UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Etnografia

2526-2-F0101R051-ETNO

Course title

Ethnography Practicum

Topics and course structure

The "Ethnography Practicum" offers a practical activity that directly involves students, exposing them to the use of tools and methods in fieldwork, as well as to the actual ethnographic experience.

The main and crucial question that the Practicum aims to address practically is: "**What does an anthropologist do concretely in the field?**" However, it also seeks to provide concrete guidance in answering a series of subsequent but equally important questions, such as:

- How is ethnographic research organized?
- How are research questions formulated?
- How do we prepare for our arrival in the field?
    - How do we select participants to involve?
- How and what do we observe?
- How is an interview structured?
- What ethical and professional issues should we be aware of before undertaking research?
- How do we formally or informally inform the participants about the research objectives and the use of the information they provide?
- How are the collected/produced data treated and communicated?
- How has the ethnographic method evolved over time?
- What are the specificities of the anthropological use of ethnography compared to its practice in other disciplines?

The critical discussion of these topics will be constantly accompanied by practical exercises that will help participants become familiar with the available tools. An interactive discussion among all participants, mediated by the instructor, will follow the exercises and help understand and reflect upon the role of the ethnographer in the field.

Students will have the opportunity to propose a research project of their interest (about a general topic which will be discussed at the beginning of the practicum) to focus on during the course and shape the exercises accordingly.

If technically feasible, a field trip will be organized where students and the instructor will collectively engage in fieldwork activities on a specific topic within the anthropology of food.

The presence of guest anthropologists is also expected, who will share their research experiences, focusing on practical aspects, challenges, and resources encountered in their fieldwork approach, and answering questions and doubts from students.

Note: **Students unable to acquire the 4 CFU (academic credits) through active participation in at least 75% of the 40 scheduled hours of the Practicum (or through other channels provided by the degree program) can contact the responsible instructor and the assistant-instructor of the Practicum BEFORE THE START of the Practicum to report their specific situation. The modes for acquiring the 4 CFU by exempted students will be explained during the first meeting of the Practicum**.

Objectives

The Ethnography Practicum has the following objectives:

Knowledge and Understanding
ACQUIRE knowledge of the main methods of ethnographic field data collection and production;
IDENTIFY the application specificities of each ethnographic method and the possibility of drawing methodological connections and interdisciplinary practices;
UNDERSTAND the specificities of each application area of ethnographic practice and their level of integration and interdependence in the complexity of social and cultural realities;

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding
ARTICULATE the dialogue between methodology and ethnographic research in an innovative way, being able to organize, contextualize, analyze and interpret ethnographic data collected and/or produced, in light of the relevant literature;
Effectively IDENTIFY the methods and practices for setting up ethnographic research, from the preliminary stages of identifying the general topic, to choosing a case study, formulating research questions, selecting participants, and choosing the most appropriate methods for approaching the study;
TRANSMIT specific relational knowledge and practices that facilitate the coexistence, mediation, and development of socially, economically, and culturally productive environments;

Autonomy of judgment
UNDERSTAND the complexity of cultural processes and practices, welcoming and valuing different points of view and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices;
EVALUATE the consequences of one's actions and decisions, taking a reflective and responsible attitude;

Communicative skills
EXPRESS ideas, knowledge and arguments with clarity;
DRAFT texts and reports, employ different expressive languages (audio, video, digital, artistic);
FORM well-founded judgments, integrating information from different and reliable sources.

Learning skills
DEVELOP and refine their learning methodologies, independently identifying and constructing objects and themes of study.

Methodologies

The teaching character of the Ethnography Practicum meetings will be both **erogatory (10%)** and **interactive (90%)**. The planned activities are **exercise and laboratory-based** and aim, therefore, at the *direct involvement* and *active participation* of students who will tangibly contribute to this educational-practical experience. There are no remotely delivered lectures (except for the first meeting which, as reported above, will be streamed to allow those who have requested exemption - within the timeframe and in the manner provided by the Degree Course - to learn about the activities planned to obtain the 4 CFUs). Seminars will be in Italian.

Online and offline teaching materials

Specific teaching materials will be indicated to students during the Practicum meetings.

Programme and references

The practicum does not include an exam, so there is no mandatory bibliography.
However, the following readings are recommended that will serve as an ongoing reference for the illustration of ethnographic research methodologies and practices:

- Semi G., Bolzoni M. 2022. *L'osservazione partecipante. Una guida pratica*. Bologna: il Mulino;
- Counihan C. 2015. Ethnography of Farmers' Markets: Studying Culture, Place, and Food Democracy. In *Teaching Food and Culture*, eds. Lowe Swift C. and Wilk R. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, pp. 113-128;
- Della Costa F. 2025. *Paesismo. Etnografia del rurale nella Marsica*. Roma: CISU.

Assessment methods

CFUs recognition is in relation to **active participation** and the **carrying out of the exercises and activities proposed** by the instructor.

The modes for acquiring the 4 CFU by ***exempted*** students will be explained during the first meeting of the Practicum.

Registration for one of the scheduled exam appointments for "Altre conoscenze" will be required for the verbalization of the 4 CFUs earned from the Practicum.

Office hours

The instructor will receive by **appointment**. Please, reach out by email.

Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES