UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Cambiamento Organizzativo

2627-2-F6303M010

Learning objectives

The course explores the problem of organizational change in complex, technologically dense environments and characterized by uncertainty, through case analysis, research materials and original in depth studies. The development of skills to analyze and discuss scientific literature, data and cases is a specific educational objective of the course, as is the development of new knowledge about organizational change. Students are required to be both independent and have a critical approach in dealing with the issues being studied. In particular, the course "Organizational Change" enables students to develop the five expected areas of competence, in accordance with the Dublin Descriptors (DD):

DD1 Knowledge and understanding
By the end of the course, students will have acquired knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Organizational analysis, including in-depth study, case analysis, and practical application of theory;
- Use of key methodological and theoretical tools to analyze organizational problems through case studies and critical discussions;
- Analysis of how organizations initiate, manage, and respond to change, particularly through the design adoption and use of digital technologies;
- Locating, understanding, applying, and critically evaluating relevant organizational literature;
- Understanding organizational and institutional change, especially in technologically intensive environments.

DD2 Ability to apply knowledge and understanding
Through this course, students will learn to:

- Analyze and apply key models, methods, and tools for understanding and analyzing organizational change.
- Think critically about the main issues related to change in contemporary organizations, with particular reference to the introduction and use of digital technologies.

DD3 Independent judgment
Through this course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze key issues related to organizational change, especially with regard to the use of digital technologies.
- Independently assess the appropriateness of specific tools for analyzing organizational change, developing an approach that is both rigorous and critical.

DD4 Communication skills
Through this course, students will be able to:

- Clearly and rigorously express the concepts learned, both orally and in writing, using appropriate terminology.
- Coherently discuss problems, possible solutions, and key issues related to organizational change in technology-intensive environments.

DD5 Learning skills
The course will enable students to:

- Develop the learning abilities necessary to successfully undertake further studies requiring a deep understanding of the tools specific to the subject area of this course.
- Acquire an autonomous and rigorous study method that allows them to deepen their knowledge and independently explore new topics related to organizational change.

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Contents

The main topic of the course is the study of organizational change with particular reference to digital transformation processes. It will looks at technology adoption as an opportunity for learning and change in organizations by adopting an analytical and non-prescriptive perspective which therefore looks at technology in its instrumental dimension of the process of regulation of the organizational action and the decisions that are connected to it.

The course is structured as an 'in progress' investigation on topics such as: organizational change in complex environments, resistance to change, the relationship between organizational change and the adoption and use of advanced digital technologies (different kinds of technologies, e.g. AI, robotics, technologies for smart manufacturing, etc.) in complex environments (different kinds of organizations, e.g. healthcare organizations, advanced smart manufacturing).

Detailed program

The course aims at providing students with tools and concepts for the in-depth and critical analysis of organizational change processes in complex environments. In the first part of the course, the theoretical foundations about the organizational change's topic are laid for then addressing the relationship between organization, environment and complexity, by deepening the issues of the resistance to change. Some conceptual frameworks for the analysis of digital transformation and its organizational implications will be provided. In particular, the course will look at technology and its role for organizational change by first unpacking the very concept of technology starting from some of its classic and contemporary definitions and typologies and second by delving into how complex organizations adopt advanced technologies to deal with change.

Prerequisites

Sufficient notions of logics and general culture, basic knowledge of business organization.

Teaching methods

Lectures, case analysis, in depth studied, prepared and discussed during the course.

The course consists of 48 hours, with approximately 50% dedicated to traditional teaching methods (lectures utilizing slides, audio, and video) and 50% to interactive learning (exercises, group work, and case studies). A portion of the lessons may be delivered remotely, accounting for no more than 30% of the total hours of the entire course.

The course offers two alternative paths. The participatory path (a) includes a project work component that allows students to engage with a real organizational setting and attempt to interpret its change processes, developing their own capacity for organizational analysis through classroom discussion, an exercise that cannot be replicated through the written exam alone. Students who are able to attend regularly are naturally encouraged to choose this path. The standard path (b) involves an assessment based exclusively on the written exam, with independent preparation using the exam texts.

Please note that the two tracks ensure the same level of preparation in relation to the course contents.

Assessment methods

Students will be assessed through:
(1) an individual written exam consisting of open-ended questions based on the textbooks, articles, course materials, and case studies indicated on the e-learning platform and provided during the course;
(2) a project work* aimed at exploring in greater depth some of the central topics of the course.

More precisely, the evaluation criteria for the written test are:

1. property of language - appropriate use of terms and concepts;
2. accuracy in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to connect different topics;
4. completeness of the presentation, given the time (test duration) and space (pages available) limits.

Skipping exam sessions is not allowed.
No mid-term tests are scheduled.

Please note that at the time of ending of classes (December 2026) the detailed program (with references to the textbook and cases/furher materials) will be available on line. It will remain valid for all the exams of the current academic year.

*The project work is aimed at those who choose to follow the participatory path (a), while the standard path (b) involves an assessment based solely on a written exam in the classroom.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Indicatively, the following texts are among those used in the course:
Plesner, U., Husted, E. (2022) ‘L’organizzazione digitale’, Il Mulino, Bologna
Barley, S. R. (2020), Work and Technological Change, Oxford University Press.
Catino, M. (2014), Organizational Myopia: Problems of Rationality and Foresight in Organizations, Cambridge University Press.

Additional materials, including scholarly articles and case studies, will be provided by the instructor during the course (reading package) through the e-learning platform and/or will be available online and/or through the University of Milano-Bicocca Library. The detailed bibliography will be made available on the e-learning platform at the beginning of the course.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION