UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Vulnerability and Social Inclusion

2526-2-F8803N010

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Understanding

The student acquires:

- The theoretical framework and conceptual references for the study of vulnerability and social inequalities.
- A general overview of inequalities in the Western world, the main generative causes, and their primary forms (variables over time and space).
- The main problems and research issues in the field of social vulnerability and inequalities.
- Tools for measuring social vulnerability and inequality.

Ability to Apply Knowledge and Understanding

The student learns:

- The correct use of specific terminology in the field of social vulnerability and social inequalities.
- The main theoretical hypotheses studied.
- The foundations for participating in the debate on the relevance of vulnerability and inequalities in contemporary society.
- The ability to gather information, produce analysis and interpretations, both by applying the acquired knowledge and through relevant examples constructed also independently.

Independent judgment

The course fosters the ability to critically analyze situations of vulnerability and social inequalities, encouraging independent reflection on structural causes and models of intervention. Students will be able to assess inclusion policies and practices in relation to their social contexts.

Communication skills

Students will acquire the tools to clearly and effectively communicate concepts, data, and strategies related to vulnerability and social inclusion, adapting their language to different audiences. Particular attention will be given to group work and oral presentations of classroom topics.

Learning skills

The course encourages autonomous and continuous learning, essential for keeping up with the evolution of social inequalities and forms of exclusion. Students will develop the ability to critically reflect on experiences and knowledge to support their professional development.

Contents

Theories of social vulnerability and inequalities.
Dimensions and causes of vulnerability and inequalities in the contemporary world.
Capitalism and vulnerability/inequality.
Forms of vulnerability and inequality: economic, work-related, housing-related, educational, generational, territorial, environmental, racial, symbolic, gender-related, health-related.
Measurement of vulnerability and inequality.
Policies to respond to social vulnerability and inequalities.

Detailed program

The course aims to provide knowledge on the main dimensions of social vulnerability and its close relationship with social, economic, and cultural inequalities. Taking a macro-sociological and structuralist approach, the course will examine the factors associated with increasing vulnerability in contemporary societies. In this context, we will look at the emergence of growing inequalities related both to the possession of individual resources such as income, education, social capital, employment, and to generative contextual factors related to territorial differences (North-South, central/internal areas), demographic changes (ageing population), crises (such as economic crisis of 2008, health crises such as Covid-19 pandemic, climate change). The social and economic transformations that in recent decades have led to a sense of insecurity, even among traditionally secure social classes have resulted in the expansion and aggravation of the risks and needs of a number of vulnerable groups: unemployed/precarious workers, the elderly, the poor, the sick, disabled, etc.
At the methodological level, the course aims to provide tools for measuring social vulnerability and inequality, through the use of specific indicators and data analysis techniques.
Finally, the course will look at interventions to combat social vulnerability and inequality, with a particular focus on welfare state policies.

Prerequisites

Sufficient logical reasoning and social and cultural knowledge, along with reasonable learning, writing, and oral communication skills.

Teaching methods

Lectures, seminars, group work, and exercises.

Specifically, the teaching activity will be distributed approximately as follows:

- 65% (18 two-hour lessons) with expository teaching (lectures using slides, audio, and video) delivered in person.
- 35% (10 two-hour lessons) with interactive teaching (exercises, group work, and individual assignments) delivered in person.

Students must enroll in the course on the e-learning platform, where support materials for the lessons will be uploaded.

Assessment methods

The examination can be taken in two ways.

**Mode 1

The student must give an oral presentation in the classroom and take a written test.
The exam is passed only if a positive evaluation (from 18 upwards) is obtained in both tests (presentation and written test).
The final mark that will be recorded is the sum of the (weighted) marks obtained in the two parts.
An oral presentation with a pass mark is valid for 6 examination sessions, thereafter the student will have to take the examination as indicated in Mode 2.

*Oral presentation

Individual presentation on the course contents chosen by the student, to be given during a course session.
The oral presentation will be worth 30% of the final mark.
The presentation must have a minimum duration of 20 minutes.
The presentation should be structured indicatively as follows:

- Theoretical framework of the phenomenon being analyzed (what literature says about the topic, what are the essential theoretical references, etc.).
- A section where the data, quantitative and/or qualitative, relating to the phenomenon of interest are reported (citing the source).
- Detailed discussion of the topic addressed.
- Bibliography of the sources used for the presentation.

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

In case the presentation does not reach a positive evaluation, the student will have to take the examination as indicated in Mode 2.

*Written Test

The written test aims to assess the knowledge and understanding of the course's fundamental concepts and contents, the ability to make connections and links between topics, and the ability to rework the themes addressed personally.

The written test will be worth 70% of the final mark.

Written test (duration 60 minutes) -> Two open-ended questions on the texts specified in the program and on the content of the lectures.

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

**Mode 2

The written test aims to assess the knowledge and understanding of the course's fundamental concepts and contents, the ability to make connections and links between topics, and the ability to rework the themes addressed personally.

The written test will be worth 100% of the final mark.

Written test (duration 90 minutes) -> Three open-ended questions on the texts specified in the program and on the content of the lectures, including an additional text only for students who will take the test in Mode 2. The additional text will be indicated during the course.

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Lucchini M., Negrelli S., Pisati M. (a cura di), La forza del destino. Origine sociale e opportunità di vita nell'Italia contemporanea, il Mulino, Bologna, 2011
- Slide del corso
- Rapporto BES ISTAT 2023 (with the exception of the following domains: 6. Politica e istituzioni; 9. Paesaggio e patrimonio culturale; 11. Innovazione, ricerca e creatività). The report will be used in class to discuss some of the phenomena covered in the course. In the exam, you may be asked ONLY to comment on the charts/figures/tables included in the Report and their relation to the topics discussed during the lectures.
  The BES Report is available and can be downloaded from the course's Moodle page.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | REDUCED INEQUALITIES