Sociology of cultural and communication processes

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Objectives

The course aims to develop a critical perspective on contemporary cultural dynamics by analysing: 1) a significant selection of the main sociological theories of communication and cultural processes through which we will clarify the choice of approach adopted; 2) the concept of communication systems according to systemic theory; 3) the narrative approach to cultural processes; 4) intercultural communication in global society; 5) communication as linguistic mediation. In addition, the course aims to stimulate the active participation of students in examples and case studies. In this way, we intend to enhance their experience, highlight the importance of theoretical reflection in understanding cultural and communication processes, and provide practical tools, many of which are the result of recent Italian and European research, that can be used in the workplace.

Contents

The course begins with an introduction to the analysis of cultural and communicative processes, interpreting culture and communication as social practices in constant transformation. Following this approach, we will consider these processes not as fixed or given realities, but as contingent outcomes of relationships, differences and negotiations that occur over time.

Basics of communication, social structure and transformations of society. We will investigate the basics of communication by analysing how social and communicative processes are made possible by structured contexts and mutual expectations. In addition, we will explore changes in ways of communicating in relation to the social transformations of modernity and contemporaneity.

The production of narratives as a social practice. Narratives are not only tools for storytelling but also communicative practices through which meaning and identity are produced and negotiated and through which we orient ourselves in social and cultural contexts.

Analysis of different forms of communication. Different forms of communication will be analysed: interpersonal communication, role-based communication and media communication.

Cultural diversity as a social construct. Moving beyond an essentialist view of cultures, diversity will be analysed as the result of communicative processes through the concept of the co-construction of "small cultures".

Intercultural communication. The meaning, challenges and opportunities of intercultural communication will be explored in depth. In particular, the characteristics of intercultural communication in the process of globalisation will be described.

Linguistic-cultural mediation: the relationship between facilitation and personal and cultural identity. We will look at linguistic mediation as a system of communication, as well as a process of dialogic facilitation and identity negotiation. In particular, the role of the mediator in promoting intercultural dialogue will be discussed.

Case studies. Concrete examples from Italian and European projects will be analysed to allow for debate and the application of theoretical and practical tools to concrete cases.

Examination method

The examination will be oral, starting from a topic of your choice (duration of the examination approximately 30 minutes).

Bibliography

Required reading:

C. Baraldi, I sistemi della comunicazione. Olschki, 2020. (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10)
V. Iervese, La differenza che fa la differenza. Analisi dei processi culturali. Mimesis, 2024. (chapter 1)

Optional further reading (on which some of the case studies will be based):

C. Baraldi (ed.), Promuovere l'agency dei bambini a scuola e nella sanità, Franco Angeli, 2023. (chapters 4, 5 and 6).
C. Baraldi, F. Farini, V. Iervese (eds.), Raccontare storie personali in classe, Franco Angeli, 2021. (chapters 3, 9 and 10)

Skills expected at the end of the course

At the end of the course, students are expected to have acquired the following skills: 1) the ability to critically analyse communication and cultural systems; 2) an understanding of the processes of mediation and management of difference; 3) the ability to apply theoretical and practical tools to real-life cases; 4) intercultural sensitivity and critical awareness of the management of cultural differences.

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