UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Area Studies: Europe

2627-1-F0102R015

Course title

Cultures and societies of Europe

Topics and course structure

The course “Cultures and Societies of Europe” provides an in-depth introduction to the anthropology of Europe and European ethnology, with particular attention to the so-called “urban question.” Starting from an interdisciplinary and critical analysis of the concept of Europe, its history, and its development, the lectures will first address some key themes, such as honour in “**Mediterranean societies**,” **multiculturalism**, and the construction of **European identity**, and will then focus on specific cases of “Europeanization.” In particular, the course will explore the strategies implemented by the European Union to shape urban policies and promote processes of city “**regeneration**.” The course will combine lectures, laboratory activities, and field trips in order to engage not only with the intellectual frameworks and knowledge produced throughout the historical development of the field, but also with some of its research practices.

Objectives

Through this course, thanks to regular and active participation in lectures, the following learning outcomes are intended to be promoted in terms of:

Knowledge and understanding:

- Identifying the main anthropological and ethnographic perspectives within the field of the anthropology of Europe and European ethnology;

- Critically understanding the historical, political, and social process of identity construction of the European Union;
- Analysing, from a comparative and multi-scalar perspective, the processes underlying certain European urban policies, starting from their local dimensions (as captured through ethnography).

Applying knowledge and understanding:

- Applying the deconstructive gaze of anthropology to European urban contexts, understood as socio-political arenas shaped by local, supra-local, and transnational practices and representations;
- Articulating the dialogue between scholarly literature and research with specific reference to the European area.

Autonomy of judgment:

- Understanding the complexity of cultural processes, acknowledging and valuing different perspectives while overcoming stereotypes and prejudices;
- Assessing the consequences of one's actions and decisions, adopting a reflective and responsible attitude.

Communication skills:

- Expressing ideas, knowledge, and arguments clearly;
- Writing texts and reports;
- Formulating well-founded judgments by integrating information from different and reliable sources.

Learning skills:

- Developing and refining one's own learning methodologies, independently identifying and constructing objects and topics of study.

Methodologies

The lectures (lecture-based teaching, approx. 30 hours) will be accompanied by **laboratory-based teaching methods** (interactive teaching, approx. 26 hours), such as active learning, interactive lecturing, plenary discussions, group exercises, and field trips.

The course will be delivered in Italian. Classes will be held in person.

Students are expected to attend regularly and participate actively in lectures.

Online and offline teaching materials

The course includes the use of academic texts, lecture handouts, videos, and an e-learning platform.

Individualized learning materials may be selected where appropriate, depending on the personal and professional interests of the students.

Programme and references

The course will be structured into three sections. The first (comprising six lectures) will consist of an introductory overview of the field of study and its “cardinal points” (main schools and paradigms of the anthropology of Europe, research areas, and contemporary developments). The second section (seven lectures), of a more workshop-based nature, will focus—also through fieldwork activities—on the anthropological study of urban policies and regeneration processes observable in the territory of Milan, understood as an emblematic site for analysing the process of construction (and simultaneous deconstruction) of European Union identity. The third and final section (the last four lectures), of a seminar-based nature, will feature guest speakers who will present urban ethnographies useful for developing potential comparisons with the analyses carried out in the second section. Between the first and the second section, students will be required to prepare short presentations on topics of their own specific interest related to the course. Further practical information will be provided during the first lectures. The syllabus may undergo minor changes depending on the needs expressed by attending students. The course includes the study of the texts listed below:

Section 1:

- Kockel, U.C., Ma?ire?ad, N., and Frykman, J. (eds.) (2012), A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe, Blackwell Publishing, Malden (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13).
- Banfield, E.C. (2010), Le basi morali di una società arretrata, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Scarduelli P. (2013), L’Europa disunita. Etnografia di un continente, Archetipo, Bologna (Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Section 2:

- Grassi, P. (2022), Barrio San Siro. Interpretare la violenza a Milano, Franco Angeli, Milano

Section 3:
One text to be chosen from:

- Cacciotti, C., (2024), Qui e? tutto abitato. L'occupazione romana di Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs come esperienza abitativa liminale, Ombre corte, Verona.
- Caglar, A., Glick Schiller, N. (2018), Migrants & City-making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration, Duke University Press, Durham and London.
- Capello, C., Semi, G. (2018), Torino. Un profilo etnografico, Meltemi, Sesto San Giovanni.
- Fava, F. (2008), Lo Zen di Palermo. Antropologia dell’esclusione, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Grassi, P., Cognetti, F. (2026), La periferia è la città. Attraversare San Siro, raccontare Milano, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Grassi, P, Pozzi, G., Verdolini, V. (2025), Milano fantasma. Etnografie di una citta? e delle sue infestazioni, Ombre corte, Bologna.
- Hekki, M. (2002), Europa. Storia di un’idea e di un’identita?, il Mulino, Bologna.
- Locorotondo, M. (2026), Corpi urbani contesi. Etnografia dei beni comuni napoletani nella città turistica. Ombre corte, Bologna
- Marasco, M. (2021), Spacciati, rabbiosi, coatti. Periferia romana e costruzione del panico morale, Ombre corte, Verona.
- Scandurra, G. (2017), Bologna che cambia. Quattro studi etnografici su una citta?, Junior, Bergamo.

Part of the bibliography may be personalised and integrated according to the individual and professional interests of students.

Erasmus students may contact the lecturer to arrange the possibility of studying a bibliography in English and taking the exam in English.

Assessment methods

Attending students
The exam consists of an oral assessment aimed at verifying the knowledge acquired through the study of the texts included in the exam syllabus and the work carried out in class.

Non-attending students
Non-attending students are required to submit (via email), at least ten days before the exam date, a reading note (i.e., a critical reflection) of approximately 6 pages on the text chosen from Section 3.

The choice of an oral examination format is consistent with the learning objectives of the course, as it allows, through a dialogic communicative situation, interaction with the student in order to assess their ability to critically understand the course topics and to connect theory and practice.

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 understanding of the texts and topics covered. Although there are some minor inaccuracies or a few uncertainties regarding specific, non-essential details, overall the student shows sufficient comprehension and a reasonable ability to analyse the texts.
- Ability to apply knowledge: The student has some difficulty connecting general points to the examples provided in the texts. The summary of the content is sometimes not very effective, and the contextualization and comparison of authors and themes could be further developed.
- Autonomy of judgement: The student demonstrates a fair degree of independence in forming critical assessments, although he or she sometimes tends to rely on the opinions 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: The student demonstrates a reasonable ability to apply knowledge and relate it to personal experience. An awareness of the subject’s practical value is present, though it is still developing.

3. Basic Level (0–17/30): Still consolidating

- Knowledge and understanding: The student demonstrates only a partial understanding of the texts and topics covered. Their grasp of the content is sometimes uncertain and requires further exploration and greater precision in interpretation.
- Ability to apply knowledge: The student finds it difficult to link general considerations to the examples in the texts and to summarise the content effectively. Contextualisation and comparison between authors and

themes still need to be developed.
- Autonomy of judgement: Critical thinking and independent evaluation need to be guided through more personal reflection and reworking.
- Communication skills: Oral presentation is at times somewhat halting; it would be advisable to strengthen the use of subject-specific vocabulary and improve precision of expression.
- Learning skills: The student still shows difficulty in personally reworking knowledge and linking it to broader experiences and themes. Greater awareness of the educational value of the subject is desirable.

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

Office hours

By appointment, to be arranged via email: paolo.grassi@unimib.it

Programme validity

The syllabus is valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES