UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Politics, Rights and Society

2627-1-F8805N005

Learning objectives

This course aims to provide students with a solid theoretical and analytical foundation in political and social philosophy, with particular emphasis on conceptions of citizenship and theories of human rights. These themes will be explored in their historical, legal, and political dimensions, with special attention to issues of rights protection and violations within the context of contemporary public debate and ongoing processes of democratic erosion. By engaging with key philosophical texts and real-world case studies, the course seeks to develop students' critical capacities to interpret and understand the complex relationship between politics, rights, and society in consolidated democracies, transitional contexts, and situations marked by conflict or authoritarianism.

Contents

The course explores the relationship between politics, rights, and society by analyzing the historical and theoretical development of citizenship and human rights in their various forms and contexts. Focus will be placed on the challenges to rights within consolidated democracies, transitional states, and conflict zones, with special attention to the dynamics that facilitate the rise of authoritarian regimes and the weakening of the rule of law.
Particular attention will be devoted to contemporary armed conflicts, international humanitarian law, and war narratives, alongside other overlapping global crises—health, environmental, and economic—examining their impact on fundamental rights, human security, and international governance.

Detailed program

Module 1: Theoretical and Historical Foundations – Human Rights and Citizenship
The history and philosophy of human rights and the idea of citizenship.
Analysis of major declarations, conventions, and constitutional charters, with reference to the United Nations, the

Council of Europe, the European Union, and national legal systems.
Key concepts: natural rights, positive rights, active citizenship, collective rights, international humanitarian law.
Module 2: Crises and Violations
Analysis of human rights violations in national and international contexts.
Examination of new forms of authoritarianism and democratic crises in a global perspective.
In-depth study of contemporary armed conflicts, international humanitarian law, and war narratives, alongside health, environmental, and economic emergencies.
Special focus topics: international law and armed conflict, wartime disinformation, forced migration, access to healthcare, environmental rights, repression of dissent.
Module 3: Workshops, Seminars, and Educational Visits
Case study analysis, group exercises, presentations.
Educational visit to the Memoriale della Shoah in Milan or to the Casa della Memoria in Milan, sites of reflection on persecution, deportation, and the protection of human rights.
Potential meetings with experts and practitioners in the field of human rights.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of political theory and the functioning of democratic institutions.
Interest in critical debate and argumentative reasoning.
Willingness to work in groups and develop independent learning skills.
Ability to read theoretical texts in Italian or English.

Teaching methods

The course consists of 56 total hours, structured as follows:
60% traditional lectures, supported by slides and multimedia tools for the presentation of theoretical content.
40% interactive activities, including group work, seminars with Italian and international experts, case study analysis, individual and group presentations, and an educational field visit.
Depending on the composition of the student cohort, parts of the course may be conducted in English or another agreed language.
D1 – Knowledge and Understanding
Acquire an in-depth understanding of the main concepts of political and social philosophy, particularly human rights theory, the idea of citizenship, and the historical foundations of national and supranational institutions involved in the protection of rights.

D2 – Applying Knowledge and Understanding:
Apply theoretical knowledge to the analysis of real-world cases involving human rights violations, taking into account diverse geopolitical contexts, the emergence of new forms of authoritarianism, and global challenges such as health, environmental, economic, and military crises.

D3 – Making Judgements:
Develop an autonomous and critical approach to evaluating political and social dynamics related to human rights, with particular attention to the manipulation of information, instrumental use of rights discourse, and the tensions between security and liberty.

D4 – Communication Skills:
Improve oral and written communication skills, particularly the ability to present complex analyses and critical reflections clearly and coherently in both academic and professional settings.

D5 – Learning Skills:
Promote autonomy in learning, the ability to stay informed on emerging issues, and the capacity to work collaboratively, while developing effective research, source evaluation, and

Assessment methods

The final assessment consists of an oral exam based on a written paper agreed upon with the instructor.
The paper must comply with detailed guidelines available on the e-learning platform and include a relevant, up-to-date bibliography.
Students may choose to write and present their paper in English or another agreed-upon language.
Evaluation criteria include:
Learning capacity and ability to stay up to date on relevant topics (D5)
Clarity and argumentative effectiveness in oral and written communication (D4)
Relevance and depth of the selected topic
Critical and analytical skills in engaging with texts and cases (D1, D2, D3)
Coherence, clarity, and completeness of the presentation
Rigorous and comprehensive use of bibliographic sources
A detailed schedule outlining deadlines and submission procedures for the final paper will be published during the first week of the course.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Pietro Costa, Cittadinanza, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2005.
Stefano Petrucciani, Politica. Un’introduzione filosofica, Einaudi, Torino, 2020.
Antonio Cassese, I diritti umani oggi, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2009.
Marcello Flores, Le parole hanno una storia. Apartheid, Colonialismo, Crimini di guerra, Genocidio, Pogrom, Sionismo, Donzelli, Roma, 2025.
Alessandra Facchi, Orsetta Giolo, Una storia dei diritti delle donne, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2023.

Throughout the course, the instructor will provide additional learning materials to support students' learning, including supplementary readings, digital resources, background documents, and other relevant teaching materials. All resources will be made available on the course e-learning platform, together with guidance on the topics covered in class and recommendations for their use in individual study.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | ZERO HUNGER | GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS