UNIVERSITÀ DI TRENTO

[135430] Human Behavior in Social Contexts

Course objectives and learning outcomes

The main objective of the course is to provide social work students with the conceptual tools needed to understand the motivations and psychological processes underlying human behavior in social contexts. The theoretical framework adopted is that of social psychology. In particular, through online lectures and individual study, students are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- acquire a solid command of the specific terminology of the discipline, as well as the theories covered in the course and readings;
- develop a sound understanding of the psychological processes and motivations that underlie human behavior in interpersonal interactions, as well as in attitudes and group dynamics;
- connect theoretical knowledge with the analysis of social contexts relevant to social work practice (e.g., by selecting, among the theoretical models studied, those that offer useful tools for interpreting specific social situations);
- apply this knowledge to issues particularly relevant to social services, such as poverty, social exclusion, and immigration.

In addition, along with the other courses in the program, this course is intended to help strengthen students' learning skills, critical thinking, and communication abilities.

Contents

After an introduction to the history and methods of social psychology, the course will address the following topics:

- Understanding others
    - Patterns and first impressions
    - Social labeling and self-fulfilling prophecy
    - Theories of attribution
    - Stereotypes and prejudices
    - Social perception bias
    - The motivations underlying social cognition

- Social attitudes
    - Attitudes, components, and functions
    - Mechanisms of attitude formation
    - The relationship between attitude and behavior
- Group processes and group dynamics
    - The formation of groups
    - Roles in groups
    - Social influence
- Correlates and psychological consequences of poverty, social exclusion, immigration, and gender dynamics.

Entrance requirement

No prerequisites are required.

Teaching and learning methods and activities

Instructional methods and learning activities are designed to support the achievement of the course's educational objectives. These include:

- online lectures delivered by the instructor;
- reading, understanding, and studying the assigned materials and other resources provided through the course webpage;
- critical discussion of course topics in small groups and during online sessions;
- participation in in-depth activities proposed during the course (e.g., role-playing), for students who attend online lessons regularly.

Students are expected to follow the instructions provided by the instructor – both in online class and via the course webpage – regarding the required reading of chapters and articles.

Test and assessment criteria

Evaluation is aimed at assessing the achievement of the main expected outcomes – namely, the knowledge acquired and the ability to connect theoretical concepts with the interpretation of human behavior in social contexts. To ensure fairness, different assessment methods are provided for attending and non-attending students.

- Attending students:
  - a written exam at the end of the course aimed at assessing the acquisition of theoretical knowledge presented in the bibliography;
  - participation in online activities designed to deepen the understanding of selected topics covered during the lessons, along with the preparation of an individual report for each activity;
  - participation in activities intended to further explore the topics outlined in the syllabus, accompanied by the preparation of an individual report.
- Non-attending students: a written exam at the end of the course, with open-ended questions designed to ascertain the acquisition of the training objectives.

Bibliography

Information regarding the required texts and materials will be made available on the course website.