all study materials and course content. It is recommended to bring class notes, completed exercises, assigned readings, and references to the case studies discussed during the course. In the event of a high number of candidates, once the registration period has closed, a detailed calendar—including any additional examination days—will be communicated to all registered students. To ensure the reliability of the schedule, students who decide not to take the exam are kindly asked to cancel their registration in advance or, if the registration is already closed, to notify the instructor of their absence.

Office hours

To make an appointment, please email the professor at: samuele.maccioni@unimib.it

Office hours will be held remotely in the professor's virtual room: https://unimib.webex.com/meet/samuele.maccioni

Programme validity

Two academic years

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES