UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Antropologia delle Religioni - Fondamenti della Disciplina

2627-1-F0102R006

Course title

Anthropology of religions

Topics and course structure

The course aims to provide fundamental theoretical and methodological knowledge of the anthropology of religions, with a view to providing specific skills for analysing and interpreting the cultural, social and political dimensions applicable to different religious systems.

More specifically, the course aims to:
-outline the theoretical landscape of anthropological studies and relate them to the epistemological and historical-social context in which these theories were developed
-analyse ethnographic and historical cases from different geographical contexts that demonstrate the centrality of practice and matter in religious life, with particular attention to the body and possession, sacred objects and things, natural environments, images and visions.
-Develop reflections on the presence of religions in different societies and their role in the cultural processes of constructing worldviews, the person and social groups.

Objectives

Through this course, with regular and active participation in lessons, the following learning outcomes are intended to be achieved:

Knowledge and understanding

Students will:
-acquire fundamental knowledge of the themes and issues of the anthropology of religions, with particular reference to the theme of religious practice.
-identify the theoretical and methodological specificities of the anthropology of religions.
-understand the specificities of the themes dealt with by the anthropology of religions and their integration and interdependence in the complexity of social and cultural realities.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding
The aim is to achieve mastery of theoretical concepts and ethnographic specificities, as well as the ability to adequately synthesise the knowledge acquired, so as to be able to connect it to other aspects of the discipline. Students will be able to use the concepts and issues of the anthropology of religions in relation to everyday life and to develop an intellectual attitude open to understanding different “religious realities”.

Autonomy of judgement:
In terms of autonomy of judgement and strengthening communication skills, students will be encouraged to formulate their own ideas independently and express them appropriately. Active participation in lessons, which is required of attending students, will stimulate the ability to develop independent judgement, including through the presentation and discussion of materials provided or indicated during the course, and in terms of bibliographic research in preparation for the final exam.

Communication skills

- Expressing ideas, knowledge and arguments clearly.
- Writing texts and reports, using different forms of expression (audio, video, digital, artistic).
- Making informed judgements, integrating information from different and reliable sources.

Learning skills

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

Methodologies

The course consists of:
(a) erogative mode: two three-hour classroom lectures. First lecture: the lecturer presents the structure and content of the programme, examination and assessment methods; last lecture, she highlights the main topics covered during the course and provides further information on the final examination. A streaming link is provided to allow non-attending students to participate in these two lectures.
b)Thirteen three-hour lectures in mixed classroom mode. These lectures are structured to provide a diverse learning experience. In the first part, the lecturer gives a frontal lecture (erogative mode). In the second part, students actively participate in interactive activities, such as discussion of texts (included in the examination programme) and exercises related to the lecture topic.
c) Three three-hour lectures during which a number of investigative experiences are planned based on the observation of real data, on the basis of which specific theoretical reflections can be organised. It is proposed to develop small research projects aimed at acquiring specific field skills in the magical-religious field.
Lessons will be face to face and in Italian.

Online and offline teaching materials

Additional teaching materials to the scheduled texts (background articles, documents, films) will be made available on the course page.

Programme and references

1) a collection of essays selected and discussed during the lectures

2) a book among:

a) U. Fabietti, Materia sacra. Corpi, oggetti, immagini, feticci nella pratica religiosa, Raffaello Cortina ed, 2014 (capitoli 1, 4, 5, 6, 9)
b) A. Brivio, J. González Díez, A. Gusman, Antropologia delle religioni. Temi - Etnografie - Pratiche. Milano, Hoepli, 2025.

3) E.de Martino, La terra del rimorso, 1961

4) a book among:

a) A. Brivio, Serpenti, sirene e sacerdotesse. Antropologia dei mondi acquatici in Africa occidentale, Viella editore, 2023
b) R.Strongman, Divinità queer. Candomblé, Santería e Vodou: transcorporeità nelle religioni dell'atlantico nero, Mimesis, 2023
c) S.Consigliere, Materialismo magico. Magia e rivoluzione, Derive Approdi, 2023
d) C. Ginzburg, I benandanti, Adelphi, 2020
e) M. Sahlins, La nuova scienza dell'universo incantato. Un'antropologia dell'umanità (quasi tutta), Raffaello Cortina editore, 2023
f) M.Bloch, Da preda a cacciatore, Raffaello Cortina editore, 2005
g) A. Brivio, C.Mattalucci, (a cura di), La materia per pensare la morte, Raffaello Cortina editore, 2022

Assessment methods

Type of test
Oral exam

Assessment criteria
The choice of an oral interview is consistent with the objectives of the course, as it allows, in a dialogue situation, to assess knowledge of the texts and the ability to develop a reflective, analytical and critical argument around the core concepts highlighted in the texts covered in the programme.

The final assessment will depend on:

-Regular and active participation in classroom discussions and exercises.
-Oral interview on the topics covered in class and on the exam texts. The assessment will focus on the understanding of the texts, the clear and concise presentation of the contents, the ability to critically analyse and rework the material by drawing connections between the assigned texts.
Students who are unable to attend classes and carry out the activities proposed during the course will be assessed

solely on the oral exam.

There are no intermediate tests.
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.

The exam can be performed in English by foreign/Erasmus students.
**

Office hours

Email appointment

Programme validity

Two academic years. This year's programme can therefore be carried over to the winter session in February 2028

Course tutors and assistants

Luis Gregorio Abad Espinoza

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GENDER EQUALITY | CLIMATE ACTION