UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Philosophy

2627-2-E3902N014

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide an introduction to the most relevant concepts and themes of political philosophy and to guide the understanding of the philosophical-political issues most relevant to the existence and functioning of social services and social work.
Knowledge and understanding (D1): participants will acquire knowledge of the main concepts of political philosophy, from a historical perspective and in relation to contemporary debate, and the ability to understand and formulate philosophical and political problems.
Applied knowledge and understanding (D2): participants will acquire the ability to apply the concepts learned to reflection on political and social problems, the role of the social worker, and the dilemmas of social work.
Autonomy of judgment (D3): the course promotes the development of independent evaluation skills and encourages the formulation of informed judgments, especially on controversial and divisive philosophical issues.
Communication skills (D4): the course promotes the ability to speak in discussions and presentation skills in class and during the exam.
Learning skills (D5): the course provides a solid foundation for independent learning and critical orientation in scientific literature.

Contents

The course will be structured in two parts:
The first, curated by Prof. Giorgia Serughetti, will provide an overview of the fundamental problems, concepts theories and currents of political philosophy, with a general introduction to the discipline and an articulation into thematic sections.
The second part will be devoted to two in-depth focuses:

1. together with Prof. Roberto Miraglia, the problem of freedom and thus the limits that should be placed on political and social power will be addressed, particularly through the reading of J.S. Mill's 'On Liberty'.
2. Together with Prof. Giorgia Serughetti, we will explore the philosophies of work and care, starting with texts

by Axel Honneth, Joan Tronto and Nancy Fraser.

Detailed program

The first part of the course (Prof. Serughetti - 28 hours) aims to provide an overview of the fundamental problems, concepts theories and currents in political philosophy. After a general introduction to the discipline this overview will be divided into 4 thematic sections.
The first section will address the most classic problem of political philosophy, namely that of the legitimacy of political power (sovereignty). Pivoting on the classical opposition between two strands (Aristotelian-Hegelian and contractualist), the main responses philosophers have given to the classical problem of political obligation ('why and under what conditions must I obey a power?') and related questions such as the meaning and function of social life will be shown.
The second section will deal with the question of justice. Starting with the classical definitions, the lectures will follow the vicissitudes of the discussion on this issue that lead to Rawls' theory, i.e. the cornerstone of the contemporary debate. In the tension between (re)distributive justice and freedom, the philosophical roots of oppositions that often animate the public debate will be shown.
The third section will examine the fundamental concepts of equality and freedom and compare the main contemporary political theories: liberalism, socialism, democracy. This will also provide an understanding, with the contribution of philosophy, of the political landscape of the present.
The concluding section will give space to philosophical-political theories that offer different and alternative perspectives on classic problems in this field of study, particularly feminist theories.

In the second part:
Lectures given by Prof. Miraglia (14 hours) will explore the problem of freedom and thus the limits that must be placed on political and social power. Starting from the Aristotelian idea of the political sphere as the prerogative of free and equal individuals, the developments that the idea of freedom has had in modernity will be shown, starting from the tradition of classical liberalism, passing through the reflections of J.S. Mill – whose 'On Liberty' will be given a guided reading – up to the libertarian addresses and their apology for the minimal state.
The lectures given by Prof. Serughetti (14 hours) will explore the philosophical and political foundations of social rights and the welfare state, before going on to examine: 1) philosophies of work and the relationship between fair work and democracy, starting with Axel Honneth's text, *The Sovereign Worker*; 2) the relationship between the concept of work and that of ‘care’, at the center of much feminist political reflection, as a notion capable of both expanding the boundaries of welfare and redesigning the form and substance of democracy - starting from studies by Joan Tronto and Nancy Fraser.

Prerequisites

No special skills are required, but interest in discussing current issues of public interest, willingness to learn, passion for argumentation and active participation in the classroom.

Teaching methods

The teaching consists of 56 hours, of which approximately 70 percent is by didactic delivery (face-to-face lectures with use of slides) and 30 percent is by interactive teaching (viewing and discussion of films, presentation and discussion of case studies, interactive seminars with guests).

Assessment methods

The exam will consist of a written test with four open-ended questions: two relating to the first part of the course and two relating to the second part.
In order for the test to be considered sufficient, all questions must be answered satisfactorily.
The assessment will take into account: knowledge of the topics and texts; argumentation skills; lexical accuracy.
This examination method will allow for the assessment of: learning (D1), the ability to apply the concepts learned to specific cases (D2), the ability to work independently (D3), as well as communication skills (D4) and independent learning skills (D5).

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. Stefano Petrucciani, *Modelli di filosofia politica*, Einaudi, Torino 2003.

2. John Stuart Mill, *Saggio sulla libertà*, qualsiasi edizione.

3. Choose between the following readings:
   a) Axel Honneth, *Il lavoratore sovrano* (The Sovereign Worker), il Mulino, Bologna 2023.
   b) Joan Tronto, *Who cares? Come ripensare una politica democratica*, Castelvecchi, Rome 2023, and Nancy Fraser, *La fine della cura. Le contraddizioni sociali del capitalismo contemporaneo*, Mimesis, Milan 2017 (those who choose option b must read both short texts)

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS