



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Sociologia della Politica

2627-3-E4001N134

Learning objectives

*Knowledge and understanding:

This course provides an introduction to the main perspectives and theoretical approaches used to interpret political and social transformations in contemporary societies, with particular attention to the configuration and redistribution of power and agency at national, supranational, international, and transnational levels. The course also aims to develop students' critical and reflective capacities for analysing socio-political phenomena, as well as their ability to understand the complexity and contradictions of transformative processes unfolding at local, national, European, and global scales.

Applying knowledge and understanding:

The course equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the dynamics of contemporary social and political transformations, while fostering their capacity for informed civic and political engagement in both professional settings and civil society.

Autonomy of judgement

Ability to independently collect, analyse, and critically interpret theoretical approaches relevant to the field of the course, as well as diverse types of empirical data concerning political and social phenomena and their transformation over time.

Communicational skills:

Active and continuous student participation is a fundamental requirement of the course. Seminar activities and group work constitute an integral part of the learning experience.

Ability to learn

Ability to pursue further learning independently by developing effective study methods that facilitate the acquisition of, and access to, advanced knowledge and skills in Political Sociology and related disciplines.

Contents

The course aims to introduce the fundamental principles that distinguish Political Sociology from other social science disciplines, with particular emphasis on its approach to the complex relationship between politics and society. Political Sociology views the political sphere as being in constant interaction with other social institutions and examines how social actors and agencies challenge, co-construct, shape, and reproduce social structures, as well as specific forms of action, events, and movements.

Traditionally, Political Sociology has focused on power relations within the framework of the nation-state. In an increasingly globalised world, however, it is essential to reconsider these processes from supranational and transnational perspectives that extend beyond the boundaries of individual states. In this context, European integration represents a particularly significant field of sociological inquiry, offering valuable insights into the emergence and competition of new political and social interests within the political arena.

These developments involve new actors who attribute alternative meanings to individual and collective action, institutions, and political and social structures. As a result, new questions have emerged that challenge established interpretations of political action and social order in a post-national constellation. The course provides students with the opportunity to examine and critically discuss selected dimensions of these processes.

Detailed program

The course examines and critically discusses major theoretical approaches to the study of socio-political phenomena, with continuous reference to contemporary transformations in European and global societies. Concepts such as the state, political systems, and civil society are analysed as arenas of conflict among competing social interests, ideological positions, and cultural worldviews. Particular attention is devoted to political participation and the ways in which political cultures shape collective identities and forms of association. These are reproduced through processes of socialisation while simultaneously being challenged and reinterpreted by emerging social and political actors.

Within this framework, the formation and legitimisation of political parties and social movements are examined as key elements for understanding the relationship between the political and social spheres in the transition from the twentieth century to the new millennium. The course also explores the tensions currently affecting European and Western liberal democracies, focusing on the global predominance of neoliberalism on the one hand and the rise of illiberal and authoritarian tendencies on the other, both of which contribute to processes of democratic erosion.

Finally, the course analyses forms of structural political violence associated with twentieth-century totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes, as well as with the modern nation-state more broadly. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which such forms of violence re-emerge in the discourses and practices of the radical right and, less visibly, in contemporary modes of state power.

The course is organised around two parallel and interconnected components. The first consists of interactive lectures introducing the core concepts and theoretical foundations of Political Sociology. The second involves various forms of student participation focused on selected topics proposed by the teacher and discussed in agreement with the students. Both components are designed to encourage discussion, critical reflection, and the exchange of ideas, and therefore require active student participation.

Seminars constitute an integral part of the course and include contributions from invited guest speakers, as well as the reading, presentation, and discussion of selected texts by enrolled students. Topics such as nationalism, populism, citizenship, and social inequalities are examined through an intersectional lens that considers class, gender, religion, and ethno-national identification. Throughout the course, a critical perspective on methodological nationalism is adopted.

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisite is required. A basic knowledge of English is desirable, but not essential.

Teaching methods

The course will combine lectures and participatory activities – students will be invited to present and discuss several selected texts. We will host experts in the field during our seminars. Italian is the official language of the course.

The lectures will be proposed in presence; the online participation will be possible only in case of the external guests of the seminars.

The course does not distinguish between attending and non-attending students, but rewards participation. A certain number of online meetings with working students may be arranged; Erasmus students may ask for short seminars in English, in remote synchronous mode.

I will receive students in presence and via Webex – the appointment should be agreed by mail a few days in advance.

Assessment methods

The oral examination consists in an interview concerning the topics and argumentation treated by the relevant literature and during the lectures and seminars. Beside the textbook, each student must choose **four** scientific articles / book chapters that were proposed for the seminars on citizenship, nationalism, populism and totalitarianism. There will be no mid-term exams.

All students are invited to write a paper (max 2500-3000 words including references), on a selected topic proposed by and agreed with the teacher; the paper must be delivered at least 7 days before the first session of oral examination in June 2027; each paper will be evaluated by assessment of points (min 0 - max 2). Students can write their papers in English, Slovenian, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian language. **Writing a paper is not compulsory.** Active role in seminar presentations will be taken into consideration.

Evaluation criteria:

The oral exam test:

/- Understanding of the specific concepts related to the course topics;

/- Ability to present the topic in a coherent way;

/- Ability of critical and reflective thinking.

The paper evaluation (not compulsory):

/- Ability to grasp the fundamental conceptual elements proposed by the course;

/- Ability to unfold synthetically a subject chosen for the paper in an original and autonomous way;

/- Ability to develop a critical and reflective discourse in written form.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The main textbook for the oral exam is:

Fabio de Nardis (2023), *Sociologia politica. Per comprendere i fenomeni politici contemporanei*, Milano: McGraw Hill Education.

The Erasmus+ incoming students may use in alternative:

Nash K. (2010), "Contemporary Political Sociology", Wiley-Blackwell.

Additional literature for the oral exam:

Four articles/book chapters of your choice among the proposed texts for seminars: two on citizenship + two on populism, nationalism, totalitarianism. The list of the articles will be published by January 2027.

All texts will be available in the university library and, where possible, in electronic format. Other selected materials will be uploaded to the course website. Students may compile their own selection of references on the specific topic of their paper, but this is not compulsory.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
