UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Methodologies for Qualitative Social Research

2627-1-E3902N009

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Understanding
Social reality is subject to continuous transformation, which has accelerated in recent decades due to events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and international conflicts. These profound changes have reshaped policies, services, and social needs. Sociology is the discipline that seeks to deconstruct the taken-for-granted nature of everyday social life and to analyze and interpret the processes through which it evolves. The general objective of the course is to equip students with a set of conceptual and technical tools (knowledge) derived from the qualitative approach, enabling them to analyze and interpret contemporary social reality and its transformations. Methodological skills will also be developed through guided practical exercises. These competencies are fundamental to the training of social work professionals.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding
The specific objective of the course is to provide students with the necessary skills to navigate the field of empirical qualitative social research, enabling them to critically and consciously identify issues and methodological approaches to intervention within various organizational settings.

Autonomy of Judgment – Communication Skills – Learning Abilities
The course aims to enhance the ability to interpret complex phenomena, critically evaluate methodologies and theoretical perspectives, and formulate well-grounded judgments through the critical analysis of research cases, guided discussions with experts, and individual exercises.
Furthermore, the course promotes communication skills through group oral presentations, written assignments, and the use of academic communication tools such as forums.
Lastly, the course fosters solid autonomous and continuous learning capabilities through a progressively modular structure, active learning methods (learning by doing), supplementary materials, and dedicated tutoring.

Contents

The Course is organized on six thematic issues developed in four units:

1. introduction to social research;

2. the planning of qualitative research and the ethics of social research;

3. the carrying out of qualitative research;

4. communication, dissemination and impact on society;;

5. collaborative and participatory research;

6. gender sensitive research.

Detailed program

1? Module: introduction to social research

Common Sense vs. Scientific research

Qualitative and Quantitative research

2? Module: the planning of qualitative research and the ethics of social research

The planning of research

The phases of research

Ethics of/in research

3? Module: the carrying out of qualitative research

Choice of issue (relevance)

Literature review

Conceptualization

Selection of the unit of analysis, selection of cases, contact method, collection of data)

Data gathering techniques

Data analysis

4? Module: qualitative social research and its impact on society

Analysis of qualitative empirical material

Report writing in qualitative research

Dissemination and communication

Impact on society

Prerequisites

Basic educational skills in logic, social culture, and reasonable ability in learning, writing and communication.

Teaching methods

The course consists of a total of 56 hours and will be delivered in a blended e-learning format, including 18 hours conducted remotely, and 38 hours through traditional face-to-face instruction:
13 in-person lectures (3 hours each), delivered in an expository format during the initial phase of the course, aimed at engaging students interactively in the subsequent stages;
3 problem-solving exercises (3 hours each), carried out individually with the support of the instructor and teaching assistants, delivered remotely in synchronous mode;
3 interactive practice sessions (3 hours each), conducted in a hybrid format, combining both in-person and synchronous remote participation.

Assessment methods

Attendance at the course includes the evaluation of the following activities:
• Three problem solving exercises (individual open-ended essay) at the end of modules 2, 3 and 4 of the course respectively. Each of them will contribute 10% of the final grade, for a total of 30% of the final grade.
• A practical activity (group essay starting from a paper in English to be discussed collectively) which will contribute 40% of the final grade.
• The remaining 30% of the grade will be awarded through the final exam. This test will be oral and will consist of the answer to an open question on the texts of program no. 1.

Evaluation criteria:

Written examination

- Relevancy of the answer towards the subject of question;

- Ability to grasp the essential elements of the proposed issue;

- Ability to present the proposed issue in a coherent and consequential manner;

- Completeness of the elements that constitute the answer;

- Spelling and syntactic accuracy.

Oral examination

- Knowledge related to the topics analyzed in the bibliography and discussed in classroom;

- Ability to expose the proposed issue in an orderly and complete manner;

- Understanding and appropriate use of specific concepts relating to complex sociological phenomena;

- Ability of a critical thinking and reflection.

Each intermediate and final exam will receive a mark:

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Program no. 1:

1. Fasanella A., Mauceri M., Nobile S. (2024), Metodologia della ricerca sociale: approcci, strategie e tecniche di indagine (Capp. 1, 2, 3, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 e 24), Milano, FrancoAngeli Open Access Platform: https://series.francoangeli.it/index.php/oa/catalog/series/inferenze
2. Decataldo A., Russo C. (2022), Metodologia e tecniche partecipative. La ricerca sociologica nel tempo della complessità, Torino, Pearson.
   Further papers and the reference website will be indicated during the teaching activities to carry out practical activities individually and in small groups, which will be evaluated.

Program no. 2:

1. Corbetta P. (2014), Metodologia e tecniche della ricerca sociale - Parte prima. I paradigmi di riferimento, Bologna, il Mulino.
2. Fasanella A., Mauceri M., Nobile S. (2024), Metodologia della ricerca sociale: approcci, strategie e tecniche di indagine (Capp. 1, 2, 3, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 e 24), Milano, FrancoAngeli Open Access Platform: https://series.francoangeli.it/index.php/oa/catalog/series/inferenze
3. Decataldo A., Russo C. (2022), Metodologia e tecniche partecipative. La ricerca sociologica nel tempo della complessità, Torino, Pearson.
   4a) Decataldo A., Ruspini E. (2014), La ricerca di genere, Roma, Carocci.
   or
   4b) Decataldo A., Russo C. (2024), Lo sguardo sociologico in Terapia Intensiva Neonatale. Una ricerca partecipativa e collaborativa per promuovere un’ecologia dei saperi, Milano, FrancoAngeli Open Access Platform: https://series.francoangeli.it/index.php/oa/catalog/book/1091

Erasmus students may ask for an alternative bibliography in English language.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES