



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### History of Philosophy

2122-2-E2401P076

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#### Learning area

Learning area III. Knowledge of an interdisciplinary nature

Course: History of philosophy

Teacher: Marco Vanzulli

#### Learning objectives

##### *Knowledge and understanding*

- Define, from the point of view of the history of ideas, a given theoretical question.
- Read a philosophical text, putting it in connection, on the one hand, with a tradition of thought and, on the other hand, with a specific theoretical problem.

##### *Applying knowledge and understanding*

- Identify the complexity of the philosophical questions, identifying their intersection with the other human sciences and with the social reality.
- Use the acquired abilities in new theoretical contexts.

## **Contents**

Categories of human knowledge in the Western tradition from the 19th to the 21st century

Freedom and determinism

Contingency and necessity

Eudemonism and duty

Character and will

Individual history and action

Time and consciousness

Biological and social determination of personality

Brain, mind and freedom

## **Detailed program**

The course aims to deal with a classic theme of philosophical thought and of great relevance for students of Psychology: freedom and determinism. Are we free in our behavior? Or do the conditioning to which we are subjected force and determine to certain choices what appears and what we call our will? Where lay the motive for action: in the spontaneity and autonomy of the human mind or in the environment and the mind has to be considered only as a recipient and freedom as a self-deception (yet necessary)? The question, posed in these now classic terms, will not receive an univocal answer, but we will see the different approaches and solutions proposed by the tradition of late modernity and contemporaneity, in order to provide the conceptual tools and knowledge to orient oneself within a topic that conveys other issues, such as the relationship between mind and "environment", the nature of conscience, moral responsibility, etc. The theme of freedom and determinism will be illustrated through the direct reading of texts of the tradition of thought of late modernity and contemporaneity up to contemporary texts in which the theme is addressed on the basis of the results of neurobiology, who will have to deal with philosophy.

- The texts will be read and commented during the lectures and the problems at stake explained and contextualized.

- Same examination program for attending and not attending students

## **Prerequisites**

Specific previous knowledges are not required

## **Teaching methods**

Lecture, texts reading and commentary, discussion on the analysed topics

## **Assessment methods**

Oral examination, aiming at evaluating:

the knowledges acquired;

the ability of reconstruction the arguments of the texts;

the adequacy in using the specific language;

the critical ability to connect and compare the conceptual problems encountered in the texts. There is no provision for *in itinere* tests.

Lessons will be held in presence, unless further COVID-19 related restrictions are imposed.

## **Textbooks and Reading Materials**

An anthology of texts prepared by the teacher, of which the teacher will communicate the availability through the e-learning platform.

Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so,

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