UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Public Management and Social Entrepreneurship

2627-3-E1805M018

Learning objectives

The course focuses on how the public and private sectors interact to produce social development and innovation. It explores the processes that shape this interaction and how it is best managed to optimize welfare, governance, and market outcomes.

Contents

This course explores the role of public management and social entrepreneurship in addressing complex societal challenges and creating public value. Through real-world problems, including inequality, public health, social inclusion and urban resilence, environmental sustainability, and digital transformation, students examine how public institutions, social enterprises, and nonprofit organizations can design, organize, and manage innovative responses to collective needs.

The course combines a selected set of theoretical concepts with real-world cases, decision-making simulations, collaborative activities, and practical management tools. Particular attention is devoted to cross-sector collaboration, financial sustainability, digital innovation, and social impact assessment.

Adopting an experiential, problem-based learning approach, the course enables students to develop the skills needed to analyze societal needs, design innovative interventions, navigate managerial dilemmas, and evaluate the capacity of different solutions to generate public value.

Detailed program

The course explores how public administrations, social enterprises, and nonprofit organizations can address

complex societal problems through innovative and sustainable solutions, contributing to public value creation, understood as generating collective benefits in terms of well-being, equity, inclusion, and service quality.

Particular attention is devoted to social entrepreneurship, understood as identifying unmet societal needs and developing innovative solutions that primarily pursue a social mission through financially sustainable initiatives. The course also examines social innovation, referring to new ways of addressing collective needs, including through collaboration among public institutions, private organizations, and civil society.

Drawing on societal challenges such as public health emergencies, inequality, social exclusion, environmental sustainability, and digital transformation, the programme covers five main areas:

1. "Societal problems and public value creation": collective needs assessment, complexity of societal challenges, the role of public institutions, and opportunities for innovation.

2. "Social entrepreneurship and service design": opportunity identification, social business models, human-centered service design, and the development of innovative interventions.

3. "Governance and collaboration": organizational models of social enterprises and hybrid organizations, stakeholder engagement, partnerships, and co-design.

4. "Management and financial sustainability": service organization and delivery, budgeting, cost analysis, cash-flow management, and financing decisions.

5. "Digital innovation and impact assessment": the use of data and artificial intelligence, opportunities and risks of digital transformation, and the measurement of outcomes and social impact.

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisites are required. A basic understanding of management principles and organizational functioning may facilitate engagement with the course content.

Teaching methods

The course comprises 6 hours of face-to-face lectures and 30 hours of interactive distance learning activities, including synchronous and asynchronous lessons.

Assessment methods

The first is an individual written test comprising 10 multiple-choice questions worth 2 points each, with no penalties for incorrect or unanswered questions, and 2 short open-ended questions worth 5 points each, for a total of 30 points.

The second component consists of a short assignment, completed individually or in groups of up to 4 students, involving the analysis of a case or the development of an innovative response to a societal problem. Alternatively, students may replace the assignment with an oral discussion of the supplementary readings assigned during the

course.

The final grade is based on the written test (60%) and the assignment or oral discussion (40%). Active participation in course activities, discussions, and exercises may contribute up to 3 additional points. Students achieving an overall score above 30/30 will be awarded honors (30/30 cum laude).

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The course does not require a single compulsory textbook. Learning materials include selected book chapters, academic articles, case studies, and supplementary readings in English, assigned according to the topics covered in each class and made accessible through the course learning platform, subject to applicable access and licensing conditions.

The recommended general reference is: Kickul, J., & Lyons, T. S. (2025), Understanding Social Entrepreneurship: The Relentless Pursuit of Mission in an Ever Changing World, 4th ed., Routledge.

Additional references, required readings, and optional supplementary materials will be communicated throughout the course.

Semester

Second semester

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES