UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

# COURSE SYLLABUS

# Consultancy in Educational Discomfort: Theories and Practices

**2627-2-F8502R013**

## Course title

Theories and practices for a pedagogical counseling that knows how to stay in discomfort and to accompany its experience in the contemporary.

## Topics and course structure

The teaching proposes a critical reflection on educational distress, showing the intertwining of representations and treatment of what is commonly referred to as “distress.”
More specifically, educational distress as a social construct is explored, questioning its meaning as an “individual fact” and seeking to understand it, instead, as an educational situation.
In addition, reference to philosophical disciplinary knowledge will deepen the hypothesis that the experience of distress is intrinsic to the human condition itself, while at the same time being historically determined. These reflections will allow one to ask how, at present, the experience of distress influences and interrogates education, particularly as an institutionally and formally predisposed experience. This leads to dwelling on the forms of discomfort experienced by the current educational workforce in particular.
Thus, counseling is proposed as a second-level pedagogical intervention aimed primarily at services and educators or teachers to thematize the discomfort experienced. Within a thematization of the field of action of pedagogical counseling, the course proposes an in-depth study of a phenomenological approach to read discomfort, while reaffirming the need to know and know how to also use other approaches and models within pedagogical knowledge, precisely to intercept and interpret the complexity of educational discomfort according to different approaches.

The course will address the following points:

- Discomfort as a social construct;
- Discomfort as an object of pedagogical gaze;
- Discomfort and existence: philosophical and pedagogical contributions;

- Discomfort and widespread education: the cultural historical connotation of discomfort between exclusion and social inclusion;
- Discomfort and intentional education: the current form of educational discomfort;
- Educational discomfort in contemporary experience;
- Educational distress and the area of mental health;
- Representations of counseling in distress situations and proposal of a mode of interpretation of counseling in educational distress as critical, reflective, and second-level research work with respect to educational experience;
- View and positioning of the educational consultant in the current social and educational scenario: methodological hypotheses and project dimension;
- The phenomenological approach in pedagogy for reading distress and designing counseling pathways;

## Objectives

1. Knowledge and understanding

• To acquire in-depth knowledge, beyond that required by the three-year degree programme, in the field of educational sciences;
• To analyse, understand and interpret the issues encountered in educational contexts;
• To acquire in-depth knowledge of the theories, models, methodologies, techniques and tools of educational practice in its various forms;
• Acquire the ability to understand the various dimensions that structure pedagogical work in its various forms (coordination, supervision, consultancy, training, research);
• Be familiar with and understand models, perspectives and approaches to pedagogical consultancy regarding educational difficulties;
• Understand, deconstruct and problematise the concept of 'difficulty', being able to identify its components related to education;
• Understand, deconstruct and critically examine situations of educational distress, considering the most appropriate methods and approaches to educational consultancy.

2. Ability to apply knowledge and understanding

• Apply knowledge and skills to design possible educational consultancy pathways in cases of educational distress;
• Develop the ability to design and implement pedagogical interventions in relation to the dimensions that structure pedagogical work;
• Develop the ability to use pedagogical theories and models to interpret the specific contexts of intervention;

3. Independent judgement

• Develop the ability to analyse the complexity of the situation in which they will intervene;
• Develop the ability to form independent judgements and assessments of the situation, on the basis of which to design and oversee the pedagogical intervention, acting reflectively in accordance with ethical and professional principles and in compliance with sector regulations;
• Acquire and consolidate analytical and critical thinking skills in situations of educational difficulty, in order to adopt a pedagogical counselling approach.

4. Communication skills

• Developing the ability to communicate effectively the epistemological choices necessary to provide educational consultancy in cases of educational distress;
• Knowledge and use of the specific language and vocabulary of the educational discipline, necessary to perform a consultancy role.

5. Learning skills

• Be able to identify the areas requiring further development within one's professional development pathway;
• Acquiring the ability to organise the necessary methods for accessing sources and support tools suitable for meeting one's own training and professional needs;
• Knowing how to use one's own knowledge and skills as a tool for work and guidance in complex situations, including from an interdisciplinary and interprofessional perspective, as well as sources of potential theoretical and practical connections;
• Ability to rework and organise the knowledge acquired.

## Methodologies

Teaching methods will stimulate reflection on various educational situations, promoting both discussions in large group and activities in small groups (case studies, problem solving, etc.).
The course will be held in Italian.
All training activities planned for the 56 hours are carried out in person.
Each lesson includes the presence of a didactic part (theoretical explanation, conceptual in-depth analysis) and an interactive part (dialogical exchanges, activities supervised by the teacher such as individual exercises, group work, case work, planning, role playing).
Approximately 50% of the hours will be provided as didactic teaching and 50% as interactive teaching.

## Online and offline teaching materials

Case work, slides, videos, if possible, available online in the virtual classroom.

## Programme and references

Can distress be understood as the object of educational work and pedagogical counseling?
How can educational professionals operate "within" discomfort?
In answering these questions and in sketching discomfort as something structurally inherent in the educational experience, the course aims to traverse the experience of discomfort in contemporary times, offering glimpses and directions for pedagogical reflection. Specific reflections around the concepts of limit and discard, which constitute enormous challenges in contemporary Western reality, will allow pedagogical positions to be proposed around the theme of discomfort.
Indeed, how are situations of discomfort generated today and what responsibility does education, whether formal, nonformal or informal, have in this? Indeed, it is a widespread feeling that the educational experiences proposed by the world of schools or services are from time to time accomplices or victims of contemporary experiences of hardship. The question arises, however, as to whether an alternative position can be identified, one capable of putting the world of formal and nonformal education in a position to act purposefully, fleeing both salvific illusions and self-destructive drifts.
The space of pedagogical consulting work can open up precisely from the search for such a position. This requires the counselor to define a specific position with respect to the current situation of widespread educational discomfort: a position certainly never defined once and for all, but characterized at the same time by risk and creativity. Consistent with these questions and hypotheses, the course aims to provide elements of knowledge and reflection on the dimensions that structure the contemporary life experience leading it to take on connotations of discomfort, and to identify together with students and students conditions, characteristics, attitudes, and tools

essential for the construction or recognition of a pedagogical position in this regard.
To thematize the specificity of counseling intervention, finally, the course aims to promote a firm anchoring of practices to the pedagogical theories that support them, presenting and analyzing in detail the phenomenological approach in pedagogy to think and act pedagogical counseling in educational distress, which will be directly experienced by students and students through case work and situations and concrete.

Students have to study:

1. Palmieri C. & Gambacorti-Passerini M.B. (a cura di) (2021), Disagio e lavoro educativo: prospettive pedagogiche nell'esperienza della contemporaneità, Franco Angeli, Milano.

2. Gambacorti-Passerini M.B. (2020), La consulenza pedagogica nel disagio educativo. Teorie e pratiche professionali in salute mentale, Franco Angeli, Milano.

3. Cornacchia M. & Tramma S. (a cura di) (2019), Vulnerabilità in età adulta. Uno sguardo pedagogico, Carocci, Roma.

4. Barone P., Cucuzza G., Ferrante A. (a cura di) (2024), Ecologie della materia. Educazione e materialità nello scenario contemporaneo, Franco Angeli, Milano.

In addition, students have to choose one book in the following list, focused on rethinking the experience of distress (with a specific focus on the mental health area) from the point of view of different disciplines:

For an educational point of view:
• Annacontini G. (2019), Imparare a essere forti. Segnavia di pedagogia della salute per pensare la relazione di cura, Progedit, Bari.
• Antonacci F., Cappa F. (a cura di) (2001), Riccardo Massa. Lezioni su "La peste, il teatro, l'educazione", Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Biesta G.J.J. (2023), Oltre l'apprendimento (traduzione di C. Montà), Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Brambilla L. & Rizzo M. ( a cura di) (2020), Giovani, modelli e territori. Esplorazioni pedagogiche attorno al divenire di ragazzi e ragazze nella contemporaneità, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Bruzzone D. & Zannini L. (a cura di) (2021), Sfidare i tabù della cura. Percorsi di formazione emotiva dei professionisti, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Freire P. (2018), Pedagogia degli oppressi, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Torino.
• Gagliardo M., Rizzo S., Tarsia T. & Vergani E., (a cura di) (2018), Corporeità. Pratiche educative nell'incontro con i corpi in crescita, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Galanti A. (2007), Sofferenza psichica e pedagogia. Educare all'ansia, alla fragilità e alla solitudine, Carocci, Roma.
• Gambacorti-Passerini M.B. (2016), Pedagogia e medicina: un incontro possibile. Un'esperienza di ricerca in salute mentale, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Locatelli R. (2025), Trasformare l'educazione insieme. Prospettive internazionali per una rinnovata alleanza educativa, Vita e Pensiero, Milano.
• Marescotti E. (2020), Adultescenza e dintorni. Il valore dell'adultità, il senso dell'educazione, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Pagano G. & Sabatano F. (a cura di) (2020), Oltre il disagio. Il lavoro educativo tra scuola, famiglia ed esperienze di comunità, Guerini e Associati, Milano.
• Pasta S. & Santerini M. (2021), Nemmeno con un click. Ragazze e odio online, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Rovelli M. (2025), Non siamo capolavori. Il disagio e il dissenso degli adolescenti, Laterza, Bari-Roma.
• Simone M.G. (2022), Cambiamenti. Sfide e compiti educativi, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Zannini L. (2023), L'educazione del paziente. Per una consapevolezza pedagogica dei professionisti della cura, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.
• Zannoni F. (2022), Educare nelle periferie. Descrivere, comprendere, progettare, Franco Angeli, Milano.
• Zizioli E., Stillo L., Franchi G. (a cura di) (2024), L'altra scuola. L'educazione popolare tra apprendimento e riscatto sociale, Donzelli, Roma.

For a philosophical point of view:
• Foucault M. (2006), Il potere psichiatrico. Corso al Collège de France (1973-1974), Feltrinelli, Milano.

For a sociological point of view:
• Bauman Z. (2007), Modus vivendi. Inferno e utopia del mondo liquido, Laterza, Roma-Bari.
• Micheli G.A. (2013), Il vento in faccia. Storie passate e sfide presenti di una psichiatria senza manicomio, Franco Angeli, Milano.

For a psychiatric point of view:
• Basaglia F. (1982), Scritti: 1968-1980. Dall'apertura del manicomio alla nuova legge sull'assistenza psichiatrica, Einaudi, Torino.
• Maone A., D'Avanzo B. (2015), Recovery. Nuovi paradigmi per la salute mentale, Cortina, Milano.
• Saraceno B. (2014), Discorso globale, sofferenze locali. Analisi critica del movimento di salute mentale, Il Saggiatore, Milano.

For a multidisciplinary point of view:
• Consorzio Cascina Clarabella (a cura di) (2018), I luoghi del possibile. Fare salute mentale oggi, Le Matite di Animazione Sociale, Torino.

The book that can be chosen in the list can also be replaced with the study of ALL the following scientific articles, also available through the search engine of the University Library:

1. Ferrante A. & Galimberti A. (2018), Interrogare le transizioni tra contesti di apprendimento. Un confronto tra differenti approcci teorici, in Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education, 13(3) https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/7846.

2. Gambacorti-Passerini M.B. (2021). Educating to prevent youth (aged 16– 24) mental distress: giving meaning to an educational effort, in Encyclopaideia, 25(59), pp. 83-95, https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/11628
3. Biesta G. J. (2023), Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect With the Question of Purpose in Education, in Encyclopaideia, 27(1s), pp. 9-20, https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/16834
4. Morganti C., Porcellana M., Biancorosso C., Fontana R., Lanzo F., Malchiodi F., Mastromo D., Motto D., Oltolina M., Savino C., Vairelli F., Zanobio A. & Percudani M. (2019). L'esperienza budget di salute di comunità dell'ASST Grande Ospedale Metropolitano Niguarda con aMIcittà, in Psichiatria Oggi, XXXII(1), pp. 88-94.

Erasmus students have to study:

- Dewey J. (1983), Experience and Education, Kappa Delta Pi, New York.
- Dahlberg K., Dahlberg H. & Nyström M. (2008), Reflective Lifeworld Research, Student Litteratur, Hungary.
- Malti T. & Noam G. (2009), Where youth development meets mental health and education: the RALLY approach, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

For every difficulty in finding references, please contact the teacher: maria.gambacorti@unimib.it

## Assessment methods

There are no in-progress tests. The final examination is scheduled in oral mode, with two possibilities detailed below. The choice of the oral interview as the examination mode is consistent with the objectives of the teaching,

as it allows through a dialogic communicative situation to interact with students to assess their ability to critically understand the course topics, pedagogical analysis and connection between theory and practice.

There are two modes provided for taking the exam, which involves only the final exam:

1. Oral interview in which each student will present and discuss the topics of the course and the examination texts, starting with a “product,” created independently so as to summarize the fundamental steps of the coursework done during the teaching period and critically express the formative gain that each person has been able to take from the course. In the “product” should be present references to all the texts studied and to at least two of the exercises proposed during the course (all the exercises are contained in the slides and other teaching materials available on the e-learning page of the course. They are named "exercises" - in Italian "esercitazione").
   Special reference should be made to the text of choice, giving reasons for its choice and identifying its contribution in the construction of the educational path experienced during the course. The “product” can take any form: a piece of writing, a presentation, an object, a collection of objects, an artifact, an image, a metaphor, a poem, a song, etc.; something that helps not only to reconstruct scenarios and reflections created during the course, but also to structure and express an autonomous pedagogical position with regard to the themes of the course, reworked also through the study of the texts, which will necessarily have to be cited. The interview will start with a discussion of the paper and will then focus on an in-depth study of the content found in the texts in the bibliography. It will thus be aimed at assessing:

- The ability to structure and express an autonomous pedagogical position relative to the lived experience in the classroom and also reworked through the study of texts;
- The ability to make connections between texts;
- The ability to critically argue around the conceptual cores that the texts highlight;
- The ability to connect what has been studied to one's own professional or personal experience;
- The ability to use the knowledge provided by the texts to identify, deconstruct, and understand situations of educational distress;
- The ability to use the knowledge gained to construct intervention projects in educational distress;
- The ability to use the acquired knowledge to set up contexts and develop strategies for pedagogical counseling in educational distress.

2. Oral interview, based on the exam texts, aimed at assessing:

- the knowledge of the texts;
- the ability to develop an independent discourse on the cross-cutting topics of the texts;
- the ability to critically argue around the conceptual cores that the texts emphasize;
- the ability to connect what has been studied to one's own professional or personal experience;
- the ability to use the knowledge provided by the texts to identify, deconstruct, and understand situations of educational distress;
- the ability to use the knowledge acquired to construct intervention projects in educational distress;
- the ability to use the acquired knowledge to set up contexts and develop strategies for pedagogical counseling in educational distress.

Grading will be on a 30-point scale, based on the following grading scale:

1. Inadequate
   Insufficient knowledge of the main topics covered in the syllabus and course reading list; very limited and poorly developed ability to argue, analyze, and critically evaluate; insufficient ability to connect theory and practice and to identify relevant connections between the texts and course topics; poor presentation skills and incorrect use of subject-specific vocabulary.
2. Satisfactory – More than satisfactory (18–23)
   General knowledge that is, in some respects, uncertain or incomplete regarding various topics in the course syllabus and bibliography; arguments, analysis, and critical thinking that are at times limited and not very independent; difficulty connecting theory and practice and identifying relevant connections between the

course texts and topics; presentation skills and subject-specific vocabulary that are partially correct.

3. Fair (24–27)
   Adequate preparation on the main topics covered in the course syllabus and bibliography, but lacking depth on some more specific themes; ability to argue, analyze, and engage in critical thinking is present, but not always precise or independent; fair ability to connect theory and practice and to identify relevant connections between the course texts and themes; presentation skills and subject-specific vocabulary are mostly correct.
4. Good–Excellent (28–30/30 with honors)
   Comprehensive and in-depth preparation on the topics covered in the syllabus and course bibliography; ability to argue, analyze, and engage in structured and independent critical thinking; good/excellent ability to connect theory and practice and to identify relevant connections between the texts and course themes; good/excellent presentation skills and mastery of the discipline's specific vocabulary.

## Office hours

By appointment, writing to: maria.gambacorti@unimib.it

## Programme validity

## Course tutors and assistants

D.ssa Cristina Savino
Dott. Luca Bassi
D.ssa Silvia Lamperti
D.ssa Giulia Romeri
D.ssa Chiara Ronconi

## Sustainable Development Goals

REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS