UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Migration, Boundaries and Diversity

2627-2-F8805N014

Learning objectives

The course pursues the following learning objectives:

1. Knowledge and Understanding
   Students will acquire the theoretical, analytical, and methodological tools necessary to understand the growing cultural complexity of contemporary societies, with particular attention to the ways in which this complexity is expressed through communicative processes—both face-to-face and mediated—and intersects with processes of human mobility. They will also acquire the knowledge required to critically analyse the role played by institutions, political actors, the media, and administrative apparatuses in the social construction of migration and the production of cultural differences, situating these processes within an intersectional and post-/decolonial perspective.

2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding
   By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- apply sociological concepts and analytical categories to the study of international migration, intercultural relations, and processes of othering.
- critically analyse empirical data, institutional documents, media products, and public discourses concerning migration and cultural diversity.
- design and conduct qualitative research on the topics addressed in the course, integrating appropriate theoretical and methodological tools.

3. Making Judgements
   Students will develop the ability to formulate independent and well-argued judgments on key issues at the centre of contemporary public debates concerning migration, cultural diversity, citizenship, and the governance of human mobility. They will also be able to critically assess media and political representations of otherness, recognising their theoretical, ideological, and normative assumptions.

4. Communication Skills
   Students will be able to:

- effectively present, including through visual communication tools, the main theoretical contributions and empirical studies discussed during the course.
- actively participate in seminar discussions, supporting their arguments with theoretical and methodological rigour.
- write a research paper on a topic agreed upon with the instructor, using the language and conventions of academic writing.

5. Learning Skills
   Drawing on the theoretical knowledge, methodological expertise, and research skills acquired during the course, students will be able to independently deepen their understanding of the topics covered and to design and conduct sociological research in the fields of intercultural relations, international migration, and the social construction of cultural differences.

Contents

The course covers the following topics:

1. The social production of cultural differences in contemporary societies.
2. Intercultural communication
3. Categories and administrative apparatuses for the analysis and governance of human mobility.
4. Contemporary migration policies: migration control, securitisation, and borderscapes.
5. The socio-political and media construction of cultural otherness.
6. The consumption of difference and urban transformations.
7. Racism.
8. Feminist, postcolonial, and queer perspectives on otherness.

Detailed program

The multicultural character of contemporary societies is one of the most significant outcomes of processes of globalization, human mobility, and transnational interconnectedness. Concepts such as culture, identity, difference, and belonging have become fundamental analytical categories in both sociological research and public debate. The course critically examines the processes through which cultural differences are produced, represented, governed, and negotiated in contemporary societies.

The first part of the course focuses on the growing cultural complexity of everyday life and the transformation of intercultural relations. Particular attention will be devoted to:

1. the figure of the stranger as a paradigmatic social and political category of contemporary societies.
2. intercultural communication and the role of linguistic and socio-cognitive competences in multicultural contexts.
3. boundary making: the reproduction and negotiation of identities and cultural differences in face-to-face and mediated interactions.
4. the role of traditional media and digital platforms in the circulation, transformation, and recontextualization of identity models.

The second part of the course examines the ways in which human mobility is constructed as an object of knowledge and institutional intervention. The following topics will be explored:

1. the categories used to describe and classify international migration.
2. the role of statistics, administrative records, and bureaucratic apparatuses in the social construction of migration.
3. the relationship between the production of scientific knowledge and the governance of human mobility.

The third part of the course is devoted to contemporary migration policies. It will examine:

1. the distinction between immigration policies and immigrant policies, and the growing centrality of migration control policies.
2. the securitisation of migration and the reconfiguration of borders in contemporary societies.
3. the European asylum system, forced migration, and the representation of asylum seekers through processes of victimisation and stigmatization.

The final part of the course analyses the ways in which cultural differences are constructed and represented in the public sphere. In particular, it addresses:

1. the political and media construction of cultural otherness.
2. contemporary forms of racism.
3. feminist, postcolonial, and queer perspectives on the production of difference.

Throughout the course, theoretical discussions will be combined with the analysis of empirical case studies and recent sociological research, drawing on contributions from the sociology of intercultural relations, the sociology of international migration, Migration Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Queer Studies.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of the sociology of cultural processes and familiarity with qualitative methods for social research.

Teaching methods

The course is taught in Italian.

Lectures (DE): 18 class hours.
Interactive teaching (DI): 38 class hours (including the presentation and discussion of texts, group exercises, and the design and implementation of a research project on topics covered in the course).

No remote teaching activities will be conducted.

Assessment methods

Students may choose between:
A research paper on a topic related to the course programme, to be agreed upon with the teacher.
An oral examination.

Assessment criteria (applicable both to the research paper and to the oral examination):
Appropriate and accurate use of sociological terminology.
Ability to identify, organize, and present topics clearly and precisely.
Ability to make connections among the various topics.
Ability to contextualize data analysis within relevant theoretical frameworks.
Completeness of the exposition.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For those students choosing the research paper option, the reference texts will be presented in the first lecture of the course and, where possible, made available in pdf format.

Reference texts to prepare for the oral examination:
Colombo E., 2020, *Sociologia delle relazioni interculturali*, Roma: Carocci.
Giaccardi C., 2012, *La comunicazione interculturale nell'era digitale*, Bologna: Il Mulino.
Quassoli F., 2021, *Clandestino. Il governo delle migrazioni nell'Italia contemporanea*, Milano: Meltemi.
Zoletto D., 2010, *Il gioco duro dell'integrazione*, Milano: Cortina.

Reference texts for Erasmus students:
Baumann G., 1999, *The Multicultural Riddle. Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities*, London, Routledge.
Wise A., Velayutham S. (eds.), 2009, *Everyday Multiculturalism*, Palgrave, Macmillan.
Neuliep J.W., 2014, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach Sixth (Edition)*, Sage.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS