UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Critical Events and Organizational Learning

2526-1-F8805N004

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to analyze complex critical events (e.g., accidents, disasters, misconduct, etc.) in order to facilitate organizational and institutional learning processes. Specifically, students will have acquired:

- *Knowledge and understanding*: acquire theoretical and methodological knowledge of the main approaches to the study of critical events in organizations and the knowledge to develop learning processes for organizations and institutions.
- *Applied knowledge and understanding*: apply the knowledge acquired to analyze, diagnose, and solve organizational problems, and the ability to analyze organizational failures to understand how organizations promote, manage, and respond to unexpected events.
- *Autonomy of judgment*: develop critical assessments of critical events and the ability to perform organizational analysis, including case studies and practical application.
- *Communication skills*: present analyses and arguments clearly and coherently, even in group discussions, using appropriate disciplinary language and comparative references.
- *Learning skills*: the ability to find, understand, use, and critique secondary organizational literature; consolidate an independent learning method through critical reading of scientific texts, comparative analysis of case studies, and personal reworking of the content covered.

Contents

Leading themes of the course are (1) the study of the set of interventions necessary to prevent accidents and critical events (incidents, misconduct, disasters, etc.) that can produce harm to people or property, and that result from erroneous actions, violations, and mishaps of an unintentional nature (safety management); (2) the study of organizational learning processes following these critical events, beyond the culture of blame. The course is structured as an in-progress investigation of topics such as:

- safety management in organizations: issues and methods;
- error management;
- organizational learning in complex systems;
- the construction of organizational scapegoats;
- organizational myopia: foresight and predictability in organizations;
- high reliability organizations;
- the role of organizational culture in learning processes.

Detailed program

The main topics of the course are (1) the study of the set of interventions needed to prevent accidents and critical events (incidents, misbehaviors, disasters, etc.) that can produce harm to people or property and that result from wrong actions, violations, and accidents of an unintentional nature (safety management); (2) the study of organizational learning processes following these critical events, beyond the culture of blame. Through a review of major theoretical frameworks, case analysis, and group study activities, the course will examine the factors that hinder or support error and safety management, as well as organizational learning within complex organizations. Particular attention will be given to the construction of "organizational scapegoats."
These are themes have become increasingly relevant for organizations operating in complex environments. By analyzing both successful and failed cases, students will become familiar with organizational theories and key tools for formulating and implementing learning and change strategies.
The course will also present the characteristics and requirements of High Reliability Organizations (HROs), which are capable of operating with low error rates over extended periods of time, learning from adverse events, anticipating risks, and managing the unexpected.
The course will include thematic focus sessions designed to engage students in simulations that apply the concepts and tools studied, including through the analysis of teaching cases. These activities are also aimed at fostering the development of critical thinking, argumentation, and presentation skills.

Prerequisites

Sufficient notions of logic and general culture.

Teaching methods

The Course will be divided 40% in didactics (lectures with use of slides, audio and video) and 60% in interactive teaching (exercises, subgroup work, presentation of case studies from which to develop individual and subgroup work, prepared and discussed during the course, etc.). All lectures will be held on campus, in person.

Assessment methods

Attending and non-attending students will be assessed through a written test based on open-ended questions regarding the course topics and the materials indicated in the “Reference Texts.” No intermediate tests are scheduled.
The objective of the learning verification is to check the preparation on the examination program and the ability to

reflect independently on the critical points of the program.
The evaluation criteria for the written test are:

1. language properties - appropriate use of terms;
2. precision in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to build connections between various topics;
4. completeness of the exposure given the time limits;
5. analytical skills in commenting on the texts selected for study texts.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Attending and non-attending students (complete study of the book)
Catino, M. (2006), Da Chernobyl a Linate. Incidenti tecnologici o errori organizzativi?, Milano, Bruno Mondadori.

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE