



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Logica

1920-2-E2001R062

Course title

Mind, culture, communication: the epistemological foundations of the cognitive sciences

Topics and course structure

The course aims to promote the ability to reflect on some important philosophical – more specifically, epistemological – problems arising in the framework of the cognitive and communication sciences. This goal will be pursued with close reference to Michael Tomasello's "The cultural origins of human cognition". The course will specifically address philosophical problems originating from Tomasello's views, concerning the concept of mind, the relation between mind and brain, the structure of mechanistic explanation in psychology, the formation of a theory of others' mind, and the conceptual and methodological foundations of the cognitive sciences. Attending students will therefore gain a deeper understanding of some important concepts used in other courses – such as the concepts of mind, cognition, scientific explanation.

The course will be articulated as follows.

- 1) A first part of the course will be devoted to understanding what a genuinely philosophical problem is, and what philosophical problems emerge in the framework of contemporary cognitive and communication sciences.
- 2) A second part of the course will be devoted to presenting and discussing Tomasello's views about the cultural origins of human cognition.
- 3) Then, with close reference to Tomasello's text, the specific epistemological problems anticipated before, and presented in more details below, will be discussed.

Objectives

The course aims to promote acquisition and development of the following abilities.

- Ability to identify the philosophical (specifically, epistemological) problems arising in the contemporary cognition and communication sciences;
- Ability to precisely formulate some of these problems, to reconstruct the main solutions proposed in the literature, and to use this ability to properly interpret, and critically discuss, philosophical issue arising in scientific,

philosophical and narrative texts. The specific philosophical problems under discussion are the following: the concept of mind, the relation between mind and brain, the possibility of a psychoneural reduction; the structure of mechanistic explanations, the concept of mechanism, non-mechanistic approaches to the explanation of mental processes; the structure of cognitive science explanations, the concept of mind as an information processing system; folk psychology and the concept of "theory of mind"; the validity of the methods adopted in the cognitive sciences (simulations, neuroimaging technologies, psychometry).

- Knowledge of Michael Tomasello's views about the cultural origins of human cognition and communication.

Methodologies

The course will involve lectures as well as more active lessons, in which students will be asked to participate and discuss. References to movies and literature will be often made to stimulate philosophical discussion.

Online and offline teaching materials

The didactic materials consist in the books included in the bibliography and in the slides used by the teacher, which will be made available on the e-learning platform.

Programme and references for attending students

- Thomas Nagel (2014), Una brevissima introduzione alla filosofia. Il Saggiatore.
- Michael Tomasello (2018), Le origini culturali della cognizione umana. Il Mulino.
- Edoardo Datteri (2017), Che cos'è la scienza cognitiva. Carocci.
- Capitoli 3 e 7 di Federico Laudisa, Edoardo Datteri (2013), La natura e i suoi modelli, CLUEB-Archetipo.

Programme and references for non-attending students

The bibliography for non-attending students is the same as for attending students.

Assessment methods

Written exam with closed-ended, open-ended, and metacognitive questions.

Evaluation criteria for the open-ended questions (the length of the answer is not part of the evaluation criteria): pertinence with respect to the question; clarity; correctness; soundness of the arguments; level of critical analysis.

Evaluation criteria for the metacognitive questions (the length of the answer is not part of the evaluation criteria): pertinence with respect to the question; clarity; soundness of the arguments; level of critical analysis.

Office hours

Please write to edoardo.datteri@unimib.it.

Programme validity

The program will be valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants
