UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Relationship

2627-1-F8502R011

Course title

Ethical Choice in Relation: Citizenship, Interculturalism, Artificial Intelligence

Topics and course structure

"How do our social relationships with others relate to our individual choices and actions? "
"By what criteria do we ascribe to others the status of citizens? On what grounds do we recognize or deny rights? "
"Where do the experiences of conflict between cultures and religions in our communities originate? What models of secularism do we have to deal with them? "
"Do artificial intelligences decide and act with us or instead of us? What is their influence on our choices and discourse? Who is accountable for what they do?"

These questions cut across some increasingly critical areas of relationship for anyone working in and about society: old and new relations of citizenship, the phenomena of inclusion and conflict related to cultural and religious diversity, and the growing influence on our choices and jobs of generative Artificial Intelligence.

In an attempt to answer these questions, moral philosophy offers conceptual resources, interpretive approaches, and models of individual and group decision-making that can be useful for making ethically responsible choices in the contexts of civic engagement and professional pedagogical activity.

The course, therefore, offers to the students a pathway divided in four sections that:
(i) introduces to the complexity of "Being and acting in public spaces", such as decisions made in political contexts or within professional teams;
(ii) considers the specificity and criticality of **citizenship** relations and the connected problem of human rights;
(iii) investigates the value choices underlying the phenomena of inclusion and exclusion related to experiences of **cultural and religious diversity**;

(iv) problematizes the impact on individual and collective choices of interactions with **artificial intelligence**.

EXTENDED COURSE PROGRAM

The course program is divided into sections which, in succession, make up the proposed path.

1. Being and acting in public space
This introductory section identifies some fundamental philosophical issues for understanding the specificity of ethical choice within the relationships between individual and community. Starting with the problematization of some conceptual distinctions used in this area (public and private, freedom and equality, justice and the common good), we consider the reflection on social bonding of some classical authors (Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Bentham) and examine some concepts typical of contemporary philosophical and sociological debate (social practice, public reason, social imaginary).

2. Citizenship Relations.
This section examines a first area of relations that manifests emerging criticalities in contemporary democratic societies: that of citizenship relations. Starting with some passages from Aristotle's *Politics*, we will problematize the basic features of the typical citizen's social action, placed between cooperative and deliberative relations. Discussing some examples of contemporary crisis of democratic citizenship (difficulty of integration of new citizens, disaffection for democratic processes, rise of authoritarian movements, polarization of political opinions) we will look for some possible response strategies in the texts of authors such as Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum and Michael Sandel.

3. Intercultural Relations
This section examines a number of relationship domains where the ethical problem of the threshold between inclusion and exclusion on cultural and religious grounds is raised. In relation to these issues, philosophical reflection on the crisis of multiculturalism, the rise of intercultural and postsecular paradigms, and contemporary reformulations of the principle of secularism will be examined. Some concrete cases of normative controversy over religious dress and symbols in schools and food prohibitions in public canteens will also be discussed. Texts by philosophers such as Charles Taylor, Jocelyn Maclure, Jürgen Habermas, and Judith Butler will provide theoretical and practical insights to discuss some ethically problematic cases drawn from the field experience of educators and social workers who have had to confront tensions and conflicts rooted in cultural difference.

4. Relations with Artificial Intelligences.
This section will offer a preliminary philosophical reading of the impact of generative Artificial Intelligences on social life, with particular attention to the unprecedented transformations they are having on the formation of ideas and values in various spheres: care, education, political life. Some texts by Luciano Floridi and Frank Pasquale will offer useful suggestions for discussing how interactions with AI-based systems are challenging traditional categories of creativity, authorship, responsibility. Emerging approaches in the ethical analysis of these systems, starting with the value alignment model, will also be specifically considered with their potential and their limits.
-> This section of the course is fully accessible without any prior knowledge of Artificial Intelligence, however, for those wishing to explore topics related to the development and application of AI systems in a broader context, I would like to highlight, in the curriculum of this Master's Degree, the course ***"Fundamentals of Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence" taught by my colleague Edoardo Datteri****, which provides a comprehensive overview of topics that this course specifically examines by focusing on their relevant ethical dimensions.*

Conclusions: Toward an ethical profile for the pedagogist
In this last, short section of the course, we question the public role of the figure of the pedagist, starting with a systematic and reasoned analysis from the ethical charters and codes of ethics of Italian associations of pedagogists and educators. In a comparison with the international debate on the ethics of the educational and care professions, we will conclude the course by trying to outline some open perspectives on the ethical responsibility proper to the pedagogist in a scenario of profound social and cultural transformations.

Objectives

The course aims to provide advanced philosophical tools for **analyzing difficulties and dilemmas of ethical decision-making within certain areas of constantly changing social relations**.

In general, from the analysis of **ethical cases and public controversies**, we aim to develop, individually and in groups, the **capacity for ethical reflection and deliberation** in these different areas, with particular attention to their impact on public education contexts.

EXPECTED LEARNING RESULTS

Knowledge and Understanding
Upon completion of the course, the student will know the concepts underlying the main philosophical models of understanding social relations, with reference to their origin in the work of classical and modern authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Bentham. Will be able to distinguish between public and private spheres, between ethical and legal dimensions. Will be able to appreciate the ethical-political relevance of the concepts of social practice, public reason, social imaginary, with reference also to the pedagogical area.

Applied knowledge and understanding
Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to analyze critical issues emerging within citizenship relations, exclusionary dynamics based on cultural and religious difference. Explain emerging ethical issues within cases drawn from concrete experiences of civic and professional engagement in the field. Identify emerging ethical issues within human interactions with generative artificial intelligences. Deliberate, individually and in groups, about the course of action to take when faced with ethically problematic and dilemmatic situations that emerge in concrete contexts of intervention.

Autonomy of judgment
At the end of the course, the student will be able to offer ethical justifications for their conduct in complex social contexts and to reflectively evaluate their role as a pedagogist in the light of a plurality of ethical-political ideals and values, with special reference to professional ethics and deontology.

Communication skills
By the end of the course, students will be able to illustrate an ethical problem and discuss the justifications for individual and collective moral choices using precise language, philosophical terminology, and a clear argumentative structure.

Learning skills
By the end of the course, students will have acquired the basic knowledge and skills needed to identify the areas that need further development as part of one's professional development, to stay informed and up-to-date on emerging ethical issues in educational and professional contexts, as well as to pursue further study of contemporary debates in moral philosophy in early research contexts.

Methodologies

The course uses a combination of different teaching methods. **All lectures consist of a part in which ideas, authors and texts are presented** (delivery mode for about **60%** of the lecture) and **a part devoted to critical discussion of lecture topics and group deliberation on ethical cases** (interactive mode for about **40%** of the lecture).

Overall therefore, the teaching consists of **18 lectures of 3 hours and 1 concluding lecture of 2 hours for a total of 56 hours divided into approximately 33 hours of didactic delivery and 23 hours of interactive teaching**.

All activities are usually conducted in presence but at the same time a curated selection of the teaching conducted in class is video-recorded and made available to non-attending students to support their study activities.

Teaching is delivered in **Italian**, but the professor is available to support students speaking in **English and French** outside of class.
The entire course bibliography is also available in English.
The **final exam** can be taken by international students **also in English and French**.

Online and offline teaching materials

The materials used during the course will be made available to students in parallel with the lessons.

Open discussion, the answer to shared questions and the discussion of ethical cases drawn from the field experience of professionals and educators constitute a central element of the course. In this sense, **the presence and interactive participation of the greatest number substantially enriches everyone's learning experience**.

At the same time, for **working and non-attending students**, audio-video recordings will be made available to support personal study: these will be videos dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the main themes and the texts included in the bibliography. The **purpose of this approach is to ensure to all those who cannot attend the course that they can still access a selected collection of video-lessons** which facilitate them in the choice of texts to present for the exam and support them in their study.

Programme and references

The course bibliography includes **one choice reading for each of the course sections**.
The study of these texts complements that of the **materials used in class and always made available online, as they are are for all intents and purposes study materials and subject to assessment for all**, including the materials on the essential aspects of the texts that the student has not specifically chosen.
The texts listed in the bibliography will all be presented during the course, thus facilitating choice according to each individual's interests. No pre-readings are required for the course itself.

1. For the section "Being and Acting in Public Space"

Michael Sandel, *Justice. What's the Right Thing to Do?*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2010, ch. 6-7, 9-10.

2. For the section "Citizenship relationships"

Hannah Arendt, *We Refugees*, in *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York 2007.

OR

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1998, Introduction and ch. 1-4.

3. For the section "Intercultural Relationships"

Jocelyn Maclure, Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2011.

OR

Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, Columbia University Press, New York 2011.

4. For the section "Relationships with Artificial Intelligence"

Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2023, ch. 1-5, 11.

OR

Frank Pasquale, *New Laws of Robotics. Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2020, cap. 1-3, 8.

Programme and course bibliography are the same for attending and non-attending students. Audiovisual materials will be available to support the non-attending students in choosing and approaching the books in bibliography.

For those who seek further support to their understanding of the course framework, it is possible to read:

5. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, Anansi, Toronto 1991.

Assessment methods

METHOD OF EVALUTION

The assessment is through **a final oral-only test**. There are no midterm exams.
The choice of the oral exam as an assessment method is **consistent with the course objectives**, as it allows for a dialogic exchange that assesses not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to engage in reflective analysis of ideas and contexts; it enables students to discuss the reasons and ethical ideals that underpin their decision-making when faced with ethical dilemmas and controversies; and it fosters the ability to demonstrate linguistic precision, appropriate terminology, and a coherent line of reasoning in direct interaction with an interlocutor.

The final oral test is structured in **four questions**, each of which tests a specific area of learning, as follows:
i. one question on the introductory course section on Being and acting in public spaces;
ii. one question on the section on relations of Citizenship;
iii. one question on the section on Intercultural relations;
iv one question on the section on relations with Artificial Intelligences.

The final exam can also be taken by **international students** in **English** and **French**.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The final grade is expressed in thirtieths and is based on a weighted average of the different learning objectives:

a) Knowledge and understanding of the theoretical elements covered in the lecture materials and in the bibliography selected by the student (40% of the grade);

b) Applied knowledge and understanding + Autonomy of judgment in illustrating references and connections between the course themes and analyzing the ethical cases considered (35% of the grade);

c) Communication skills demonstrated during the oral exam by using precise language, philosophical terminology, and a clear argumentative structure (25% of the grade).

In assessing the oral exam in these areas, the following **reference criteria** are applied, which students can use as a guide in preparing for the exam:

- A **fail** corresponds to a lack of or highly deficient knowledge of the content of the texts in the bibliography selected by the student (which usually serve as the starting point for exam questions), and an inability to reference the main themes of the course as presented in the materials uploaded to the e-learning platform.

- A **sufficient to more than sufficient (18–23)** evaluation corresponds to a basic knowledge of the content of the texts in the bibliography selected by the student, a modest ability to reference the main course themes covered in the e-learning materials, an imprecise and not well ordered oral presentation.

- A **good (24–27)** evaluation corresponds to a broader knowledge of the content of the texts in the bibliography selected by the student, a good ability to reference the course themes and cases presented in the e-learning materials, a fair ability to connect different topics covered in the course and to clearly and coherently present philosophical arguments based on texts and cases, a good use of language and terminology.

- A **very good to excellent (28–30 cum laude)** evaluation corresponds to a thorough knowledge of the content of the texts in the bibliography selected by the student, a wide-ranging ability to reference the themes, texts, and cases presented in the e-learning materials, and a strong capacity to connect different topics and clearly and precisely articulate philosophical arguments based on texts and cases, demonstrating independent judgment grounded in autonomous elaboration of the contents and critical reflection on the issues.

Office hours

The teacher is gladly available to students to arrange a meeting by appointment, in person or remotely.

Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS