UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Sociology of Risk

2526-1-F8805N001

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Understanding
The course aims to convey, on the one hand, the interpretative models that have emerged in the social sciences on the topic of risk, linked to the transformations in its definition, perception, and communication; and, on the other hand, the main strategies for analysing the dimension of risk in contemporary social contexts.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding
Students will be able to apply theoretical and methodological tools to analyse the dimension of risk in contemporary societies, working also on case studies and examples.

Making Judgements
The course develops students' critical abilities in identifying and justifying the adoption of different theoretical and methodological approaches, in relation to various types of risk and specific social contexts.

Communication Skills
Students will acquire the specialised language of the sociology of risk, necessary to clearly and effectively present analyses and reflections in both academic and professional contexts.

Learning Skills
The course fosters the development of skills useful for independently deepening topics and perspectives related to the sociology of risk, encouraging critical and continuous learning.

Contents

The central themes of the course are the different approaches used to analyse and understand the dimension of risk in contemporary societies. In recent decades, as a result of the processes of globalisation, Western societies have become increasingly interdependent in economic and technological terms. While this trend has led to an

unprecedented improvement in the well-being of people in many contexts, it has also increased their exposure to potential risks at different levels. Moreover, processes of social change have shown ambivalent characteristics, especially with regard to cultural fragmentation and social norms. The resulting uncertainty goes together with the awareness that each decision and action is inseparable from the dimension of risk. In this scenario, the discourses of experts warn of multiple risks in different spheres of social life. Starting from these premises, the course addresses the mechanisms of definition, perception, representation and communication of risk in relation to processes of social change, also focusing on the main approaches used to investigate this dimension in different areas of social life.

Detailed program

The course aims to provide students with concepts and tools for analysing risk in contemporary social realities. After dealing with the main approaches adopted in the social sciences, some concepts contiguous to that of risk and significant for investigating this dimension are explored. In addition, the main research strategies and techniques for analysing risk are examined. Subsequently, the course introduces risk communication, paying particular attention to the processes of exchanging information between parties responsible for risk assessment and management and other stakeholders. Finally, the course explores, also through case studies, how risk is defined and managed in relation to some of the main dimensions of social life.
Specifically, the course is divided into five parts:
I) the analysis of the main approaches to the study of the risk dimension in the social sciences;
II) the deepening of other concepts crucial to the analysis of the risk dimension: danger, trust, reflexivity and control, fear;
III) methodology and techniques for studying risk in different spheres of social life;
IV) introduction to the processes and mechanisms of risk communication;
V) how risks are defined and managed in specific social areas. Particular attention will be paid to:

- urban risks;
- environmental risks;
- health risks;
- risks in organisations and work.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites.

Teaching methods

The course will be divided 75% in didactic (lectures with slides and video materials) and 25% in interactive teaching (subgroup work, presentation and discussion of case studies). All lectures will be conducted in a face-to-face format. During the course, the active participation of students in teaching activities will be encouraged.

Assessment methods

Students will be assessed through an individual oral examination based on the reference texts.
The assessment criteria are:

1. correct use of language - appropriate use of terms;
2. accuracy in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to make connections between the various topics;
4. completeness of exposition.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Course handout by the instructor.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | REDUCED INEQUALITIES