UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Origins and Development of The Human Mind - 1

2223-1-F5104P003-T1

Learning area

PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING: MODELS AND METHODS FOR ASSESSMENT

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
• The role of developmental processes in shaping the individual, with reference to support and prevention.
• The role of social stimuli and social interactions in human development.
• The importance of early experiences for cognitive and socio-affective development of the individual.
• The relevance of mind-body and mind-brain interactions in development.
• The ontogeny of the ability to understand others.

Applying knowledge and understanding
• Developing critical thinking skills that enable to identify theoretical implications of empirical evidence for the explanation of developmental change.
• The ability to identify key factors to promote cognitive development.
• Applying acquired knowledge of the principles that guide neurocognitive development to the enhancement of learning processes.
• Applying the neuroconstructivist perspective to the understanding of neurodevelopmental syndromes.
• Applying acquired knowledge of the principles that guide neurocognitive development to the understanding of preterm birth as a risk condition.
• Applying acquired knowledge of the principles that guide neurocognitive development to the understanding of the link between early experience and emotional well-being.
• Developing the ability to identify early markers of typical and atypical development

Contents

Starting from the theoretical framework offered by the neuroconstructivist approach, the course illustrates the key role of developmental processes in the shaping of the individual and the importance of early experiences with the physical and social environment for the development of the human mind. The course will examine the role of biological factors as constraints on development, the relationship between motor skills, perceptual experience and learning, and the factors promoting human development. The implications of the neuroconstructivist view of development will be discussed for the understanding of developmental trajectories in neurodevelopmental disorders and preterm birth condition, and the impact of early adverse experiences on neurocognitive development and emotional well-being. The mechanisms underlying the emergence of the understanding of others will also be examined.

Detailed program

• Why study development of the human mind
• The fundamentals of the development of the human mind
• Neuroconstructivism and developmental cognitive neuroscience
• Biological predispositions as constraints on development
• The relationship between mind and body and between mind and brain during development
• Social stimuli as promoters of development
• Implicit learning mechanisms as foundations to development
• Play and learning as development promoters
• Early environment and emotional well-being
• Early markers of typical and atypical development
• The understanding of others and the origins of Theory of mind
• The implications of neuroconstructivism to the understanding of neurodevelopmental disorders
• The implications of neuroconstructivism to the understanding of preterm birth as a risk condition for neurocognitive development.

Prerequisites

Knowledge of classical theories of psychological development, with specific reference to Piaget’s theory and Cognitivism. Students who lack this knowledge will be provided with specific reference.

Teaching methods

In addition to frontal lectures, the course will offer guided discussions and video presentations. Slides and scientific papers are made available to all students (even those who are not attending classes) through the e-learning website.

Assessment methods

The exam is written with oral interview upon request. The written exam includes multiple choice questions and

open questions. Multiple choice questions provide extensive evaluation of knowledge acquisition; open questions evaluate students' critical thinking on such knowledge.
Students may ask to attend an oral interview, in addition to the written exam, on all the topics included in the Syllabus.
Evaluation criteria are as follows: response accuracy for multiple choice questions, adequacy of contents, formal organization and terminology for the answers to open questions.
International students can take the exam in English and/or ask for an English bibliography.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Macchi Cassia V., Valenza E., Simion F. (2012). Lo sviluppo della mente umana. Dalle teorie classiche ai nuovi orientamenti. Bologna: Il Mulino (chapter: 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

- Valenza, E., Turati, C. (2019). Promuovere lo sviluppo della mente. Un approccio neurocostruttivista. Bologna: Il Mulino (all chapters, except chapter 1).

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING