



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

History of Society and Labour

2627-1-F5703R026

Course title

Living and Working in Pre-Industrial European Societies

Topics and course structure

The course is in Italian. It deals with the reality and representations of labour in the Early modern age, framed in the social structures and collective mentalities of the Old regime, and considered in their long-term development. To promote comparison between the past and the present, the course will not only cover labour in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern age but include activities that were not yet part of its definition – religious service, administration, family caregiving and domestic work.

Following an introductory overview of the conceptual tools needed to understand the social and chronological coordinates of the period, the course will focus on the material and symbolic features of labour in the Early modern period and on its long-term historical foundations. The course will deal with social and cultural issues, examining theoretical models through which labour was represented and reinterpreted from the late Middle Ages to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. This includes different understandings associated with distinct social classes and with pre-modern institutions. The course will also explore the social essentialization of labour, that is the historical process that gradually came to identify individual identity with one's profession or occupation. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of intellectual labour (bureaucrats, civil servants, educators, etc.) and its social significance, including the relationship between knowledge and social mobility. Finally, the course will also explore the reality of "non-labour", that is leisure and free-time activities, unemployment and travel, highlighting the ways these experiences contributed to shaping the social meaning of labour itself.

Objectives

Students will acquire factual and methodological knowledge necessary to recognize and conceptualize changes in society and labour over time. They will be able to place significant events and historical figures within their proper chronological and geographical contexts, use the basic terminology of historical scholarship, and critically engage with historiographical texts.

The course contributes to the development of the following skills corresponding to the Dublin Descriptors indicated in parentheses:

Developing historical awareness and historical culture as tools for understanding and evaluating past and present political and social realities (Knowledge and Understanding).

Developing the ability to critically assess historical sources and information (Making Judgements).

Applying methodological approaches and factual knowledge in different contexts (Applying Knowledge and Understanding).

Developing the ability to identify and effectively communicate historical problems and ideas (Communication Skills).

Acquiring the ability to locate and use relevant sources in order to continuously update one's knowledge and cultivate critical and reflective thinking for interpreting both past and present realities (Learning Skills).

Methodologies

The course is taught in Italian. Teaching is primarily delivered through in-person lectures. Up to 20% of the course may consist of interactive teaching activities, including group readings of primary sources or scholarly texts, discussions, and student presentations, depending on the needs of the class.

Online and offline teaching materials

Course materials (slides, documents, and excerpts from scholarly works), together with lecture video recordings, will be made available on the e-learning platform shortly after each class.

Programme and references

The exam will focus on both the course lectures and the short texts (indicated or, where possible, distributed during the course) discussed in class. Students may acquire the required knowledge either by attending lectures or by viewing the recorded lectures and slides available on the e-learning platform. Students are also required to read a textbook:

Roberto Bizzocchi, Guida allo studio della storia moderna, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2024.

- Erasmus students may contact the professors for bibliography in English.

Assessment methods

There are no mid-term assessments.

The final assessment consists of an oral examination. This format is intended to foster dialogue between the instructor and the student, allowing students to demonstrate not only their knowledge of the subject matter but also their command of the discipline's terminology and its critical methodology.

Office hours

By appointment. Students are kindly requested to contact the professors by email.

Programme validity

Two years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
