UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Policy and Politics

2526-1-F8702N003

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide an introduction to the most relevant concepts and themes for the study of politics, for the understanding of problems debated in the public sphere and for the design and analysis of public policies.
Knowledge and Ability to Understand (D1): the participant(s) will acquire knowledge of the main concepts of political science, and in particular the main elements of the theory of democracy and its crisis, and ability to understand issues emerging from studies and current events.
Applied knowledge and understanding (D2): participants will acquire ability to apply the concepts learned to the understanding of current political issues and policy analysis, and first-hand knowledge of the functioning of democratic institutions.
Autonomy of judgment (D3): the course fosters the development of independent evaluative skills and the making of informed judgments, especially on controversial and divisive political issues.
Communication Skills (D4): the course fosters speaking skills in discussions and expository skills in class and during the examination.
Learning skills (D5): the course provides a solid foundation for independent learning and critical orientation in the scientific literature.

Contents

The course will deal with three macro-themes, which will constitute as many articulations of the program: 1) Introduction to the fundamental concepts of political theory; 2) Theories of democracy and populism; 3) Democracy and the issue of inequality.

Detailed program

1. In introducing the fundamental terms of political theory, we will analyse the historical and theoretical meaning of concepts and themes such as:
   what is politics;
   politics and power;
   what is public policy;
   State and citizenship;
   forms of government;
   fundamental rights
   political ideologies;
   gender and political theory.

2. In the part dedicated to the theories of democracy and populism, we will explore the competing definitions and visions on the foundations, principles, procedures and forms of democratic government, and the tension to which neo-populisms subject contemporary liberal democracies. The topics addressed will include: history of the democratic ideal; concepts of freedom and equality; liberal democracy; majority and minorities; the principle of representation; deliberative processes; actors in the democratic process and forms of political participation. And: definitions and characteristics of populism; the relationship between populism and democracy.

3. The third part will address the issue of inequality as a threat to the survival of democracy. It will analyse the attack on equality as an effect of the combination of neoliberal policies, resurgent nationalism and anti-egalitarian ideologies.

Some of the content will be covered in the form of an interactive seminar with guest speakers. Study visits are also planned.

Prerequisites

No special skills are required, but interest in discussing contemporary political issues, willingness to learn, passion for argumentation and active participation in the classroom.

Teaching methods

The Course consists of 42 hours, of which approximately 70 percent is with didactic delivery (face-to-face lectures using slides, audio and video) and 30 percent with interactive teaching (study visits, subgroup work, interactive seminars with guest speakers).

Assessment methods

Two alternative modes of examination are provided:

a) Oral examination on the reference texts.
The grade will be assigned based on the level of knowledge of the texts and the ability to independently develop answers.
The exam will assess learning (D1), the ability to critically analyze the topics covered (D2, D3), as well as

communication skills (D4) and independent learning skills (D5).

b) Limited to the January and February exam sessions, writing and presentation of a paper (max 40,000 characters) based on the topics covered in the lectures, reference texts, or seminars. The topic chosen for the paper must be agreed upon with the instructor and presented in class.
This examination method will allow for the assessment of: learning (D1), the ability to apply the concepts learned to specific cases (D2), the ability to work independently (D3), as well as communication skills (D4) and independent learning skills (D5).
The final grade will take into account the quality of the written paper (coherence of structure, quality of argumentation, adequacy of the bibliography, quality of writing) and the oral presentation of its contents (ability to argue the thesis, respond to any objections, and navigate the bibliography used).
The written paper, followed by its discussion, replaces the exam on the exam texts.

There are no midterm exams.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. P. Grilli di Cortona, O. Lanza, B. Pisciotta, L. Germano, *Capire la politica. Quarta edizione*, UTET 2025. Chapters: 1 (parr. da 1.1 a 1.6), 3, 4, 5, 6 (parr. da 6.1 a 6.7), 7 (parr. da 7.1 a 7.6), 9, 11, 12.

2. A text of your choice from the following:

- Norberto Bobbio, *Destra e sinistra. Ragioni e significati di una distinzione politica*, Donzelli 2023.
- Alessadra Facchi - *Orsetta Giolo, Una storia dei diritti delle donne*, il Mulino 2023.
- Giovanni Moro, *Cittadinanza*, Mondadori Education 2020.
- Giorgia Serughetti, *Il vento conservatore*, Laterza 2021.
- Michele Sorice, Partecipazione democratica. Teoria e problemi, Mondadori Education 2019.

Sustainable Development Goals

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