



UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF CARE

October 2024 – December 2024

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Enzo Colombo

Instructors: Dr. Camille Allard

N. hours: 20 (10 meetings)

N. maximum participants: 20

Eligible participants: students from REL, GPS, PPPA and GLO

N. ECTS: 3 ECTS as “further training activities” (“ulteriori attività formative”)

Final evaluation: attendance (at least 75%) and class presentation.

How to register: Interested students must send an email to camille.allard@unimi.it, by September 15, 2024.

Learning objectives: The Covid-19 outbreak has shone a light on the importance of ‘care work’, in maintaining the functioning of our society, and the essential role of those performing this work. ‘Care’ has also been at the forefront of social movements, such as the women’s strikes in 2018 and 2019. ‘Care’ is also now increasingly part of ecological and social justice movements agendas, calling for a better and fairer world, and better care towards the environment. In many different aspects, ‘care’ seems to be at the heart of the concerns of the new generations. Simultaneously, however, more and more organizations such as business companies call themselves ‘caring’, and more marketing strategies exploit the idea of ‘self-care’ to sell their products. In this laboratory, we will review the origins and evolutions of the concept of ‘care’, looking at its ambivalent position in feminist debates, and we will analyze its political and social importance nowadays.

Know: the different sociological and philosophical approaches to understand the origin and evolution of the concept of ‘care’ and its position within feminist debates.

Comprehend and analyze: the evolution of the concept of care in current society, and its appropriation by a variety of political and social actors.



Apply: Students choose a case study to present in front of the class (organization, social movement, political party/association) which produces discourses around the idea of 'care' and analyze its sociological meaning.

Course structure:

Friday 27 September 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 1. Care in daily life, and care as a concept*

Care has become increasingly a prominent term in sciences and in politics. This first session aims to examine some examples in daily life, where 'care' is involved, and then to consider care as a multi-faceted concept, particularly its use in analyses of 'care' systems, 'care' policies, economics of 'care', 'care' in social reproduction, and ethics of 'care'. This session also outlines the structure of the course and present the criteria for the final evaluation, which include a student presentation. A syllabus with a list of references for reading will also be circulated to students.

Friday 4 October 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Conservatorio)** – *Session 2. The ambivalent place of care in feminist debates.*

What is the place of 'care' in feminist debates? This session will review the different feminist approaches adopted to examine and analyze the role of care and challenge its traditional concept as a 'natural task' mostly performed by women. The session will review Materialist and Marxist feminist approaches to care, the role of care in Liberal feminists' critique, and the emergence of an Ethics of Care since the 1980s.

Friday 11 October 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 3. The 'dark' side of care: care and oppression.*

This session will challenge the assumption which considers that performing or doing 'care' is fundamentally 'good' in itself. The session will analyze and examine different situations through which care can also be used as a way to render work invisible, or oppress marginalized populations.

Friday 18 October 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 4: Care and social movements.*

This session will explore the role of 'care' in shaping contemporary movements, such as the women's strikes of 2018 and 2019, and the youth-led climate movements. It will explore the place of care in alternative imaginaries, and analyze its importance nowadays in terms of generational demand.



Friday 25 October 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 5: Care in the Covid-19 pandemic.*

This session will examine how care has come to light under the Covid-19 breakout. It will investigate how practices of care evolved during this time, and afterwards, and how it was perceived by policy-makers. This session will also be an opportunity to engage with Dr Sayendri Panchadhyayi who worked on care during the covid-19 pandemic in India, and who will present her research and reflections during the session.

Friday 8 November 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 6: Politics and the ‘caring’ society.*

This session investigates how ‘care’ has become a term also embroiled in politics nowadays. Specifically, it investigates political discourses about the current ‘care’ crisis developing in most western countries, and the needs for a ‘caring’ city as a response to this crisis, analyzing how care becomes an ambivalent instrument, which can be used in both neoliberal and activist practices to reframe the ‘city.’

Friday 15 November 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 7: Care as a marketing opportunity.*

This last session, before the students’ presentation, will examine the way ‘care’ has also become a marketing opportunity. This injunction to ‘take care’ of ourselves can be analyzed as a development to the ‘care crisis’, and will be examined during this session as another example of marketisation of care, through the rise of the ‘wellness’ and ‘self-care’ industry, with implications and consequences for our health and care needs nowadays.

Friday 22 November 10.30-12.30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 8: Students’ presentation.*

Friday, November 29, 10:30-12:30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 9: Students’ presentation.*

Friday, December 6, 10:30-12:30 – **Department of Social and Political Sciences (via Passione)** – *Session 10: Students’ presentation.*