UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Language

2021-1-E2004P002

Learning area

Study of the means by which communication takes place

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Distinctive features of human language and animal communication systems
- Origin and evolution of language
- Relation between language and society
- Theoretical and experimental approaches to the relation between language and thought
- Linguistic relativity: the influence of specific linguistic structures on non-linguistic cognition

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Identifying lexical and structural ambiguities
- Critical reading of scientific articles
- Assessment, synthesis and critical evaluation of theoretical debates

Contents

This class adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the debate about the origin and evolution of language, and its relationship with thought, with notions of evolutionary biology, philosophy of mind and of language, and linguistics.

Detailed program

- The distinctive features of human language.
- Animal communication systems.
- The presence of components of human language in other species
- Homo sapiens and other human forms.
- The evolution of language.
- The parameters of language variation.
- Language and its relationship with biology and society.
- Language and cognition.
- Language and categorization.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

Teaching methods

During the COVID emergency classes will be pre-recorded but some classes will be live to allow the students to ask questions and interact with the instructor.

The material (slides and, when possible, scientific articles and videos) is made available on the e-learning site of the course, so that it can also be used by non-attending students.

Assessment methods

The exam is written, with open questions to assess the effective acquisition of theoretical notions, the ability to synthesize and evaluate theoretical debates, and to critically read scientific articles.

The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesize, create links, and critically read what was learnt.

Upon student's request, the exam can be completed with an oral examination, on all the course topics.

The modality of such exam will be updated in accordance with the rules for COVID-19 emergency.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The information on teaching material will be posted on the class website by the beginning of the academic year.