UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Intercultural Communication in The Global Age

2526-2-F8802N077

Learning objectives

The course aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Knowledge and Understanding
   Students will acquire the analytical and methodological tools necessary to examine the increasing cultural complexity of contemporary societies. Particular emphasis will be placed on how such complexity manifests itself in communicative processes—both face-to-face and mediated—that shape everyday experience, and on how it intersects with certain forms of human mobility.

2. Ability to Apply Knowledge and Understanding
   Students will learn to design and carry out qualitative empirical research, adopting everyday multiculturalism as their theoretical and epistemological framework.

3. Independent Judgment
   Students will be encouraged to take informed positions and to argue effectively and appropriately on highly controversial issues that are at the core of current public debates in Western societies.

4. Communication Skills
   Students will develop the ability to:
   (1) effectively present—also through visual means—a selection of readings that will be covered during the course lectures;
   (2) engage in discussion and argue persuasively about the topics addressed in class;
   (3) draft a research paper on an agreed topic related to the course programme.

5. Learning Skills
   Drawing on the theoretical and methodological knowledge and the research skills acquired, students will be able to design and conduct sociological research in the field of intercultural relations.

Contents

The course explores the following topics in depth:

1. The increasing cultural differentiation and complexity of contemporary society.
2. The role played by international migration in these transformations.
3. The figure of the "stranger" as an emblem of contemporaneity.
4. Feminist, postcolonial and queer perspectives on alterity.
5. Forms of consumption of difference and their relation with tourism practices.
6. Intercultural communication.
7. The socio-political construction of cultural otherness.
8. Racism.

Detailed program

The multicultural character of contemporary societies is now widely regarded—both by those who welcome it and by those who fear an inevitable conflict between cultures—as an incontrovertible fact. Terms such as culture, identity, and difference constitute the basic lexicon through which we describe the world we inhabit.

More specifically, we will focus on the following aspects:

1. the growing cultural complexity of everyday experience;
2. the peaceful and/or conflictual coexistence of a variety of “grammars” that structure communicative flows;
3. the incessant (re)production of identity references and cultural differences within face-to-face and/or mediated interactions;
4. the role that traditional media and interactive digital platforms play in the circulation, transformation, and re-contextualization of identity models on a global scale, as well as in the construction of “shared common sense”;
5. the constant boundary work through which we recognize ourselves as members of various groups and “communities.”

All these topics will be analysed with particular attention to recent developments in the sociology of international migration, postcolonial studies, and LGBT and queer studies.

Furthermore, we will address several key issues for understanding the current articulation between communication, culture, and difference:

1. the relationship between cultural differences and communicative practices;
2. the role of linguistic and socio-cognitive competences in intercultural communication situations;
3. the figure of the foreigner as a paradigmatic element of contemporaneity;
4. the growing importance of diversity policies in recent urban transformations;
5. the consumption of difference within tourism practices.

Finally, we will examine:

1. the ways in which cultural otherness is constructed through political discourse and media representations;
2. the increasing prominence of migration in public debate and in the political agenda at the global level;
3. the old and new forms in which racism manifests itself today.

Prerequisites

Knowledge of the main theoretical perspectives and research approaches in the field of the sociology of cultural processes. Basic knowledge and skills related to the use of qualitative techniques for social research.

Teaching methods

The course is taught in Italian.

Lectures (DE): 15 class hours.
Interactive teaching (DI): 41 class hours (including the presentation and discussion of texts, group exercises, and the design and implementation of a research project on topics covered in the course).

No remote teaching activities will be conducted.

Assessment methods

Students may choose between:
A research paper on a topic related to the course programme, to be agreed upon with the teacher.
An oral examination.

Assessment criteria (applicable both to the research paper and to the oral examination):
Appropriate and accurate use of sociological terminology.
Ability to identify, organize, and present topics clearly and precisely.
Ability to make connections among the various topics.
Ability to contextualize data analysis within relevant theoretical frameworks.
Completeness of the exposition.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For those students choosing the research paper option, the reference texts will be presented in the first lecture of the course and, where possible, made available in pdf format.

Reference texts to prepare for the oral examination:
Colombo E., 2020, *Sociologia delle relazioni interculturali*, Roma: Carocci.
Giaccardi C., 2012, *La comunicazione interculturale nell'era digitale*, Bologna: Il Mulino.
Quassoli F., 2021, *Clandestino. Il governo delle migrazioni nell'Italia contemporanea*, Milano: Meltemi.
Zoletto D., 2010, *Il gioco duro dell'integrazione*, Milano: Cortina.

Reference texts for Erasmus students:
Baumann G., 1999, *The Multicultural Riddle. Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities*, London, Routledge.
Wise A., Velayutham S. (eds.), 2009, *Everyday Multiculturalism*, Palgrave, Macmillan.
Neuliep J.W., 2014, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach Sixth (Edition)*, Sage.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS