

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE: THINK, QUESTION, TRANSFORM: THE CHALLENGE OF CRITICAL THINKING

COURSE INFORMATION

Program	Empowering Community Engagement: Soft Skills Micro-Courses for Students and Staff
University	University of Calabria
Department	Culture, Educazione e Società - DICES
Course name	Think, Question, Transform: The Challenge of Critical Thinking
Course code	ECE2.8
Credits/hours	2 hours
Language of instruction	Italian
Course dates	Academic year 2026/27
Course schedule	9.00 - 11.00 am or 11.00 am - 1.00 pm (TBC)
Target audience	Students, Faculty, staff
Course coordinator	Prof.ssa Emanuela Pascuzzi
Course instructor	TBD
Contact details	emanuela.pascuzzi@unical.it

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the development of Critical Thinking skills through the Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) methodology. Using real-world social issues, such as fast fashion, intergenerational socialization, migration and health inequalities, community mental health, and gambling addictions, students learn to analyse complex phenomena and co-design socially meaningful solutions. The course integrates theory, stakeholder testimonies, group work, and challenge-based activities. By confronting authentic societal challenges, participants strengthen their analytical, interpretative, and problem-solving abilities while fostering creativity, civic awareness, and active engagement in community-oriented learning.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Knowledge

1. Apply critical thinking skills to analyse contemporary social and local issues (topics may vary each semester).
2. Identify and interpret the social determinants underlying complex societal challenges using a multidisciplinary perspective.
3. Understand the phases and principles of Challenge-Based Learning as a methodology for addressing real-life problems.

Skills

1. Use CBL strategies to frame issues, investigate root causes, and develop evidence-informed solutions.
 2. Co-design socially impactful interventions in collaboration with peers, stakeholders, and community actors.
 3. Work collaboratively in diverse teams, demonstrating active participation and integration of multiple perspectives.
 4. Reflect on personal civic responsibility, ethical awareness, and community engagement.
 5. Recognise the role of individuals, institutions, and collective action in promoting social justice and sustainable change.
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COURSE CONTENTS

1. Introduction to Critical Thinking
 2. Foundations and phases of Challenge-Based Learning (CBL)
 3. Case Studies from EU PEACE Workshops (such as Fast Fashion & Responsible Consumption, Socialization & Longevity: Designing Intergenerational Connections, Migration & Health Inequalities: Invisible Wounds, Community Welfare & Mental Health (Budget di Salute approach, Gambling Addiction & New Dependencies
 4. Applied Learning Activities through testimonies from experts, NGOs; problem-framing and evidence-based inquiry, group ideation and co-design, guided discussion
 5. Open Q&A and reflection activities
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TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The course adopts an experiential and interactive approach grounded in Challenge-Based Learning. Teaching methods include short lectures introducing key concepts and analytical tools; case analysis of selected topics in line with the topics of EU PEACE; testimonies and dialogues with practitioners, NGOs, and community stakeholders; collaborative CBL group work: Engage, Investigate, Act; brainstorming and problem-framing exercises: short co-design sessions for developing solutions to real societal challenges; reflection moments focused on critical thinking, civic engagement, and personal growth. The learning experience is centred on authentic social issues, encouraging students to move from observation to understanding and action.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Overall weight
Reflection assignment	Critical analysis, clarity, connection to course topics	30%
Group activity/CBL participation	Engagement, collaboration, problem framing	40%
Final proposal/idea presentation	Feasibility, creativity, social impact, coherence	30%

AI tools may be used only for linguistic refinement or idea exploration; full assignment generation is not allowed. All sources (including AI assistance) must be acknowledged.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)

Contact hours	Independent learning	Overall
2	optional reading, reflection, or follow-up tasks) — to be defined if needed	2

Type of activity and time dedicated

Introductory lecture by the course instructor, framing the theme and presenting key concepts	20 mins
Expert testimony and thematic in-depth contribution (done by stakeholder, organisation, field professional)	30 mins
Challenge-Based Learning activity (problem framing, small-group discussion, collaborative exploration)	40 mins
Restitution and collective discussion	20 mins
Q&A session with the audience	10 mins
TOTAL duration	120 mins

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

Stakeholder testimonies and specific case studies.