



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Urban cultural studies

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Course aims and intended learning outcomes

Although arts, culture, and creativity are increasingly circulated globally, their 'raw materials' (e.g. signs and symbols, ideas, artefacts, collectives and movements) are socially, temporally, and geographically contextualized. Of these contexts, the course will focus on the geographical one, delving into the recursive relationship between culture and place through a multidisciplinary perspective spanning from economic geography and urban studies to organization studies, from public management to cultural studies. Emphasis will be placed on the dialogue between theoretical models, studies based on empirical verification, and managerial accounts from regional and city policymakers and stakeholders.

Specific course aims are:

- To locate culture and creativity in the current global economic landscape and analyze their organizational peculiarities, by introducing the main models that represent the cultural and creative industries (CCIs)
- To explore the relationships between the CCIs and local economic, social and cultural development, by focusing on sectoral and cross-sectoral policies at various governmental levels
- To discuss the main contemporary issues about management and governance of places, by analyzing such concepts as creative cities, cultural districts, creative class, smart cities, and the dynamics of culture- and creativity-led local development, urban regeneration

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the different definitions and taxonomies of CCIs
- Understand the basic models of economic, cultural, and social development tied to CCIs
- Analyze in a critical way different policy choices regarding the above, applying knowledge about causal relations and ingrained assumptions about the opportunities and the limits of culture- and creativity-led local development
- Exercise their judgment capabilities through e.g. devising place-based development strategies and projects on various scales, from micro (e.g. artists' spaces, (underutilized) public space), to meso (organizations, neighbourhoods), to macro (cities, regions) scales.
- Exercise their communication and learning skills through guided discussion about key issues (e.g. artists' space in cities and society; creativity-led gentrification and displacement) and workgroups.

Course content

The course starts by introducing key definitions of arts, culture and creativity that are key to comprehend how these activities and processes could be related to, first of all, an intrinsic development of cultural fields, and secondly, as it has been proposed by various recent theories, to social and economic development. To this aim, the course will first provide an introduction to the field of urban/regional studies and economic geography, and within them will analyze the approaches connecting the arts, culture and creativity to urban and regional development.

Then, the course is aimed to let student appreciate that culture and creativity are both cross-sectoral (involving different functions of governments) and multi-level (policies intersect at various scales such as international, national, regional and local), and so particularly complex to manage. Finally, the multi-disciplinary approach will allow to gain insights on the sustainability of cultural sectors under the current regime of globalization, by asking questions such as: will globalization and digital technology/connectivity aid or dampen the production of local cultural products? Will these latter become increasingly homogeneous and formulaic, or is there space to even augment the variety and specificity of 'authentic' local production?



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More specifically, course contents are the following:

- Definitions, models and organization of CCIs
- Basic concepts between economic geography and organization theory: co-location advantages, different kinds of embeddedness, districts and clusters
- Why do cities exist? Two basic models of urban growth and the relation with creativity
- Culture-led urban regeneration
- Statistical tools to measure creative vibrancy and their policy relevance
- Smart cities/regions and city/region attractiveness
- Key concepts in city management and policy: institutional thickness

Reading list

T. FLEW, Global Creative Industries, Polity, 2013.

A.J. SCOTT, The cultural economy of cities: essays on the geography of image-producing industries, Sage, 2000.

Selected papers uploaded on BlackBoard.

Teaching method

The issues object of the course are particularly prone to a continuous switching between the main models and taxonomies (developed either within academia or policy circles) and practices and actions observed in real cases of cities, regions, institutions and spaces. Therefore, teaching methods will be based on an interactive approach based on a mix of lectures, guest-speaking sessions (provided by professionals in policy-making, academia and cultural sectors), and in-class discussions given by students and facilitated by the instructor.

The course intends to develop an approach that will engage students in reading papers ahead of classes, so as to be able to grasp some of the features that will be systematized by the instructor. Attending students are expected to actively participate to all the course activities.

Assessment method and criteria

Attending students:

The assessment will be based on:

1. Final written exam (75% of each student's individual grade). The exam will be based on the arguments covered in the teaching materials the instructor will discuss in class and publish on BB. The topics will cover both theoretical models and concrete applications/development of cases or models.
2. Final group assignment (25% of each student's individual grade): students will be required to carry out one major assignment in team. All attending students will be part of one group; each group will decide the theme of the workgroup together with the instructor.
3. Participation and effort in Class discussions and other 'in-progress' assignments. will be also required to perform group activities such as class discussions on papers and other materials, and ad-hoc searches during the course. The content and topics will be pre-assigned by the instructor, but students may also propose topics of interest and will be involved in creatively propose the methods.



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Non-Attending students:

Students who choose not to attend classes need to be prepared on the following list of books above specified and on the papers to be agreed upon with the instructor beforehand.

The exam will be composed of four open questions, decided by the instructor, on the assigned readings.

Notes and prerequisites

There are no admission requirements, although a basic knowledge of cultural management and/or cultural and creative policy is a plus.