



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Mind, Logic and Natural Language Structure

2021-2-E2401P006

Learning area

Inter-disciplinary knowledge

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Distinctive features of human language and animal communication systems
- Principal theories about the origin and evolution of language
- Theoretical and experimental approaches to the relationship between language and thought

Applying knowledge and understanding

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

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.
- Homo sapiens and other human species.
- The evolution of language.
- Language variation and universals
- Language and its relationship with biology and society.
- Language and cognition.
- Language and categorization.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

Teaching methods

In addition to classroom lectures, part of the teaching will take place through the discussion of scientific articles, and audio-visual material (documentaries).

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.

Students who regularly attend the course can deepen the knowledge of some course topics submitting brief essays and exercises on the course e-learning page.

Lessons will be held in presence or through online video lessons, according to the University's regulations regarding the COVID-19 emergency situation. In both cases, all lessons will be video recorded and made available to the students.

Assessment methods

The exam is written, and it comprises forced choice questions, open questions, and an exercise.

The forced choice questions aim at ascertaining the effective acquisition of theoretical notions; open questions require the ability to assess, synthesize and evaluate theoretical debates, and to critically read scientific articles; the exercise consists in the syntactic representation of an ambiguous sentence.

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

There will be in itinere examinations reserved to students who regularly attend the course (two written tests). Participating to optional activities contributes to final evaluation.

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

During the Covid-19 emergency, exams will be conducted according to the University's regulations regarding the COVID-19 emergency situation.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Moro, Andrea (2015). I confini di Babele. Il cervello e il mistero delle lingue impossibili. Bologna: Il Mulino
