



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Il Lavoro nell'Era Digitale

2627-2-F8804N016

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding capacity

The course goes in depth into specific issues dealing with work, employment and labour markets changes. A special focus will be devoted to the impact of digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence on work for both medium-high-skilled and low-skilled activities.

Applying knowledge and understanding capacity

The course aims at providing students the following skills:

- presenting and discussing, with the support of different scientific documents (theoretical contributions, articles, research reports), issues relating to employment in the service sector;
- looking for, selecting, gathering and collecting empirical evidence to carry out the analysis of a specific issue or phenomenon in the labour market;
- designing and organizing a research project;
- carrying out a research with both quantitative and qualitative methods;
- analysing the results

Autonomy of judgement

During the course there will be several moments of discussion during which the participants will be asked to express their opinions and articulate them.

Communication skills

Students will be invited to present their reflections to their peers and to organise a final joint presentation of the research results.

Learning skills

All course content is aimed at developing the ability to learn.

Contents

The course examines the transformations of work and the labour market associated with processes of digitalization. In particular, it focuses on how the use of digital technologies, artificial intelligence-based tools, and the possibility of working remotely in advanced service-sector occupations are reshaping the ways in which work is organized and performed.

Detailed program

The widespread adoption of digital technologies is transforming the ways in which work is organized and performed across a wide range of sectors and occupational settings. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated that many activities could be effectively carried out remotely, numerous organizations adopted hybrid work models combining on-site and remote work. More recently, the increasing use of artificial intelligence-based tools has introduced new dimensions of change, whose effects vary considerably depending on job tasks and skill levels.

These transformations have far-reaching implications for both work organization and workers' experiences. They affect organizational practices, including performance evaluation and managerial control, as well as workers' ability to manage flexibility, reconcile work and personal life, and cope with changing work rhythms and intensities.

The course examines these ongoing developments by exploring their opportunities, challenges, and common misconceptions. It combines a review of recent academic research with the collective analysis of an original empirical study based on quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews conducted in 2025. Since the impact of digitalization differs substantially across sectors, the course focuses on call centre work as a particularly relevant case study, given its extensive use of both remote work and artificial intelligence.

Within the broader framework of transformations in work, employment, occupations, and labour markets in advanced societies, the course addresses the following topics:

- the impact of digitalization on work processes;
- the impact of digital technologies on ways of working, including remote work and the spatial reconfiguration of work processes;
- the effects of remote work on workers' working time, everyday life, and work–life balance;
- the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on job content, managerial evaluation and control, work intensity, and work-related stress.

Through the active participation of students, the course aims to foster the practical application of the knowledge and skills acquired by engaging directly with both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials.

Prerequisites

A basic command of sociological theory, methodology and fairly good skills in learning, writing and speaking.

Teaching methods

The course consists of 56 hours of lessons, all carried out in Italian, partly in erogative teaching mode and partly in interactive teaching mode. The first two weeks of the course will see a prevalence of erogative teaching, while in

the following weeks interactive teaching will prevail. The active participation of students is required during all the lectures. Students will be invited and required to:

- comment and discuss the results of empirical researches, both quantitative and qualitative;
- prepare a research project and structure its specific phases
- directly experiment statistical data analysis;
- directly confront with the carrying out and with the analysing of qualitative interviews to workers and employers;
- do short public presentations / write a short research report.

Having to give an evaluation of the percentage of time dedicated to erogative and interactive teaching activities, it can be estimated that the former weighs on average between 15 and 20% over the total numebr of hours, and the latter between 75% and 80%..

Assessment methods

in-progress assessment during classes and brief oral exam. The in-progress assessment takes into consideration the ability to teamwork, rework concepts learned, organize a research, and present research results.

For students not attending classes: written exam with two open-ended questions aiming to assess mastery of concepts, knowledge of the literature, and ability to highlight connections between the topics covered in the course.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

References by macro-theme

JOB QUALITY

- Gosetti, G. (2012) "Dalla qualità del lavoro alla qualità della vita lavorativa" *Sociologia del Lavoro* (127): 17–34

REMOTE WORKING

- Pacetti V. and Recchi S. (2024), Il lavoro da remoto dentro e oltre l'emergenza: una riflessione sociologica sul ruolo dello spazio in Bassanelli M., Ingrao A. e Satta C. (a cura di), *Spazi per il lavoro a distanza e per la cura*, Giappichelli, pp. 91-100
- Romens A.I. (2024), Riproduzione sociale e processo lavorativo nel contesto del lavoro da remoto. Spunti da una ricerca empirica nell'area metropolitana di Milano, Bassanelli M., Ingrao A. e Satta C. (a cura di), *Spazi per il lavoro a distanza e per la cura*, Giappichelli, pp.135-146
- Recchi S., Romens A-I, Scalise G. (2025), Post-pandemic remote work and the Italian care model: constraint or opportunity?, In "International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy", n.45, pp.19-33.

AI AND EMPLOYMENT

- De Stefano V and Taes S (2023) Algorithmic management and collective bargaining, in "Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research" 29(1): 21–36.

CALL CENTER

- Nath, V. 2011 Aesthetic and Emotional Labour through Stigma: National Identity Management and Racial Abuse in Offshored Indian Call Centres, in "Work, Employment and Society", vol. 25, n. 4, pp. 709-725.

CALL CENTER AND REMOTE WORKING

- Doellegast V., O'Brady S, Kim J., (2026), Spatial Control, Precarity, and Union Resistance in Digital Remote Work: An Analysis of 'Work From Home' in US and Canadian Call Centres, in "Work, Employment and Society", online first pp.1-22.

CALL CENTER AND AI

- Woodcock J. (2022) Artificial intelligence at work: The problem of managerial control from call centers to transport platforms, in "Frontiers of Artificial Intelligence", n.5, pp.1-9
- Dicataldo L. and Dorigatti L. (2025), Intelligenza artificiale, condizioni di lavoro e relazioni industriali nei servizi labour intensive. Il caso dei contact center, in "Quaderni di rassegna sindacale" n.2, pp.95-112.
- O'Brady S., Doellgast V. and Blatter D. (2024), The high costs of outsourcing: vendor errors, customer mistreatment, and well-being in call centers, in "Industrial Relations", 63 (1), pp. 80-103

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
