UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Urban and Housing Policies and Practice

2526-1-F8702N026

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
The student will acquire in-depth knowledge of the main theoretical approaches and intervention paradigms related to urban and housing policies, with particular attention to processes of social inclusion/exclusion, the housing question, and the socio-spatial transformations of contemporary cities.

Applying knowledge and understanding
The student will be able to apply concepts, methods, and tools to analyse and evaluate public policies in the field of housing and urban regeneration. They will learn to interpret and critically assess data, policy documents, and case studies at local, national, and international levels.

Making judgements
The student will develop the ability to independently assess strategies for intervention in the urban and housing sectors, considering the roles of various actors (institutions, third sector organisations, active citizenship) and the economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of such policies.

Communication skills
The student will be able to effectively present analyses, proposals, and evaluations related to urban and housing policies using appropriate language and communication tools (written, oral, and multimedia). Collaborative work and the ability to engage in multidisciplinary contexts will be encouraged.

Learning skills
The student will develop a critical and autonomous learning approach, useful for staying up to date on the evolution of urban social policies, housing legislation, and emerging social needs in urban contexts. These skills will support both further academic development and professional integration in the social policy field.

Contents

This course provides a critical and comparative analysis of the evolution of urban and housing policies, with a particular focus on the Italian and broader European contexts. Through a historical and sociological approach, the course explores how urban space and housing have been governed, regulated, and experienced over time.

The first part of the course examines the historical development of housing policies in Italy, with comparisons to welfare housing models across Europe. Attention will be paid to the shifts from universalistic approaches to more selective and residual housing interventions, highlighting the changing role of the public sector in this domain.

A central focus will be placed on housing exclusion, including severe housing deprivation and homelessness, as well as territorial segregation and urban inequalities related to access to adequate housing. The course will also address the structural and managerial challenges of public housing systems, and the crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness they face today.

Students will explore the history and transformation of the cooperative housing movement, along with emerging collaborative and community-based housing models such as cohousing, community land trusts, and solidarity-based living arrangements. These models will be analysed in terms of their potential to foster social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and active community participation.

The course will further investigate the role of public authorities, private actors, and third sector organisations in the social management of housing and the development of innovative urban policies. These issues will be studied through real-world case studies and exemplary housing projects at both national and international levels.

The learning pathway includes policy analysis tools, guided readings of strategic documents, and class discussions on concrete initiatives, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical insights relevant to professionals working in the field of urban and housing social policy.

Detailed program

This course explores the transformation of urban and housing policies through historical, sociological, and comparative lenses, with particular attention to processes of social inclusion/exclusion, spatial inequalities, and innovative approaches to housing interventions.

Historical development of housing policies in Italy and Europe
The course examines the historical and comparative evolution of housing policies, highlighting changes in welfare models and the role of the state.

Severe housing deprivation and homelessness
A specific focus is placed on extreme forms of housing exclusion, such as homelessness and residential precarity.

Territorial segregation and urban inequalities
Students will analyse the interaction between housing policies and socio-spatial inequalities, with an emphasis on urban segregation processes.

Public housing: history, transformation, and current challenges
The course investigates the development of public housing in Italy and the structural and governance issues that currently affect its effectiveness.

The cooperative housing movement
The history and transformation of cooperative housing are discussed, supported by examples of relevant practices from various contexts.

Collaborative housing and innovative models

New forms of housing, such as cohousing and community-led initiatives, are explored as alternatives to traditional provision models.

Housing and environmental sustainability
The environmental impact of housing is addressed, along with sustainable practices and eco-compatible urban regeneration strategies.

Social management of housing and local actors
The role of public institutions, third sector organisations, and citizen groups in the social governance of housing and the development of inclusive policies is examined.

Prerequisites

None

Teaching methods

The course consists of 49 hours, approximately 60% of which are delivered through traditional teaching methods (lectures supported by slides, audio, and video materials), and 40% through interactive activities.
Interactive teaching includes exercises, group work, and the presentation of case studies that serve as the basis for both individual and group assignments, which are prepared and discussed during the course.

Assessment methods

It will be possible to take intermediate assessments consisting of:

Presentations of academic articles selected from the e-learning platform. All articles are in English, but the presentations will be delivered in Italian.

Presentation of a project introduced at the beginning of the course (topic, working methods, and final product).

In the case of the full exam:

The exam will be ORAL and conducted in Italian.

The oral exam will be based on a selection of articles and book chapters in English and Italian, which will be uploaded in the Exam Program section of the e-learning platform.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

On the e-learning page, in the EXAM PROGRAM section, a list of articles and book chapters will be provided along with an instruction document.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | CLIMATE ACTION