UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Approaching an ecological research paradigm in social sciences

2526-Bbetween-TRMH-01

Module description

The module aims to propose some reflections on the possibility of adopting an ecological paradigm within social science research practices. We are referring to a “background horizon” that is not necessarily connected to an “ecological” research topic (such as, for example, environmental topics or related to instances of sustainability) but rather is characterized by the need to structure a precise coherence with respect to different elements, while remaining compatible with a plurality of epistemological and ontological perspectives. Indeed, it is a matter of focusing “ecologically” on the objects of one's study (how to read them under the sign of connection and what limits to set in this regard?), one's method (how to deploy a path that can answer one's questions in a way that is not merely linear and instrumental?), one's operational tools (how to construct them? how to “collect” data?), one's relationship with participants (how to avoid unidirectional and merely “extractive” relationships?), the interpretation of results (to what extent is it possible to break out of self-reference?) and dissemination (how to make research results “part of” a community?).
The course aims to approach these issues by showing how there is no single way to address them, but rather a multiplicity of possible balances between the demands urged by an ecological vision and the need to institute inevitable “complexity reductions.” To this end, examples of various research relevant to the area of social sciences will be offered.

Learning goals

The objective of the module is to provide an understanding of some of the features related to the possibility of identifying an “ecological research paradigm” within the socal sciences and to decline it along all the elements that mark the articulation of a research design (research question, object, method, relationship with participants, analysis of results, dissemination). The module also intends to highlight the need for individual positioning with respect to the multiple decisions that an “ecological” vision urges, particularly in an ethical sense.

General goal

Promote reflection on the possibility of designing, performing and communicating ecologically informed research in the social sciences, understanding its opportunities, constraints and limitations; explore the plurality of theoretical and methodological possibilities within the ecological paradigm; develop critical positioning.

Specific skills and competences

Know how to identify the elements that delineate an ecological paradigm within social science research.
Know how to discuss and analyze some possible options that remain consistent with the idea of ecologically oriented research.
Know how to position oneself critically with respect to the research choices described in the course.
Know how to decline the themes of the course on a research object of one's own interest.

Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 UN Agenda

Goal 4: quality education

Breakdown of meetings

The breakdown of meetings will be articulated along the following schedule:

Monday 4 May 2026 from 9:30 to 12:30 - Building Agorà (U6) - 4th floor - room: Aula Seminari (4288)
Monday 11 May 2026 from 9:30 to 12:30 - Building Agorà (U6) - 4th floor - room: Aula Seminari (4288)
Monday 18 May 2026 from 9:30 to 12:30 - Building Agorà (U6) - 4th floor - room: Aula Seminari (4288)
Tuesday 19 May 2026 from 16.30 to 19.30 - Building Agorà (U6) - 4th floor - room: Aula Seminari (4288)
Tuesday 26 May 2026 from 12:30 to 14:30 - Building Agorà (U6) - 4th floor - room: Aula Seminari (4288)

Attendance is mandatory for at least 75% of classes.

Number of participants

Unlimited

Language used in meetings

The course is taught in English

Delivery period of the module

May

Methods of assessing the outcomes of the learning process

For those who wish to have the module recognized, by completing it together with the other three teaching units included in the course “Training and Research Methods in the Humanities,” a short written essay is required, which will be graded. The final assessment of the course will consist of the average of the grades for the four teaching units.

The exam consists of evaluating a short, written essay prepared by the students. Each participant will identify a topic of interest to critically explore, based on the discussions and experiences from the course, and with the support of materials agreed upon with the teacher (for example: a book, some scientific articles, or some guidance documents). The project is to be completed in the form of a paper to be written in person during the last lesson of the module.

Department of affiliation of the teacher

Department of Human Sciences for Education "R. Massa"

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION