SO/CU300 - Reading Milan and Italian Cities: Place-making and Cultural Resources

PROF. ANDREA DAGIDE CUMAN

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to urban studies and - more broadly - to the interactions and crossovers between culture and the city.

We will examine historical, theoretical, and practical issues regarding: 1) the urban post-industrial turn (the rise of creative industries; the setting up of cultural quarters; the importance of art and culture in place-making); 2) key social transformation/processes taking place in post-industrial cities (gentrification, creolisation, festivalisation); 3) urban cultures (artistic subcultures; creative class, cultural intermediaries and hipsters; business systems such as the fashion system in the case of Milan).

To address these topics, a body of literature on creative cities will be surveyed and, in addition to the theoretical contents, the course will envisage sessions of urban observation.

Field teaching is, in fact, an integral part in the study of the urban world: it gives students an opportunity to understand the real-world situations and to supplement what they have learnt from the lectures; but it is also a concrete opportunity to develop a new, socially and culturally sensitive, professionalism, able to analyse the forces that drive cities' physical, social and economic change and to identify urban trends in people's lifestyle.

Since we are mostly urban dwellers, special attention will be paid to what we can learn from our experiences in Milan, a place that, as many other post-industrial cities, is facing the challenge of using cultural resources to re-position itself in a culturally and economically more diversified space.

LEARNING GOALS

The learning goals of the course are:

a. To understand how city development is shaped by culture;

b. To introduce students to different technique of urban observation;

c. To help students identify, understand and explain urban issues;

d. To deepen knowledge about some peculiar Italian cities.

METHOD OF TEACHING

Seminar with group activities and field trips.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to:
   a. Regularly attend class sessions and field trips;
   b. Read the assigned papers before the lectures;
   c. Actively take part in class and field trips discussions;
   d. Write 4 blog posts to be published on Maptia (https://maptia.com);
   e. Deliver one group assignments and present it to the class;
   f. Write a final paper.

Participation and Attendance Policy (a; b; c)

This course is expected to be highly interactive. Students are expected to proactively contribute to class discussion. As a consequence, Students' participation will be assessed in terms of active and meaningful involvement in class discussions and group activities. Note that participation is not merely class attendance, although you must be in class in order to participate! I do take notice of participation in our class discussions. I also recognize that emergencies, illness etc. may cause you to miss the occasional class. If you are unable to attend, It is your responsibility to obtain any notes from your colleagues and communicate with your team members for group assignments outside of class.

Maptia Assignment (d)

This course envisages a blogging assignment to ensure that students: a) gain familiarity with urban observation and blogging as professional practices; b) deepen their knowledge of Milan and/or other Italian cities; c) improve their observing, researching and writing skills; d) strengthen their comprehension of course material and topics.

Students will be required to write few blog posts (300-500 words) during the course period to be published on Maptia (https://maptia.com).

Group Assignment (e)

In order to foster cooperative learning and an in-depth knowledge of the city of Milan, students will be responsible for participating in a group presentation on a specific Milanese districts. Each group will consist of 2-4 students; the final product is a poster/SlideShow that each group will present at a group assignment session at the end of the semester; final presentation should last about 10-15 minutes.

Final Paper (f)

6-PAGE DISCUSSION PAPER examining, describing and analysing a specific social phenomenon/a concept/a theory within the context of a chosen city/neighbourhood in Milan and/or in your country.

CREDITS

6 ECTS
GRADING

Students will be evaluated on their class participation, group assignments and in-class presentation, Twitter and Maptia posts, and final paper. The final grade for the course will be calculated based on following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance + class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group assignment + class presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maptia assignment</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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COURSE READINGS AND MATERIALS

All readings, guided questions to aid readings and lecture slides will be available on Blackboard (http://blackboard.unicatt.it).

ADDITIONAL COURSE TOOLS

To assist us in our discussions, this class has a dedicated Twitter account that will broadcast info, photos, images, questions, upcoming due dates and assignments to all followers.

Students can set-up (or update) their personal Twitter account and follow @UC_ReadingMilan in order to post links, articles, personal comments and/or pictures taken during urban observation sessions, but also in order to find information from classmates. Contributions to the discussion via Twitter are seen as a valid method of class involvement.

In order to ensure that your contribution to the discussion can be seen (and responded to by others), make sure that you add the hash tag #ReadingMilan to every relevant post.

E-MAIL ADDRESS

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