UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Antropologia Culturale

2627-1-E2002R002

Course title

Cultural anthropology: understanding the world *alongside* people.

Topics and course structure

The course provides students with **an introduction to cultural anthropology**, a discipline devoted to the study of the plurality of cultures in their symbolic, material, social, economic, political, and aesthetic dimensions. Starting from a relativization of the nature/culture dichotomy, the course will address some of the foundational themes of contemporary anthropological thought, such as **the construction of individual and group identities, notions of sex and gender, local and global forms of political and economic life in the neoliberal era, and human communication (both offline and online)**. The course will combine lectures and workshop activities in which students will be encouraged not only to engage with the intellectual frameworks and knowledge produced throughout the historical development of the field, but also with the research practices that characterize it. Special attention will therefore be given to the ethnographic method, a key element of anthropological inquiry, understood as the core of a possible relationship of encounter and knowledge between different cultural realities.

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:

- Outlining the disciplinary field of cultural anthropology and its main perspectives;

- Understanding the concept of culture in its dialectical relationship with that of nature;
- Critically analyzing some dynamics of identity construction through the interpretative dimensions of race, social class, and gender;
- Examining, from a comparative and multi-scalar perspective, the cultural dimensions of globalization;
- Understanding, from an anthropological point of view, the link between communication (offline and online) and culture.

Applying knowledge and understanding:

- Applying the deconstructive gaze of anthropology to understand and competently engage with contemporary multicultural reality;
- Articulating the dialogue between scholarly literature and anthropological research in order to navigate the diverse field of intercultural communication.

Autonomy of judgment:

- Interpreting 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;
- 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 complemented by laboratory-based teaching methods (interactive teaching, approx. 26 hours), such as active learning, interactive lecturing, plenary discussions, group exercises, and observation activities.

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 the 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 **two thematic sections**. The first will consist of an introductory overview of the field of study and its main themes (culture/nature, identity, race, ethnicity, social class, gender, power, forms of economic life, globalization). The second will focus on the anthropological study of communication, with a specific emphasis on social media and the local practices they generate. For every two more theory-oriented lectures, there will be one class with a distinctly interactive and workshop-based format. Within the overall structure of the course, workshop sessions are considered essential for creating the conditions for learning the discipline and for students' personal appropriation of its content.

The syllabus may undergo minor changes based on the needs expressed by attending students.

The course includes the study of the texts listed below:

Section 1:

- Fabietti, U. (2015), Elementi di antropologia culturale. Terza edizione, Mondadori università (Parte prima, seconda, terza, quarta, quinta, nona).

One text to be chosen from the following novels:

- Atwood, M. (2019), Il racconto dell'ancella, Ponte alle grazie (1° ed. 1985).
- Golding, W. (2024), Il signore delle mosche, Mondadori (1° ed. 1954).
- Le Guin, U.K. (2025), I reietti dell'altro pianeta, Mondadori (1° ed. 1974).

Section 2:

- Biscaldi, A., Matera, V. (2019), Antropologia del social media. Comunicare nel mondo globale, Carocci editore.

One text to be chosen from the following monographs:

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2022), Sentimenti velati. Onore e poesia in una società beduina, Rosenberg & Sellier (1° ed. 2000).
- Belmonte, T. (2021), La fontana rotta, Einaudi (1° ed. 1979).
- Bourgois, P. (2005), Cercando rispetto. Drug economy e cultura di strada, DeriveApprodi (1° ed. 1995).
- Fassin, D. (2013), La forza dell'ordine. Antropologia della polizia nelle periferie urbane, La Linea (1° ed. 2011).
- Khosravi, S. (2019), Io sono confine, Elèuthera (1° ed. 2007).
- Mead, M. (2007), L'adolescenza in Samoa, Giunti (1° ed. 1928).
- Miller, D. (2020), Cose che parlano di noi. Un antropologo a casa nostra, Il Mulino (1° ed. 2009)
- Tsing, A.L. (2021), Il fungo alla fine del mondo. La possibilità di vivere nelle rovine del capitalismo, Keller (1° ed. 2015).
- Wacquant, L. (2002), Anima e corpo. La fabbrica dei pugili nel ghetto nero americano, DeriveApprodi (1° ed. 2000).

Assessment methods

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.

Attending students

Attending students are required to submit (via the e-learning platform), at least ten days before the exam date, a PDF dossier containing the results of the exercises carried out during the workshop sessions. Further instructions will be provided during the course.

Non-attending students
Non-attending students are required to submit (via the e-learning platform), at least ten days before the exam date, a PDF reading note (i.e., a critical reflection) of approximately 6 pages on the novel chosen from the second section.

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.

Assessment will follow the Dublin Descriptors: the following grade bands are used

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.
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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