UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theories and Fields of Ethnography

2627-1-F0102R002

Course title

Theories and Fields of Ethnography

Topics and course structure

The course aims to outline the main issues concerning the link between anthropological theory and ethnographic practice, with reference to the multiplicity of research fields in which it is applied. The disciplinary specificity of anthropological ethnography will be investigated in relation to the main historical transformations of the discipline, its reconfiguration in the contemporary world, and its future prospects. Furthermore, its ethical and political implications will be analysed, alongside the interdisciplinary intersections where anthropological ethnography is contested, redefined, or combined with other methodological approaches; the uses and social impacts of ethnographic work in the public sphere and in non-academic professional anthropology will also be examined. This will result in a plural, open, and dynamic picture—fragmented and conflictual—from which the effectiveness of ethnographic practice will emerge as a tool for understanding similarities and differences in a rapidly changing world.

Objectives

Through this course, with consistent and active lecture attendance, the aim is to promote the following learning outcomes in terms of:

Knowledge and understanding:

- Acquiring solid and systematic knowledge within the field of demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines.

- Identifying the theoretical and methodological specificities of ethno-anthropological disciplines and their interdisciplinary connections.
- Understanding the specificities of each research area and object (the variation of methodologies in relation to different contexts) and their level of integration and interdependence within the complexity of social and cultural realities, as well as within the structure of the discipline.

Applying knowledge and understanding:

- Articulating the dialogue between scientific literature and research in an innovative way.
- Effectively applying acquired skills to concrete problems, situations, and contexts.Knowing how to convey the sense of open-mindedness and the capacity for intercultural dialogue that underpin demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines.

Making judgements:

- Understanding the complexity of cultural processes, welcoming and valuing diverse viewpoints, and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices.
- Evaluating the consequences of one's actions and decisions, adopting a reflective and responsible attitude.

Communication skills:

- Expressing ideas, knowledge, and arguments with clarity.
- Formulating well-founded judgements by integrating information from diverse and reliable sources.

Learning skills:

- Developing and refining personal learning methodologies, independently identifying and constructing objects and themes of study.

Methodologies

The course will be offered in Italian, combining lecturing (70%) and interactive teaching (30%). In the former case, face-to-face classroom lectures will be integrated with dialogue and debate. In the latter case, in-person and remote meetings with anthropologists will be promoted, applying classroom learning to concrete situations: the practicality of ongoing ethnographic research, the public uses of anthropology, and the professional fields where anthropological skills are applied.

Online and offline teaching materials

In-class projection of slides and videos, and analysis of websites and social media.Slides uploaded to the course's online pages.

Programme and references

Students are required to study the following texts:

Bargna I., 2012, ‘Between Hollywood and Bandjoun: art activism and anthropological ethnography into the mediascape,’ Journal des anthropologues, 130-131
Bargna I., 2014, “Filming Food Cultural Practices in Cameroon. An Artistic and Ethnographic Work”, Archivio di Etnografia, 1-2, 2014
Evans-Pritchard E. E., 1976, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford University Press, 1976 https://monoskop.org/images/3/37/Evans_Pritchard_E_E_Witchcraft_Oracles_and_Magic_Among_the_Azande_1976.pdf
O'Reilly, K. 2009. *Key Concepts in Ethnography,* London: Sage

You'll also need to study one of the following books:

Ingold T., 2014 *Making. Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, Routledge, London
Pink S., 2015 (2nd edition), *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, Sage, Los Angeles
Pink S., 2015, *Digital Ethnography. Principles and Practices*, Sage, Los Angeles
Wacquant Loïc, *The poverty of Ethnography of Poverty,* OUP USA, 2025

Or the following four articles:

Ingold T. 2014, "That’s enough about ethnography!", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (1): 383–395 http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau4.1.021
Kirksey S. E., Helmreich S., 2010, 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', in *Cultural Anthropology* , 25, 4
McLauchlan L., 2021, 'Multispecies Ethnography', in *Handbook of Historical Animal Studies*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg
Rappaport J., "Beyond Participant Observation: Collaborative Ethnography as Theoretical Innovation", *Collaborative Anthropologies*, Volume 1, 2008, pp. 1-31

Assessment methods

Oral Exam: A viva voce (interview) based on the exam texts and topics covered in lectures for attending students; for non-attending students, the interview will focus exclusively on the required texts.Through open-ended questions, the lecturer will assess the student's knowledge and understanding of the course content in relation to the texts listed in the exam bibliography. This includes the ability to identify the theoretical and methodological specificities of the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines and their interdisciplinary connections, as well as the capacity to effectively apply the acquired skills to concrete problems, situations, and contexts.For attending students, with reference to the topics discussed in class and the ethnographic research group work, the assessment will also test the practical application of knowledge and understanding to the case studies explored.Finally, the assessment will evaluate independent judgment and communication skills in conveying a sense of open-mindedness and the capacity for intercultural dialogue, which form the foundation of the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines.There are no ongoing assessments (mid-term tests).

Students who request it may take the exam in English or French.

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 via email

Programme validity

The programmes are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Marco Rossi (assistant)

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION