UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Intercultural Communication

2627-2-F8702N017

Learning objectives

The intercultural studies' component of Progest intercultural relations' curriculum is constituted by two interconnecting parts taught by prof. Ida Castiglioni and by prof. Milton Bennett, “Intercultural Communication” and “Intercultural Capacity,” respectively. The courses are independent but it is highly recommended to attend both courses as contents build on each other.

The main objective of the Intercultural Communication course is to allow students to deeply understand what it takes to “take perspective” of a different cultural viewpoint. The secondary objective of the course is to have students analyze communication situations with the provided tools of observation, allowing them to exercise intercultural competence within an operational context.
Another objective of the course is to establish a constructivist approach to ethicality that can be used by change agents in intercultural communication.
Making judgements
The student will be able to develop critical and informed autonomy in understanding and managing intercultural communication dynamics, evaluating situations of cultural complexity and conflict. They will apply theoretical and practical models of intercultural analysis to formulate effective ethical and strategic decisions in multicultural organizational contexts, taking into account values, communication styles, and ethical implications.
Communication Skills
The student will acquire advanced communication skills to effectively interact in multicultural and organizational contexts, adopting strategies that facilitate inclusion, intercultural negotiation, and conflict resolution. They will be able to adjust their communication style according to the cultural specificities of interlocutors, presenting ideas and projects with clarity and cultural sensitivity.
Learning skills
The tools provided during the course provide an excellent foundation for building a thoughtful experience of intercultural encounters and diversity management in organizations throughout a professional career.

Contents

The Intercultural Communication course will provide students with basic concepts of intercultural communication and some tools of communication analysis in order to make people aware of their cultural context, a necessary step to positively relate to other cultures with intercultural competence. Discussion and application of the tools through case studies and exercises will offer a deeper knowledge of intercultural communication theories, practices and problems relative to the specificity of intercultural research within the social work, health and education contexts.
The course will initially present some prescientific and scientific paradigms to establish the epistemological basis of intercultural competence. Students will learn to recognise the epistemological principles of practitioners' interventions in intercultural and multicultural contexts and to make them more coherent.

Detailed program

The course will tackle most well known models and theories of intercultural communication developed by scholars from different backgrounds and nationalities who have consolidated their careers mostly in Northern Europe and in North America. The adopted epistemological perspective of the course is a constructivist one.
The course will then focus on developing a viable ethicality for multicultural situations. The dichotomy to be addressed is that of preservation of cultural identity simultaneously with adaptation to multicultural living. The approach will offer an alternative to most ethical schemes that assume universal truths defined by a dominant culture. When these universalist systems are used by professionals in the third sector, they support ethnocentrism and disrespect for alternative values. Students will learn how to avoid this kind of unconscious ethnocentrism in professional situations while still maintaining their commitment to important cultural values.
Particular attention will be given to communication in the context of health behaviors in local development contexts, the role of change agents, and the ethical implications of decision-making in intercultural situations. An important topic of the course is also the history and current perspectives on diversity and inclusion actions and programs, aiming to prepare Progest professionals to add competence in managing cultural diversity and inclusion to their profile.
There will be one or more study visits in different urban contexts, according to possibility. Final goal of this activity is to experiment one's own capability to encounter diversity and to create and plan experimental interventiontions of social innovation with a particular attention to the management of intercultural relations.

Prerequisites

Students are expected to be familiar with basic sociological concepts about culture. Course faculties encourage class attendance of both modules, as contents are strictly interrelated.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods are very interactive and see the direct involvement of students in exercises and group discussions completing theoretical presentations. For this reason, participation and attdance to classes is very important and encouraged.
Teaching consists of a lecture part consisting of lectures and seminar activities on specific topics to the extent of 50%; the remaining 50% is developed as interactive teaching.
Around 10% of the classes will involve remote lessons and individual readings with sessions of Q/A and tests.
Class exercises include:
facilitations on how to create third virtual cultures (i.e. interview social worker/client)
intentional creation of sensitivity experience for individuals and organizations (i.e. ICC training needs and post assessment)

Ideation of new interventions for inclusion/change agentry/prevention (project work)
re-engineering of services for the promotion of diversity (exercises of organizational development for the third sector)

Study visits will arise opportunities for intercultural encounters in specific contexts of the city.

Assessment methods

Responsible faculty for learning assessment is prof. Ida Castiglioni
Ongoing Assessment
The course includes a number of short individual and group assignments completed throughout the semester. These assignments are not individually graded but contribute to the attending student's learning portfolio and provide opportunities for discussion and feedback during class.
The examination consists of an oral interview, which provides an opportunity to interact with the student in order to assess their critical understanding of the course topics and their ability to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications.
The final grade is based on the overall performance across the different assessment components and is awarded according to the following scale:
18: Barely sufficient knowledge; minimal application and interpretation skills.
19–22: Satisfactory knowledge of the fundamental concepts, with some uncertainty in their application.
23–26: Good knowledge of the subject matter; sound application skills with minor inaccuracies.
27–30: Strong knowledge of the subject; good command of the content and well-developed critical thinking skills.
30 cum laude: Excellent and comprehensive knowledge; complete mastery of the subject matter and outstanding use of academic and professional language.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

An english program can be defined for international students upon agreement with faculty.

Sustainable Development Goals

GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS