UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Sociology of Health

2627-2-E3902N018

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
Knowing health and healthcare system dimensions
Understanding the social and environmental changes in health conditions of people over the last decades
Applying knowledge and understanding
Being able to identify common trends of health concept change and healthcare system functioning.
Developing skills to evaluate policies to combat health inequalities and promote individual and social well-being
Independent judgment
The course develops the ability to critically interpret data and social phenomena related to health and illness, with particular attention to health inequalities, medicalization processes, the social construction of illness, and emerging public health challenges.
* Communication skills*
Students will be enabled to effectively communicate the main sociological concepts related to health and healthcare systems, adapting their language to different audiences and professional contexts, also within a multidisciplinary perspective.
* Learning skills*
The course fosters the ability to independently update one's knowledge in relation to the evolving sociological understanding of health and to changes in healthcare systems, encouraging ongoing reflection on both educational and professional experiences.

Contents

- The social construction of illness

- The doctor-patient relationship

- The patient’s experience of illness

- Determinants and health inequalities

- Healthcare system functioning

- Health promotion policies

- The impact of Covid-19 on health

- Epidemiology and health

Detailed program

The course sets out to provide knowledge of the main dimensions concerning sociology of health and health care.

In a micro sociological perspective, our attention will focus on the social construction of illness, on the doctor-patient relationship and on the patient’s experience of illness.

In a macro-sociological perspective, it intends to provide students with tools to understand the persistent health inequities in our society. Moreover, we provide knowledge on the determinants of health and risk factors.

The course will reflect on increasingly pervasive medicalization / pharmacologization processes.

In addition to health issues, we will provide knowledge on the evolution of the health system and in particular, on the principles and functioning of the Italian health system.

Finally, we will analyze policies to combat health inequities and access to and use of health services.

On the methodological level, the course will allow the acquisition of the tools neces sary to correctly describe a health event in a population

The course will give specific attention to Covid-19 pandemic issue, evaluating the impact on health and healthcare system.

Prerequisites

Sufficient educational skills in logic, social culture and reasonable capacities in learning, writing and communication

Teaching methods

Frontal lectures, seminars, group work and practice exercises.

Specifically, the teaching activity will be distributed approximately as follows:

- 75% (21 two-hour lessons) with expository teaching (lectures using slides, audio, and video) delivered in person.
- 25% (7 two-hour lessons) with interactive teaching (exercises, group work, and individual assignments) delivered in person.

Students must register for the course on the e-learning platform, where they will find support materials for the lessons.

Assessment methods

The examination can be taken in two ways.

Mode 1

The student must give an oral presentation in class and take a written exam.
The exam is considered passed only if the student receives a passing grade (18 or above) in both components (presentation and written exam).
The final grade recorded will be the weighted sum of the grades obtained in the two parts.
The passing grade obtained in the oral presentation will remain valid for six exam sessions; after that, the student must take the exam as described in Mode 2.

Oral Presentation

An individual presentation on course-related content, chosen by the student, to be delivered during one of the course sessions.
The oral presentation will account for 30% of the final grade.
The presentation must last at least 15 minutes.
The presentation should be structured approximately as follows:

Theoretical framing of the phenomenon being analyzed (what the literature says about the topic, key theoretical references, etc.)
A section commenting on relevant data (quantitative and/or qualitative), with sources cited
A focused discussion of the topic addressed
A bibliography of the sources used in the presentation

Assessment criteria: the level of knowledge and the ability to apply the theoretical concepts learned in class in an integrated manner; the use of language consistent with the content of the presentation; clarity of expression (relevant information presented in an organized and concise way).

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

If the presentation does not meet the minimum passing requirements, the student will have to take the exam as described in Mode 2.

Written examination test

The written exam aims to assess the student’s knowledge and understanding of the core concepts and content of the course, the ability to make connections between topics, and the capacity to personally elaborate on the themes covered.

The written exam will account for 70% of the final grade.

Written exam (duration: 60 minutes) ? Two open-ended questions based on the required readings and the content of the lectures.

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

Mode 2

Written examination test

The written test aims to assess the knowledge and understanding of the course's fundamental concepts and contents, the ability to make connections and links between topics, and the ability to rework the themes addressed personally.

The written test will be worth 100% of the final mark.

Written test (duration 90 minutes) -> Three open-ended questions on the texts specified in the program and on the content of the lectures, including an additional text or scientific articles only for students who will take the test in Mode 2. The additional text or scientific articles will be indicated during the course.

The result of the exam will be graded on a scale of thirty.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Material for students

Sarti S. e Terraneo M. 2023. Studiare la salute. La prospettiva della sociologia, Roma, Carocci editore.

Pozzi C. 2025. #Malati, Torino, Codice Edizioni.

Toth F. 2014. La sanità in Italia, Bologna, il Mulino (capitoli 1-2-3-5-Conclusioni).

Lecture notes “Salute, sanità, società”, available in e-learning course site

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | REDUCED INEQUALITIES