UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Anthropology of Communication

2627-1-E2007P004

Learning area

Acquisition of practical and theoretical knowledge and functional techniques for the profession of interpreter and translator between spoken and signed languages, including in international settings.

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
Students will gain the theoretical foundations of the discipline and will handle the specific terminology;
Applying knowledge and understanding
Students will be able to reflect critically on communication processes and sensorial cultural constructions.
Autonomy of judgment
Strengthening the ability to critically analyze, understand, synthesize, and evaluate complex ideas in relation to issues central to the field of communication anthropology (e.g., multimodality, multisensoriality, linguistic diversity) through the study of ethnographic research, theoretical models, and group discussions of data on spoken and marked languages.
Communicative skills

- Strengthening the ability to clearly and knowledgeably communicate concepts, issues, and findings of ethnographic research to specialist and non-specialist interlocutors, including in interdisciplinary, multilingual, and multisensory contexts.
- Enhancement of collaborative skills and critical discussion, including in heterogeneous work groups.
  Capacity to learn
- Strengthening the ability to learn independently through critical analysis of linguistic and cultural data, study of experimental methodologies, and in-depth study of the main theoretical debates on language processing in a multimodal and multisensory perspective.

Contents

Starting from an idea of communication as a multimodal and multisensorial mode of human interconnection, the course proposes a critical reflection on the semiotic resources and on sensorial ways that human beings use in their communicative acting and interacting, according to different historical and cultural patterns.

Detailed program

The first part of the course is devoted to a presentation of the theoretical and methodological foundations of anthropology of communication along the two lines of ethnolinguistics (intertwining of linguistic categories, conceptual categories and experience) and communication ethnography (uses and pragmatic aspects of words and linguistic acts); the second part consists of an analysis of ethnographic cases drawn from different contexts representative of the close relationship between communication, senses and culture.

Prerequisites

None.

For the academic year 2026/2027 it will not be possible to select this course as a single-course entry.
Exam not selectable from the study plan by students not enrolled in Interpretariato e Traduzione in Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS) e Lingua dei Segni Italiana Tattile (LIST) (*Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Tactile Italian Sign Language (LIST) Interpretation*).

Teaching methods

The course adopts the following teaching methods:

- didactic delivery (lectures): 36 hours
- interactive teaching (classroom discussions and exercises): 7 hours

Assessment methods

Oral examination. The examination consists of a colloquium on the contents of the course, and will evaluate the student's critical and argumentative capacity. Results will be: insufficient in case of a lack or incorrect critical analysis of the texts; sufficient in case of possession of a basic knowledge and understanding of the specific lines of research and analysis of anthropology of communication; good in case of expressive ability and knowledge of the texts; very good in case of excellent expressive and critical ability, together with in-depth knowledge of the texts.

Evaluation grid:
18: barely sufficient knowledge, minimal application and analytical skills;
19–22: sufficient knowledge of the core contents, with some hesitation in application;
23–26: fair knowledge, good application skills with a few inaccuracies;

27–30: solid knowledge, good command of the contents and critical thinking skills;
30 with honors (30 e lode): fully comprehensive knowledge, complete command of the subject, and excellent fluency of language.

There are no mid-terms for this course.

Students who would like further clarifications may contact the professor by e-mail and/or request a meeting. The teacher will also be available to answer students' questions at the beginning and end of each lesson.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

One between the following textbooks, which may be partly replaced with a selection of articles in English (just in case the student cannot master reading in Italian at an adequate level), in addition to materials discussed during the classroom.

1. Finnegan R., Comunicare, Utet università, 2008
2. Biscaldi A., Matera V., Antropologia della comunicazione, Carocci, 2017.

Sustainable Development Goals

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