UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Consulenza Familiare: Teorie e Pratiche

2526-1-F8502R003

Course title

The Search for Beauty. Systemic Pedagogy in Action

Topics and course structure

In this course, we will explore a different way of doing pedagogy: a way that begins with relationships, embraces complexity, and takes care of beauty within educational contexts. We will study the main concepts of systemic pedagogy—such as system, feedback, relationships, context, power, and narration.
Together, we'll work to understand how you can use these concepts to read and transform real educational situations. We will put these concepts into practice through activities and exercises, dialogical encounters, and reflective tools. We will use aesthetic and embodied languages, because to educate also means to engage emotions, senses, and imagination.

You will learn to think in stories, not just in categories. To use generative questions to open up new possibilities in conversations, educational meetings, family interactions, and teamwork. Read and interpret the institutional context, and position yourself in a reflective and responsive way.
Collaborate in teams, design interventions, and act with ethical and relational awareness.

What do you need?
Curiosity, openness, and a willingness to engage with your head, heart, and body. And a notebook—paper or digital—to keep track of your journey: your reflective journal. We will accompany you in a learning path that blends theory, practice, and personal transformation. Here, beauty is not an ornament—it is a form of knowledge and responsibility.

Objectives

The course aims to develop knowledge, skills, and reflective competencies within the framework of systemic pedagogy, promoting a deep understanding of relationships, context, and transformative processes in educational and social services.

Knowledge and Understanding
Principles of systemic theory and their application in pedagogical consultancy: system, feedback, symmetrical/complementary relationships, escalation, pattern, reflective questioning, power, etc.
Systemic models of learning: relationship with knowledge, logical levels, structural coupling, collective mind, transformative learning.
Contextual and institutional dimensions of educational intervention: mandate, demand, professional posture, metacommunication, meaning-making, professional networks.
Narration and beauty as modes of thinking and intervention: embodiment, enactment, aesthetic languages, and hypothesizing (Bateson).

Skills
Analyze complex educational situations using systemic tools.
Formulate generative questions in consultancy and co-design contexts.
Design narrative and reflective interventions using the knowledge spiral model.
Work collaboratively and generatively in professional teams.

Transversal and Reflective Competencies
Act responsively and consciously in the here and now.
Develop emotional self-awareness and ethical positioning.
Cultivate autonomy in learning and in caring for context and relationships.
Strengthen linguistic, communicative, relational, planning, and metacognitive skills.

Methodologies

In this course, you won't be a passive observer—you'll be an active participant in a transformative learning process.
We'll work in a dialogical, experiential, and reflective way, moving between theory and practice, individual and group work.
Your perspective, your experiences, and your questions will be key to building shared meaning.

Here's what you'll actually do:

- You will take part in dialogical lectures, where concepts are explored through examples, questions, and storytelling.
- You'll engage in workshops and activities using diverse languages: verbal, embodied, aesthetic, and narrative.
- You'll write weekly, to track your awareness, connections, and learning journey.
- You'll work in groups, in a cooperative, design-based, and hypothesis-driven way—simulating professional contexts.
- You'll have access to online resources and forums, to go deeper, exchange ideas, and continue learning beyond the classroom.
- You will write a final reflective paper on a meaningful experience, which will be discussed in the oral exam.

In short: we work with mind, heart, body, and relationships. We're not asking for perfection—just your openness, curiosity, and willingness to truly reflect.

Online and offline teaching materials

Teaching materials are uploaded to the platform (video lectures, recorded lessons, readings, stories), some materials will be provided by the students themselves.

Programme and references

The course programme is the same for attending and non attending students.

Bibliography for the exam

The standard program for the exam entails 2 books and a third book or 4-5 research papers or book chapters (in Italian and/or English). Students may propose an alternative program to the teacher.

Mandatory books for the students who read Italian

Formenti L. (a cura di) LE REGOLE DELLA BELLEZZA. Pedagogia sistemica in azione Franco Angeli, 2024. (in uscita a ottobre)

Formenti L. Formazione e trasformazione. Un modello complesso. Raffaello Cortina, 2017.

Alternative books (third choice)

Sclavi M., Arte di ascoltare e mondi possibili. Come si esce dalle cornici di cui siamo parte, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2003.

Luraschi, S. Le vie della riflessività. Per una pedagogia del corpomente. Armando, 2021.

Formenti L. Re-inventare la famiglia. Guida teorico-pratica per i professionisti dell'educazione. Apogeo, 2012. (only for students who did not attend Pedagogia della famiglia at Laurea Triennale in Scienze dell'Educazione)

For students who are not fluent in Italian, prof. Formenti can help to identify books in English that are relevant for the course:

About papers:

See the reference lists uploaded in the e-platform or look for scientific sources to explore more deeply your interests. Most papers are in English. To allow personalized learning, it is possibile to agree motivated changes to the program with the teacher.

Assessment methods

Why This Exam?
The exam format is consistent with the course's learning objectives: it helps you connect theory and practice, develop critical thinking and reflective awareness, and position yourself consciously in relation to the course topics.

The Exam Consists of Two Parts:

A. Submission of a reflective paper
B. Oral exam, based on the paper and the course readings

What Is a Reflective Paper? It is a personal and well-argued text that answers the question: “What have I learned, and how—starting from a concrete experience?”
? It is not a theoretical essay, nor a summary of the readings
? It starts from a real experience, which is then analyzed using the course concepts
? It must demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired
? It must include explicit references to the bibliography (with correct citations)
? The style is personal (written in first person), but not purely subjective: it is analytical and reasoned, not just opinion-based

Formal Requirements of the Paper
Length: 8–10 numbered pages (excluding cover page and bibliography)
Format: Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF
Font: any readable typeface (e.g., Times New Roman 12)
Line spacing: 1.5 – Margins: 2.5 cm on all sides
Bibliography: at least 2 books and 5 articles (additional sources allowed), cited using academic standards

The Cover Page Must Include:
Full name
Student ID number
Title of the paper
Degree program and course title
Instructor’s name
Academic year
Indicate whether you are an attending or non-attending student

(Optional: a creative title or image is welcome)

? You may enrich your text with images, diagrams, literary or poetic inserts, graphics, etc., as long as the material is coherent and carefully curated.

Submission Instructions
Upload the paper to the Moodle repository no later than 10 days before the exam date
The repository will be opened a few days before the deadline
? Do not email your paper to the teacher
? Do not use Moodle’s internal messaging system—it is not monitored
? For any questions, always use the general forum on Moodle

Oral Exam
The oral exam is a discussion of your paper: we will start from what you wrote and explore it further, clarify, or expand it.
If the paper shows insufficient use of theoretical references, you may be asked some supplementary questions on the readings.
Bring the course texts with you: they may be consulted during the exam.

Evaluation
The paper will receive written feedback, published the day before the oral exam
Even a poorly rated paper does not exclude access to the oral
The final grade (out of 30) is based on both the paper and the oral discussion

Main evaluation criteria:

- Academic quality and appropriateness of the writing

- Correct and in-depth use of systemic theories
- Conceptual clarity and explicit references to course texts
- Critical and reflective analysis of the experience
- Quality of the oral discussion

Office hours

Prof. Formenti receives upon appointment and only if strictly necessary. Students' tutoring (e.g. about exames) is delivered through the forum in the e-learning platform and during the dedicated meetings in streaming.

Programme validity

Programmes' duration is 2 academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Valentina Calciano, pedagogist, coordinator Lab'O
Davide Cino, PhD, fellow researcher
Antonella Cuppari, PhD, psychologist, pedagogist, responsible disability services
Andrea Di Martino, teacher, external collaborator
Gabriele Greggio, pedagogista, musicoterapeuta, assegnista
Marcella Lisi, pedagogist, coordinator "Signori bambini" service for children and families
Silvia Luraschi, PhD, pedagogist, independent researcher, Feldenkrais teacher, systemic counsellor
Sonia Mastroeni, pedagogist, external collaborator
Martina Paoli, pedagogist, external collaborator
Silvia Pinciroli, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, trainer Lab'O, lecturer (laboratories)
Mara Pirotta, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, traineeship tutor, lecturer (laboratories)
Andrea Prandin, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, trainer and supervisor
Maddalena Rossi, teacher, external collaborator
Ludovica Sebastiano, PhD student, pedagogist
Federica Vergani, pedagogist, systemic counsellor, psychomotor therapist

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS