



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Qualitative Research Methods

2627-1-E4002N005

Learning objectives

The course pursues the following goals:

1. knowledge and comprehension skills: a) of the main methodological principle of qualitative social research; b) of the main research and analysis techniques;
2. practical application of knowledge and comprehension skills: a) the students should learn to construct research questions sociologically relevant; b) to decode cultural texts and documents of different nature; c) to identify the suitable research techniques and methods according to the research field and object;
3. Autonomy of judgment: the student should be able to understand the advancements and limits of his/her capability to approach methodologically social and cultural phenomena;
4. Communicative capabilities: the student should be able a) to argue the contents of the course by using a sociological appropriate language; b) to autonomously structure research project;
5. Ability to learn: the students will acquire theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge suitable for carrying out in the future complex empirical investigation on socio-cultural, political and economic phenomena.

Contents

The course aims at providing the main methodological principles of the qualitative social research, departing from the intersection among some pivotal sociological paradigms with the research methods and practices depending on them. Thus, the student should learn: first, to understand and frame socio-cultural phenomena hermeneutically; second, to pinpoint sociologically meaningful research questions; third, to define the research objects; fourth, to collect and construct the empirical data; fifth, to apply the more suitable research techniques and techniques of analysis to the collected research data; sixth to choose the more suitable communicative strategies according to the specific nature of the research (phenomenological; structural-constructivist; ethnographic; participative)

Detailed program

The course aims at providing the main methodological principles of the qualitative social research. In this regard, it will first illustrate the interconnections among pivotal sociological approaches – the comprehensive sociology of Max Weber and the interpretative paradigm, the social phenomenology and the social-constructivism; the symbolic interactionism; the structural constructivism and the strong program in cultural sociology– and the structure and configuration of social phenomena which are of sociological interest, in order to pinpoint the more suitable research methods and techniques and techniques of analysis.

Thus, the first part of the course is devoted to understanding how defining the research field and the research questions, by considering three methodological principles: the character of objectivity in qualitative social research; the value-freedom; and the reflexivity of social researcher.

The second part is devoted to the study of the following research methods and techniques and techniques of analysis:

- the participant observation in disembodied and embodied ethnographic research;
- autoethnography;
- discursive interviews;
- focus group;
- Thematic analysis and grounded theory method;
- discursive visual analysis; compositional visual analysis and visual content analysis (i.e. spots, comics; digital communities and tv-formats)
- participative research methods (especially by the comics medium)

Prerequisites

none

Teaching methods

The course will be taught in Italian.

About 60% of frontal lessons, discussing on research and analysis methods and their epistemic and theoretical assumptions

About 40% of Interactive lessons, including group works and research reports.

All the lessons will be in presence

Assessment methods

Written exam with four open-ended questions (90 minutes). The students should demonstrate to be able to know and apply methodological knowledge to specific research fields and objects.

Students who will complete at least 2/3 of the research works assigned during the lessons (average score of each research work) will do a written exam with a choice question (0-3 points if the student answers; -1 if the student does not answer)

Criteria of evaluation of the written exam: the student should be able to argue the contents required by the answers, to use the sociological language appropriately, to express themselves clearly and to apply the theoretical

and methodological knowledge required to empirical case studies.

Criteria of evaluation of the research works: capability of developing research questions and applying suitable research methods and methods of analysis to specific research questions; accuracy of sociological terminology; clarity of exposition.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Grüning, B. e Scavarda, A. (2025), *Sociologia del fumetto. Concetti, metodi e pratiche di ricerca*, Roma, Carocci

Anderson, L. (2006): *Analytic autoethnography*, "Journal of Contemporary Ethnography", 35(4), p. 373-395 (e-learning website)

Reading Material (by fotocopisteria Fronte/Retro, Viale Sarca 191; reservation: <https://www.fronte-retro.it/dispense.html>)

Creswell, J.W.(1994), *Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Thousand Oak, Sage. (cap. I)

Denzin N.K., (1978), "Triangulation and the doing of sociology", in Id. The research act. A theoretical introduction to the sociological methods (pp. 291-307)

Demazière, G. & C. Dubar, C. (2000), *Dentro le storie*, Milano, Cortina Editore. (first part)

Geertz, C. (1973 [1987]), Il «gioco profondo: note sul combattimento di galli a Bali, in Id. *Interpretazione di culture*, Bologna, Il Mulino (pp. 383-436)

Thanem, T, & Knights, D. (2019), *Embodied research methods*, London, Sage (Introduction; cap. 4)

Fine, A. (2008), *Kitchens: The culture of restaurant work*, University of California Press (appendix)

Cardano, M.; Gariglio, L. (2022): "Il focus group" in Id., *Metodi qualitativi*, Roma, Carocci (p. 123-148)

Rose, G. (2016), *Visual methodologies*, Thousand Oak, Sage (cap. 2)

Rose, G. (2001), *Visual methodologies*, Thousand Oak, Sage (cap. 3, 4)

Non-compulsory Reading material (sociology)

Bourdieu, P., *Sulla riflessività*, Meltemi, 2024

Grüning, B., "Sociogenesi dei concetti e "sociologia riflessiva" in Weber, Mannheim e Bourdieu: alcuni spunti a partire dal concetto di Lebenschancen", in *Sociologia classica contemporanea*, 2026 (elearning website)

Non-compulsory Reading material (narrative and graphic narrative)

Calvino Italo (1963), *Marcovaldo* (any edition)

Ballard James (1975), *Il Condominio* (any edition)

Ernaux Annie (2018), **La vergogna **(any edition)

Ernaux Annie (2022), *Guarda le luci amore mio* (any edition)

Pazienza Andrea (1977-1981), *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal*, (any edition)

Zerocalcare (2017 e 2018), *Macerie prime* (vol. 1 e vol. 2), Bao

Tota Alessandro (2011), *Fratelli*, Coconino Press

Ghigliano Cinzia e Tomatis Marco ([1980] 2019), *Il mistero dell'Isolina*, Comicout

Manara Milo (1982), *Il gioco* (any edition)

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES

