UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Ethics of Relationship. Theory and Practice

2627-1-F8502R019

Course title

“You Can’t Learn How to Begin”
Creativity and Creation: Between Philosophy and Pedagogy.

Topics and course structure

Creativity is a recurring term in public discourse, often trivialized through the figure of the “creative person.” It is widely present and discussed in the field of education, but is most often understood as a disposition, an aptitude, or a way of being characteristic of certain individuals—for example, those predisposed to divergent thinking; in this regard, education often intersects with psychology and cognitive approaches.
Starting with a preliminary clarification of some basic terms in the lexicon of pedagogical practice (“work,” “work of art,” “action,” “reproduction”), the course aims to argue for the need to add the concept of “creation” to this vocabulary.
Philosophically, creativity and creation are linked, but they must be distinguished, because creation is not being, but bringing into being: it is an act, an occurrence, or an event.
Creation lies at the heart of experience; it always comes into play whenever we have an experience that changes us; in this way, we experience exposure to otherness, to the new.
So, what is the relationship between creativity and creation?
Creation is the peak of creativity’s intensity; it is the point of exposure where the event of encountering what was not there before occurs: when things change.
Taken by surprise, we are called upon to improvise!
But if pedagogy is also method, project, and theory, how can we integrate into it that which cannot be predicted, prepared, or arranged?
Can we speak of the “fiat” of creation? Is there a knowledge of creating?

Objectives

The aim of this course in relational ethics is to provide the student with the theoretical tools required to read educational phenomena and relationships – with educational consultancy and coordination roles in mind – and with a focus on ethics.

Specific learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding.
The first objective is to accustom students to a style of inquiry suited to critically analysing the categories of thought that explicitly or implicitly underpin discourses in the human sciences and the associated research practices and forms of intervention. Students will be led to recognize and problematize the interpretive approaches and conceptual distinctions underpinning understandings of the world in real-life contexts.

Application of knowledge and understanding.
The second objective is to help students develop the capacity to reflect on the less obvious, and thus even more crucial, assumptions underlying their actions (whether theoretical or practical) in typical educational situations and settings. The expected learning outcome is enhanced awareness of the horizons of meaning that come into play in diverse sociocultural contexts and the main cognitive and normative structures underpinning mutual expectations in educational settings, which in turn will inform educational action.

Independence of Judgment.
The third objective is the development of critical judgment skills in highly complex situations

Communication Skills.
The fourth objective is to develop the ability to communicate effectively, based on knowledge and use of the specific language and vocabulary of philosophy, with attention to the conceptual dimension, the semantic stratification of key terms, the logical-formal structure of arguments, and the different regimes of truth.

Learning Skills
The fifth objective is to refine students' ability to process and organize knowledge.

Methodologies

Roughly all the training activities envisaged in the 56 hours are carried out in the classroom.
The course will therefore comprise: introductory lectures and discussions on the fundamental themes and guidelines of the theoretical pathway; guided analysis of the texts; days of active teaching with in-class exercises based on worksheets and audiovisual materials; moments of shared recapitulation on the basis of the outlines provided via power-point or with external interventions, with an overall distribution estimated at approximately 80% lecture-based instruction and 20% interactive learning.

The course is delivered in Italian.

Online and offline teaching materials

Course books, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets and other documents for individual exercises and group work, audio-visual materials.

Programme and references

The course is divided into two parts:

The first part consists of a preliminary clarification of some basic terms in the lexicon of pedagogical practice.
It is divided into three sections:

1. “Creativity” in the educational context and as a pedagogical category (through a reading of the writings of Riccardo Massa and Piero Bertolini)
2. The distinction between the three classical forms of action and their educational significance: “labor“, ‘work’, and ”action” (using contributions by Hannah Arendt)
3. “Reproduction”: a critical category for analyzing pedagogical models that perpetuate the status quo (according to Bourdieu).

The second part is an in-depth exploration of the categories of creativity and creation.
It is divided into three points:

1. The grammars of creation: an analysis of the lexicon of creation within the cultural context of classical and biblical traditions (based on the contribution by G. Steiner).
2. Creation as a defining element of experience and as the central core of the educational process (thanks to Waldenfels).
3. Improvisation as the maximum intensity of creation and its significance for educational practice (through a reading of Jankélévitch’s essay).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. R. Massa, Una nuova creatività pedagogica. Intervista a Riccardo Massa, in “Pedagogika n. 2-3, 2009 (pages 39-47).
2. P. Bertolini, Fenomenologia dell’avventura. Oltre il già dato, in R. Massa (a cura di), Linee di fuga. L’avventura nella formazione umana, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1998 (pages 19-33).
3. H. Arendt, Lavoro, opera, azione, Ombre Corte, Verona, 2021 (76 pages).
4. P. Bourdieu, La riproduzione, Guaraldi, Rimini/Firenze, 2006 (pages 23-105 only).
5. G. Steiner, Grammatiche della creazione, Garzanti, Milano, 2003 (Cap. I, pages 7-63 only and Cap. III, pages 103-161 only).
6. B. Waldenfels, Creatività responsiva, InSchibboleth, Roma 2022 (pages 109-179 only).
7. V. Jankélévitch, Dell’improvvisazione, Solfanelli, Chieti, 2014 (68 pages).

The bibliography is for all.

Assessment methods

The final examination consists of an oral interview in which, in addition to verifying knowledge of the content of the volumes in the bibliography, the topics discussed during the course will be discussed. The ability to analyse, rework and apply the philosophical categories discussed will be assessed. The choice of the oral interview as exam mode is consistent with the teaching objectives, as it allows, thanks to a dialogical communicative situation, to interact with the student in order to assess his or her ability to critically understand the course topics.

There are no ongoing tests.

Elements considered for evaluation will be:
a. relevance of the answers
b. terminological appropriateness

c. coherence of argumentation
d. ability to identify and problematise theoretical issues and open questions.

The evaluation will be given in thirtieths, based on the following rating scale:
Not sufficient.
Sufficient - More than sufficient: 18-23
Fair: 24-27
Good - Excellent: 28-30/30L

Office hours

Prof. Vergani receives at studio no. 4146 Tel. 4896 U6 Floor, IV (please send an e-mail to the lecturer in advance, so that interviews can be arranged). Ordinary enquiries can also be requested by e-mail before or after class.

Programme validity

The current programme is valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION