UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Social Indicators and Measures of Sustainability and Equity

2627-1-F8804N004

Learning objectives

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge and Understanding
   The course provides students with knowledge regarding the origins and evolution of social indicators as fundamental tools for measuring well-being. This knowledge is consolidated through a comparative study of statistical production methods in countries of the Global North and Global South, highlighting differences in information systems, data sources, and institutional capacity to generate reliable information.
2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding
   Through the analysis of case studies and the examination of practices adopted by international organizations, students develop the ability to design simple statistical surveys, assess the quality of available data, and critically interpret the produced statistics.
3. Autonomy of Judgment
   The course also focuses on statistical aggregation methods and the construction of composite well-being indices. Students acquire skills to select and aggregate indicators coherently and transparently, developing autonomy in evaluating methodological choices. Critical reflection on the ethical, political, and social implications of these measures is also encouraged.
4. Communication Skills
   The course aims to strengthen communication skills by promoting oral and written presentation of content through presentations, group discussions, and short individual reports. Students learn to structure clear and coherent arguments, use appropriate language, and translate numerical results into interpretative assessments.
   5.Learning Skills
   A significant part of the course is dedicated to developing students' capacity for autonomous learning by encouraging the consultation of scientific literature, official documents, statistical reports, and the use of databases and digital tools for data analysis. Students are encouraged to develop a personal study method and to maintain a critical and reflective attitude towards information sources and the outcomes of quantitative analyses.

Contents

Origin and evolution of social and demographic indicators.
Data production agencies and quality of sources.
The Network of International Databases
Limits and opportunities of the databases of major national and international agencies
Validity and representativeness of indicators.
Techniques for constructing composite indicators.
Measures of well-being and quality of life

Detailed program

The course is structured in two main parts, each of which contributes to the development of a sound theoretical and practical background in the field of well-being measures and social indicators, with reference to their use in national, international and comparative contexts.
In the first part, the course aims to provide students with in-depth knowledge and critical understanding regarding the genesis and evolution of social indicators as fundamental tools for measuring well-being. The main conceptual and methodological transformations that have characterized the transition from purely economic indicators, such as GDP, to more articulated and multidimensional measures of quality of life are analyzed. This knowledge will be consolidated through the comparative study of statistical production methods in countries of the global North and South, highlighting differences in information systems, data sources and institutional capacity to generate reliable information.
Through analysis of case studies and examination of practices adopted by international bodies (such as the UN, OECD, World Bank) and national statistical institutions, students will develop knowledge and applied comprehension skills that will enable them to design simple statistical surveys, assess the quality of available data, and critically interpret the statistics produced. They will also be able to recognize structural and methodological limitations in the collection and use of indicators in different geographical and socioeconomic contexts.
In the second part of the course, the focus will shift to statistical aggregation methods and the construction of composite indices of well-being. Students will acquire the skills necessary to select, normalize, weight and aggregate different indicators in a consistent and transparent manner, finalizing these activities to the generation of cross-country comparable summary measures. The goal is to develop sound judgment in evaluating the methodological choices underlying aggregate indices, stimulating critical reflection on the ethical, political and social implications of such measures The course also aims to strengthen students' communication skills by encouraging oral and written exposition of the content learned through presentations, group discussions and short individual reports. Students will be guided in the structuring of clear and coherent arguments, the use of appropriate technical-statistical language, and the ability to translate numerical results into interpretive assessments that are also accessible to a non-specialist audience.
Finally, a significant part of the course will be devoted to fostering the ability to learn independently, through the consultation of scientific materials, official documents and statistical reports, as well as the use of databases and digital tools for data analysis. Students will be encouraged to develop a personal method of study and to maintain a critical and reflective attitude toward sources of information and the results of quantitative analyses.
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Prerequisites

None.

Teaching methods

The course is a combination of theoretical lectures and applications. Of the 56 hours scheduled, 46 will be delivered as (DE), and 10 as interactive teaching (DI).

Assessment methods

During the course, students are required to complete three assignments, a written exam covering the topics discussed in class, and a final report focused on the Sustainable Development Goals. The final grade will be calculated as the average of the scores obtained in the ongoing assessments.
The assessments aim to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of the fundamental concepts and content of the course, their ability to make connections and links between topics, and their capacity to personally reinterpret the subjects addressed. The evaluation criteria are: a) accuracy of responses;
b) analytical skills and the application of concepts to research examples; c) clarity of expression; d) ability to integrate theoretical concepts and ethical principles discussed during lectures and in the assigned readings.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For those who have the opportunity to attend class, lecture materials are provided by the lecturer.
Those who are unable to attend class may contact the professor to arrange the needed bibliography.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | CLIMATE ACTION