UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Public Engagament

2526-2-F5702R020

Course title

The public engagement of art: artistic languages and political dimension

Topics and course structure

This year's course will focus on the intrinsic publicness - and political nature - of experience and artistic languages, dwelling on some crucial moments within philosophical and artistic modernity in which this connection has been more or less explicitly thematised. The course will be essentially divided into two parts. We will begin by considering the way I. Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), elaborates his conception of aesthetic judgment as public judgement, a theorisation in which one can already grasp the Enlightenment demand for the formation of a public capable of rising above its own private individuality and in which art is assigned an end that reaches the moral and political sphere; and we will then see how F. Schiller, in the *Lettters on the aesthetic education of man* (1795), on the basis of Kant's intuitions, makes aesthetics and its concepts, just as the French Revolution is entering its most extreme phase, the pivot of a new, authentically moral education and politics ("it is precisely the path that passes through the aesthetic question that we must take to arrive at any definitive solution to the political problem: it is through beauty that we arrive at freedom', he writes in the *Letters*). So if there is, in modernity, an explicit thematisation of the nexus between art/aesthetics and its public and political force, declined in an emancipatory sense, what about this knot in later centuries? The second part of the course will address this question by discussing the perspectives of some of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century (W. Benjamin, T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, L. Althussser), who have highlighted, each in their own way, how art and artistic languages, within the fully developed capitalist modernity, entertain an ambiguous relationship with politics, with the commodity form and with their own public, placing art and its languages at a constant and unescapable crossroads. If for the Benjamin of *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* the new reproducible work of art can act, thanks to its own characteristics, as a means for the production of a new type of public - critical, inquiring, politicised - and thus produce a new public sphere, for Adorno and Horkheimer art, as a cultural industry, increasingly becomes a means of integrating the individual into the domain of capital, while for Althusser it can function as both an Ideological Apparatus and a means of interrupting ideological consciousness and awakening,

under certain conditions, a collective critical consciusness.

Objectives

The course aims to provide philosophical notions and tools that enable the student to
understand complex contexts and be able to act appropriately within them taking into account the different social constraints at play;
deal with situations that are always new, different and often changing; understand the implications and repercussions in socio-political processes of the professional activity carried out.

Expected learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding of the fundamental concepts exposed during the course, as well as their current political relevance. The student will also be able to distinguish the different uses that are made of these concepts depending on the context in which they are called upon.
Ability to consciously and critically apply this knowledge to the personal contexts in which the student will be acting.
Ability to analyse the critical aspects of the relationship between art and politics in capitalist and late-capitalist modernity in an autonomous and critical manner.
Clarity and autonomy of judgement on the social scope of one's action within the context of work and the political repercussions it produces.

Methodologies

Lectures; in-class discussion; text comprehension seminars (for attenders); use of video materials

Approximately, 14-17 lectures are expected in delivery-interactive mode, 2-4 lectures fully interactive, and
up to a maximum of 4 lectures in delivery mode remotely, asynchronously and recorded, in case of special teaching needs

The langiage of the course is Italian.

Online and offline teaching materials

Slides and selected passages will be provided during the lessons

Programme and references

I. Kant, *Critica della capacità di giudizio*, [qualsiasi edizione], Libro Primo, Analitica del Bello, §§ 1-22
I. Kant, "Risposta alla domanda: Che cos'è l'illuminismo?", in Id., Scritti politici e di filosofia della storia e del diritto, UTET, Torino, 1956, pp.
F. Schiller, *Lettere sull'educazione estetica dell'uomo*, Bompiani, Milano, 2019, passi scelti [saranno indicati a lezione]
W. Benjamin, *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Torino: Einaudi, 2014.

T.W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, “L’industria culturale”, in Iid., *Dialettica dell’illuminismo*, Torino: Einaudi, 2010. [pdf del testo disponibile]
L. Althusser, "Il Piccolo, Bertolazzi e Brecht. Note per un teatro materialista", in Id., *Per Marx*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1972
L. Althusser, "Ideologia e apparati ideologici di Stato", in Id., *Freud e Lacan*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1970 [pdf del testo disponibile]

Assessment methods

Oral examination consisting of an interview. Candidates may choose between two different formats:

1. Short presentation (5 min) of a topic of your choice from the topics covered in the course + two questions
2. Three questions

Assessment criteria: knowledge of the topics covered in class (for those attending only); knowledge of texts; critical aptitude and independence of judgement; terminological appropriateness.

There will be no intermediate evaluation(s).

Exam languages: Italian, English

The choice of the oral colloquium as exam mode is consistent with the objectives of the course, as it allows, thanks to a dialogical communicative situation, to interact with the student in order to assess his or her ability to critically understand the themes of the course, to analyse philosophy and to connect theory and practice.

The Dublin Descriptors will be used for assessment.

1. Low level (0-17/30): Not sufficient
   Knowledge and Comprehension: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts proposed. Ability to Apply Knowledge: He/she is not able to verify on the texts the philosophical-political concepts learnt; he/she is very partially able to synthesise the contents of the texts presented, he/she is not able to contextualise and compare them. Autonomy of Judgement: lacks critical capacity and autonomy of judgement; depends exclusively on information provided by the teacher or the critical bibliography. Communication skills: has a stunted, approximate, stereotyped oral expression; shows little command of the specific language of the discipline. Learning abilities: has a limited ability to rework knowledge and link it to one's own experience.

2. Average level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
   Knowledge and understanding: The student shows a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, although with some gaps, imprecision on specific but non-essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of texts. Ability to Apply Knowledge: He/she is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify on texts the philosophical-political concepts learnt, at the teachers' prompting; he/she is able to summarise the texts presented in a discrete manner, to interpret, contextualise and compare them correctly. Autonomy of judgement: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to the reiteration of others' judgements. Communication skills: has a clear and sufficiently precise expression, a fair command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers according to communicative situations. Learning skills: has a fair ability to rework knowledge and relate it to own experience.

3. High level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates thorough and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyses the proposed texts without uncertainty. Ability to Apply

Knowledge: The student is able to find in the texts, with confidence and effective personal observations, the philosophical-political concepts learned; with adequate argumentative property he/she is able to analyse, synthesise, interpret, contextualise and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary links. Autonomy of Judgement: demonstrates excellent critical capacity, autonomy of judgement, originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts and problems. Communication skills: has clear, rigorous, fluent and appropriate expression. Is fully aware of the need to use different linguistic registers according to communicative situations. Ability to learn: Shows excellent/excellent independent learning skills, is able to revise knowledge effectively and relate it to own experience.

NB: Students with PUOI must email the document to the teacher prior to the examination. In addition to accepting requests certified by PUOI, the lecturer is available for any clarification of lesson topics by appointment in person or remotely.

NB: Examination interviews will follow the order of registration. In the event of a large number of candidates, once enrolment has been completed, a
calendar with possible continuation days. In order to have a reliable timetable, students who decide not to take the interview are advised to cancel in good time or, once registration has closed, to inform the lecturer of their absence anyway.

Office hours

TBC at the beginning of the first term '25-26

Programme validity

two academic years

Course tutors and assistants

Gianluca Pozzoni

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS