



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Cultural and Communicational Processes

2526-1-E4002N002

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#### Learning objectives

This course offer an introduction to the conceptual, teoretical and technical tools to understand and analyzie cultural phenomena in our contemporary societies. What do we mean by "culture"? Which is the role of culture in our daily life? What is the role of culture in the processes of marginalization, oppression and inequality? What is the relationship between culture and power?

The following educational objectives will therefore be pursued:

Knowledge and understanding: learning processes, knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories and epistemologies useful for understanding cultural processes will be encouraged.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding: processes for applying concepts, theories and methodology to the analysis of a variety of "cultural objects" will be encouraged.

Autonomy of judgement: the course aims to stimulate an autonomous and critical approach both in the reading and study of texts and in the cultural analysis of concrete objects.

Communication skills: the course aims to stimulate the acquisition of useful tools for both oral and written communication by students.

Learning skills: the course aims to encourage an attitude of curiosity and openness towards the plurality of theoretical approaches to cultural analysis and, therefore, to provide the basis for independent learning.

#### Contents

he teaching is structured as a progressive theoretical journey. These are the fundamental steps:

Culture: from text to practice

Culture and power

Culture as a 'toolkit' and schemes of action

Ideology as a cultural system

Social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann)

A sociology of social problems (Kitsuse and Spector)

The labeling approach in the study of deviance

The construction of social problems, collective identities, and social movements

Bourdieu: the practice of culture

Cultural capital

Habitus

Inequalities in the face of culture

Subcultures

Subcultures and symbolic resistance

## **Detailed program**

The course is structured as a progressive theoretical journey. It begins with "classical" definitions of culture, moving toward a theorization of culture as a "web of meanings," and finally to "culture as practice": a repertoire of symbolic tools and action schemes that make possible, orient, limit, and enable strategies of action.

On this basis, social constructionism is introduced, providing an understanding of how the reality of everyday life, social problems, and even what appears "obvious" or "natural" are the results of historical processes of definition (cultural ones, precisely), institutionalization, and conflict.

From this perspective, phenomena such as deviance, immigration, school failure, or "security" are not simply objective facts, but outcomes of discursive practices, social classifications, and symbolic struggles. Any "social problem" is the result of social and cultural processes that define it as such. These cultural definitions have real effects. Here, culture appears already intertwined with power. We will see how the processes of constructing social problems can legitimate and stabilize hierarchies, exclusions, and oppressions, or how they can challenge them.

The journey then deepens through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which allows for an understanding of how culture is embodied in bodies, tastes, dispositions, and the cultural, linguistic, and social competencies that we usually take for granted. The notions of habitus and cultural capital allow for an analysis of how social inequalities are reproduced in schools, universities, and everyday life—not only through economic resources but also through incorporated cultural schemes recognized as legitimate.

Finally, the course engages with studies on subcultures and youth cultures, showing how culture can also be a space for resistance, re-elaboration, and conflict, particularly within educational contexts. In this way, the themes of class and everyday life return to the center of the analysis.

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, you should have acquired several fundamental competencies:

Analyzing a social phenomenon as a process of cultural construction;

Recognizing the role of language, classifications, common sense, and power in the definition of social problems;

Understanding how culture operates through embodied practices and forms of capital that impact inequalities;

Connecting authors and concepts to concrete issues of everyday life.

## Prerequisites

no prerequisite

## Teaching methods

The course consists of 56 hours, approximately 70% of which will be delivered through frontal teaching (lectures using slides, audio, and video) and 30% through interactive teaching (exercises, small-group work, and the presentation of case studies as a basis for individual and group assignments prepared and discussed during the course). A portion of the lessons will be seminar-based, featuring guest speakers, and may be conducted remotely.

## Assessment methods

For those who are able to ensure **regular attendance throughout the duration of the course (at least 80% of the lessons)**, the final grade will be determined by the following activities:

Written Exam: Graded on a scale of 30 (out of 30).

Group Project (a poster on an essay chosen from those proposed in class): A bonus score of 0 to 5 points, which will be added directly to the written exam grade.

Note: To access the poster bonus, students must first achieve a passing grade (18/30) on the written exam.

**Students who are unable to attend lessons regularly and participate in group work** will take a written exam consisting of 2 open-ended questions based on the required reading list. These questions are designed to encourage students to develop arguments and reflections that start from the concepts learned in the texts and apply them through the ability to provide relevant examples.

**For all students**, the following elements will be taken into account in the assessment of the tests to determine the final grade:

Conceptual precision and clarity in the exposition of the course content.

Analytical ability, i.e. the ability to identify and distinguish the main points of a text/topic and to (re)articulate them appropriately.

Critical analysis of the arguments addressed in the texts and ability to link them to specific theoretical and methodological orientations.

Autonomy of judgement in interpreting and analysing the examination texts and topics proposed here.

Ability to synthesise.

## Exam Preparation Guidelines

For the purpose of exam preparation, it is essential to purchase and read the course reader in its entirety, as it constitutes the sole official reference for the exam. All essays included in the reader are part of the syllabus and must be studied in their complete version.

Students are strongly discouraged from relying on summaries, unofficial notes, slides, or recordings of the lectures that have not been explicitly provided by the course instructor. Such materials are often partial or inaccurate and do not replace the direct reading of the assigned texts, which is a fundamental component of both the learning process and the assessment.

The ability to engage directly and critically with the original texts is considered an integral part of the course's learning objectives.

### **The final grade is expressed in thirtieths.**

Marks between 18 and 22 reflect the elementary or barely sufficient acquisition of basic knowledge of content and methods. The student has shown modest analytical and synthesis skills. The student expresses himself in a manner that is not entirely appropriate and shows gaps in training and conceptual clarity.

The marks between 23 and 26 account for the more than sufficient acquisition of content and methods. The student has shown sufficient analytical and synthesis skills. The student expresses himself sufficiently appropriately and with clarity from a conceptual and terminological point of view.

27 to 30. Grades between 27 and 30 reflect good to excellent acquisition of knowledge relating to content and methods. The student has shown good to excellent analytical and synthesis skills. The student expresses himself/herself appropriately from a conceptual and terminological point of view.

## **Textbooks and Reading Materials**

- Handout of 'Processi Culturali e Comunicativi, A.A. 2025-2026' (will be available shortly before the beginning of the teaching semester at the copy center Fronteretro, Viale Sarca 191)

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | CLIMATE ACTION

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