UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Culture e Società della Cina - Formazione D’Area

2627-1-F0102R012

Course title

Anthropology of China: A comparative and transversal perspective on the complexity of Chinese culture, through the study of the philosophical foundations of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Topics and course structure

The course examines the philosophical foundations of Chinese thought by comparing them with the forms of rationality developed in Europe through philosophy and science. Specifically, it focuses on the body of knowledge that has been institutionalized since the 1950s as Traditional Chinese Medicine. The trasversal anthropological perspective crosses, on one hand, different medical systems, with particular reference to Western medicine. On the other hand, it seeks to understand the linguistic, theoretical, epistemological, and, more generally, cultural specificities of China: from its constitutional definition as a "multinational or multiethnic system," to its historical relations with alterity, to the contributions of Chinese anthropology itself to international dialogue.

Objectives

Through this course, with regular and active attendance in classes, the aim is to promote the following learning outcomes, in the following terms
Knowledge and Understanding
Through the study of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the course aims to provide conceptual tools essential for understanding the cultural and social complexity of China.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding
Based on the analysis of ethnographic case studies, the course trains students in the cross-disciplinary and

comparative methodology of the discipline for the critical analysis of contemporary societies. The course thus aims to foster and develop the ability to articulate and apply the proposed theoretical models and knowledge to various fields of study.

Autonomy of Judgment
Comprehend the complexity of cultural and social processes by utilizing diverse perspectives, theoretical models, and reliable sources.
Evaluate the consequences of one's own actions and decisions, adopting a reflexive and ethically responsible attitude.

Communication Skills
Clearly express ideas, knowledge, and arguments.
Formulate well-founded judgments by integrating synthesized information.

Learning Skills
Refine and develop personal learning methodologies, independently and autonomously identifying and elaborating on specific objects and themes of study.

Methodologies

The course consists of 19 lectures (13 in-person lectures and 6 delivered remotely, for a total of 56 hours).
All in-person sessions will feature a balance of lecture-based delivery and interactive components, averaging 50% of the total hours. Lectures will be conducted in Italian. The course employs diversified methodologies: frontal lectures, classroom discussions based on materials such as texts (including those in the exam syllabus), slides, and audiovisual documents provided by the instructor or independently proposed by students, as well as presentations by guest researchers showcasing ongoing research projects.

Online and offline teaching materials

Online and offline materials.

Programme and references

Lectures aim to provide conceptual tools for understanding Chinese medicine. They are designed to assist students in text analysis and in the drafting of the final written essay. The main topics include:
The ethnographic and comparative perspective of anthropology: from Brazil to China
Chinese pluralisms: Science, ethnicity, religion
"From the Chinese point of view": Orientalisms, Occidentalisms, and hetero-centrisms "under heaven" (tianxia)
The theoretical and epistemological foundations of Chinese medical knowledge: the philosophy of change (Yi Jing), Confucianism, and Daoism
"Correlative thinking"
Key theories and practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine, from classical texts to university textbooks (yinyang, five movements, syndrome differentiation)
Cultivation of the body and its techniques (Taijiquan, QiGong, meditation).
The invention of Traditional Chinese Medicine: institutionalization policies and standardization practices.

Reference Bibliography (in alphabetical order)
Ames R. 2024, Living Chinese Philosophy: Zoetology as First Philosophy, New York, SUNY Press.
Cheng A. 2000, Storia del pensiero cinese, Torino, Einaudi, 2 vol.
Farquhar J. 2018, Knowing Practice: The Clinical Encounter of Chinese Medicine, New York, Routledge.
Granet M. 2018, Il pensiero cinese, Milano, Adelphi.
Jullien F. 2005, Figure dell'immanenza. Una lettura filosofica del I Ching, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
Hsu, E. (2008). The History of Chinese Medicine in the People's Republic of China and its Globalization, East Asia Science, Technology and Society: an International Journal 2:465–484.
Malighetti R. 2014, Antropologie dalla Cina, Firenze, SEID.
Malighetti R. 2025, «"Dal punto di vista dei cinesi". Orientalismi, occidentalismi, eterocentrismi "sotto il cielo" (tianxia)», in G. Molinari, M. Settura (eds.), Teoria critica: nuove prospettive. Mimesis, Milano pp. 311-328.
Scheid, V. (2002). Chinese medicine in contemporary China: Plurality and synthesis. Durham, Duke University Press.
Sivin N. 1987, Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China, Anna ASrbor, Center for Chinese Studies.

Assessment methods

Students are required to produce a written essay (term paper) which may address either general theoretical aspects or a specific case study. The topic must relate to the specific themes of the course or be connected to them (culturally, theoretically, philosophically, etc.). This assignment serves as a formative exercise in drafting a scientific text, encompassing the selection of the research object, bibliographic research, engagement with scientific literature, conceptual articulation, and academic writing. The topic of the paper must be proposed to and approved by the instructor. The essay may be written in Italian or English and must not exceed 7,000 words. It must be submitted exclusively in .doc or .docx format and must adhere to the editorial guidelines prescribed for the Master's thesis. The paper must be sent to the instructor no later than one week prior to the exam date.
The oral examination consists of a discussion of the paper to verify the knowledge acquired through the drafting of the text. Evaluation will focus on the acquisition of discipline-specific terminology and the ability to articulate and critically discuss the course topics. The oral discussion of the essay aligns with the educational objectives, as the dialogic nature of the communication allows for interaction with the student to assess their critical understanding of the course themes and their ability to connect theory and practice.

Office hours

Before lectures, by appointment to be scheduled via email.

Programme validity

Durata dei programmi
I programmi valgono due anni accademici.
Cultori della materia e Tutor Dott. Daniele Buonomo
Two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Dr. Daniele Buonomo
Dott.ssa Annalisa Molgora

Sustainable Development Goals

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS