UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Antropologia dei Media

2627-3-E2001R028

Course title

Media Anthropology

Topics and course structure

The course analyzes the relationships between culture and media in various fields – including cinema, photography, social media, and video art – to reflect on:

(1) the media representation of cultural diversity;
(2) the social and cultural forms shaped by old and new media;
(3) the development of media beyond Euro-American urban centers;
(4) the material dimensions of the digital;
(5) ethnographic techniques and methods for investigating media.

In doing so, the course addresses the authors and ethnographic research that have most significantly influenced the development of media anthropology and the formulation of its theoretical framework.

Objectives

Through active and consistent lecture attendance, this course aims to foster the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding
– Knowledge of the history and main theoretical frameworks of the anthropology of media.
– The ability to understand the specific nature of the ethnographic method applied to media contexts.

Applying knowledge and understanding
– The ability to analyze a specific media product using the theoretical lenses of the anthropology of media.
– Knowing how to design and conduct a small-scale fieldwork exercise.
– The ability to apply the concepts of cultural relativism and reflexivity to the analysis of media practices.

Making judgments
– Understand the complexity of cultural processes and mediation practices by welcoming and valuing diverse viewpoints, and by overcoming stereotypes and prejudices.
– Develop a critical perspective toward dominant narratives and representations of "cultural diversity" in the media.
– The ability to evaluate the social and political impact of digital infrastructures.

Communication skills
– The ability to present complex concepts using the specific terminology of the anthropology of media.
– Refine presentation and argumentation skills.
– Formulate well-founded judgments by integrating information from diverse and reliable sources.
– The ability to adapt one's expressive register depending on the context and the interlocutors involved.

Learning skills
– Develop and refine personal learning methodologies by independently identifying and constructing subjects and themes of study.
– The ability to independently identify and select reliable bibliographical sources.

Methodologies

The course is taught in Italian.

60% of the lectures will follow a lecture-based format (direct instruction), and 40% will be interactive. Therefore, classes will include explanations of theories and concepts by the professor, alongside the active participation of students through in-class activities, collective discussions, and guided ethnographic exercises.

All classes will be held in person. In the event of public transport strikes or other unforeseen circumstances, a maximum of two lectures may be delivered remotely (synchronous mode, at a date and time to be agreed upon and communicated both in class and on the course e-learning page).

Online and offline teaching materials

PowerPoint presentations, audiovisual material, online sites and platforms, exam readings

Programme and references

1. Grassi, P. & Santanera, G., a cura di, 2026, Antropologia digitale. Problemi, prospettive, pratiche di ricerca, Ledizioni. (available in open access - please request the link from the professor)

2. Miller, D. et al., 2021, Lo smartphone globale: Non solo una tecnologia per giovani, UCL Press. (available in open access here: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10139782/1/Lo_Smartphone_Globale.pdf)

3. Bargna, I., a cura di, 2018, Mediascapes. Pratiche dell'immagine e antropologia culturale, Meltemi – ONLY the chapters by Giovanna Santanera (from page 141 to page 178), Virginia Evi (from page 179 to page 226), and Ivan Bargna (from page 271 to page 322).

4. Lecture notes (or, as an alternative: Pertierra, A.C., 2017, Media anthropology for the digital age, Polity Press - Available as an e-book via the university library)

Attending students may arrange with the professor to complete a project work in place of the book by D. Miller et al., "Lo smartphone globale. Non solo una tecnologia per giovani".

Erasmus students may contact the professor to arrange for an English-language bibliography and/or the possibility of taking the exam in English.

Assessment methods

**Oral exam: individual interview in Italian with open-ended questions. **

Questions may cover exam texts, topics discussed during lectures, and the ethnographic activities and exercises carried out.

Upon request, students may take the exam in English or French.

There are no mid-term exams.

Assessment Criteria

The assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors. The level bands are as follows:

**1. High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent **

Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates in-depth and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyses the texts presented without hesitation.
Ability to apply knowledge: is able to identify general considerations on the authors/topics examined in the texts with confidence and effective personal observations; with adequate argumentative skills, is able to analyse, summarise, interpret, contextualise and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary links.
Autonomy of Judgement: demonstrates excellent critical skills, autonomy of judgement and originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.
Communication Skills: expresses themselves clearly, rigorously, fluently and appropriately. Is fully aware of the need to use different linguistic registers depending on the communicative situation.
Learning skills: demonstrates excellent/very good independent learning skills, is able to effectively rework knowledge and link it to their own experience; is fully aware of the usefulness of the discipline.

**2. Average level (18-24/30): **

Sufficient - Good Knowledge and understanding: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, albeit with some gaps, inaccuracies on specific but non-essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of the texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify in the texts the general considerations on the authors/topics examined, when prompted by teachers; is able to summarise the texts presented in a reasonable manner, interpret them, contextualise them and compare them correctly.
Autonomy of Judgement: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to repeating the

judgements of others.
Communication skills: expresses themselves clearly and with sufficient precision, with a reasonable command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers depending on the communicative situation. Learning skills: has a reasonable ability to rework knowledge and link it to their own experience; has partial awareness of the usefulness of the subject.

**3. Low level (0-17/30): **

Not sufficient Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmented knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts provided.
Ability to apply knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on the authors/topics examined in the texts; able to summarise the contents of the texts presented only to a very limited extent, unable to contextualise and compare them. Autonomy of judgement: lacks critical thinking and autonomy of judgement; relies exclusively on information provided by the teacher or the critical bibliography.
Communication Skills: has a halting, approximate, stereotyped oral expression; shows poor mastery of the specific language of the discipline.
Learning Skills: has a limited ability to rework knowledge and relate it to their own experience; shows little awareness of the usefulness of the discipline.

NB: Students with PUOI (special educational needs) must email the document before the exam.

Office hours

By appointment only; please email: giovanna.santanera@unimib.it

Programme validity

The syllabus remains valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION