UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theoretical Philosophy - A-L

2122-1-E1901R016-AL

Course title

On responsibility. Philosophical categories and educational action

Topics and course structure

Responsibility is at the forefront of every educational experience: both from the point of view of education to responsibility and from the point of view of our responsibility as educators. Among the words of ethics "responsibility" today is perhaps the most pronounced. But what's its point? When is an action responsible? And why should I feel responsible? Where does it start and where does it end, what are its limits? How does it question the dimensions of power, knowledge and will? How do responsibilities and freedoms intertwine? With a philosophical look and with specific attention to the repercussions on the level of educational action, the course will discuss some models and conceptual categories to initiate a critical reflection on the theme, deepening the foundations of the ethics of relational action and the theory of moral obligation, on the one hand with reference to intersubjective and interpersonal relationships, on the other hand to the problems related to acting in contexts of high complexity that raise problems of public ethics at.

It consists of 5 moments:

1. The relationship between education sciences and ethics: responsibility in education (P. Bertolini)

2. At the roots of the ethics of responsibility: difference between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility (M. Weber)

3. Personal responsibility and historical responsibility (D. Bonhoeffer)

4. Social and political implications of educational responsibility (H. Jonas)

5. Responsibility for future generations (F. Menga)

Objectives

Knowledge and understanding

The first objective of this course in theoretical philosophy is to accustom students to a style of inquiry suited to critically analysing the categories of thought that explicitly or implicitly underpin discourses in the human sciences and the associated research practices and forms of intervention. Students will be led to recognize and problematize the interpretive approaches and conceptual distinctions underpinning understandings of the world in real-life contexts.

Application of knowledge and understanding

The second objective of the course is to help students develop the capacity to reflect on the less obvious, and thus even more crucial, assumptions underlying their actions (whether theoretical or practical) in typical educational situations and settings. The expected learning outcome is enhanced awareness of the horizons of meaning that come into play in diverse sociocultural contexts and the main cognitive and normative structures underpinning mutual expectations in educational settings, which in turn will inform educational action.

Transferable learning outcomes

The third objective of the course is to enhance students' capacity to revisit and organize their knowledge, using their own independent judgement, while attending to underlying concepts, the layers of semantic meaning implicit in key terms, the logical-formal structure of arguments, and different possible regimes of truth.

Methodologies

Introductory lectures and discussions on the course's key themes and theoretical bases; guided analysis of the course books; active learning sessions based on audio-visual materials and worksheets; joint recap sessions based on outlines presented in PowerPoint or guest lectures.

Online and offline teaching materials

Course books, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets and other documents for individual exercises and group work, audio-visual materials.

Programme and references for attending students

The course discusses the philosophical and historical reasons that explain the renewed interest in the theme of responsibility today and its implications in educational contexts, both in the sense of education to responsibility and in that of educational responsibility. It presents the basic elements of a theory of responsibility and the relationship between subjectivity, inter-subjectivity and responsibility, between heteronomy and self-autonomy.

Bibliography

1. P. Bertolini, “La presenza dell’etica nel processo formativo”, in *Ad armi pari. La pedagogia a confronto con le altre scienze sociali*, Utet, Torino, 2005, pp. 247-277 (tot. pagine: 30)

2. M. Weber, *La politica come professione*, Einaudi, Torino 2004, pp.45-121 (tot pagine: 76)

3. D. Bonhoeffer, “La storia e il bene (redazione I e II)”, in *Etica*, Queriniana, Brescia 2010, pp. 191-261 (tot. pagine: 60).

4. D. Bonhoeffer, “Dieci anni dopo”, in *Resistenza e resa*, San Paolo, Milano1988, pp. 61-78 (tot. pagine: 17).

5. H. Jonas, *Il principio responsabilità*, Einaudi, Torino 2009, solo i capitoli I, II, e IV, pp. 1-63 e pp. 102-173 (tot. pagine: 134)

6. F. Menga, *L'emergenza del futuro. I destini del pianeta e le responsabilità del presente*, Donzelli, Roma 2021 (tot. pagine: 120).

Programme and references for non-attending students

The course discusses the philosophical and historical reasons that explain the renewed interest in the theme of responsibility today and its implications in educational contexts, both in the sense of education to responsibility and in that of educational responsibility. It presents the basic elements of a theory of responsibility and the relationship between subjectivity, inter-subjectivity and responsibility, between heteronomy and self-autonomy.

Bibliography

1. P. Bertolini, “La presenza dell’etica nel processo formativo”, in *Ad armi pari. La pedagogia a confronto con le altre scienze sociali*, Utet, Torino, 2005, pp. 247-277 (tot. pagine: 30)

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Assessment methods

Attending students: oral exam.

During the oral exam the student will be required to discuss the course themes; the examiner will evaluate both the precision of their knowledge and their ability to critically rework it.

Assessment will be based on:

a. Pertinence of answers,

b. appropriate use of terminology

c. coherence of argument,

d. ability to identify and problematize theoretical issues and open questions.

Non-attending students: oral exam.

As above, except that the questions will evaluate the student’s knowledge of the prescribed reading materials without reference to the additional analysis conducted in class

Office hours

Prof. Vergani receives students on Wednesdays from 11.00 to 13.00. Tel. 4896 U6 4th Floor, Room 4146 (students requiring an appointment should request it in advance via email). Routine information may be requested via email, or before or after classes.

Programme validity

The current programme is valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Course tutor: dott. Claudio Belloni.