



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

### Freedom of research and public use of reason: developing critical thinking through four philosophical approaches

2223-DOTT-MOD07

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#### Title

Freedom of research and public use of reason: developing critical thinking through four philosophical approaches

#### Teacher(s)

Prof. Mario Vergani  
Prof. Vittorio Morfino  
Dr. Stefano Pippa  
Dr. Didier Contadini

#### Language

English

#### Short description

The cycle of lectures is designed as an exercise of critical thinking, which improves reflexive and argumentative abilities.

Which social and institutional conditions affect research practices? What effects in the political sphere and in the context of public communication does the exercise of different research practices have to deal with?

This year, the seminar will provide PhD students with some philosophical approaches to analyse in depth this classical subject with reference to some issues of the current public debate. Each lecture will start with a brief presentation of some fundamental theses and models of analysis of the topic by the speakers, followed by a discussion.

The lectures are open to first, second, and third year doctoral students working in scientific, humanistic, and technological areas of research. The cycle of lectures is organized in the context of the PhD program "Education in the Contemporary Society", Department of Human Sciences for Education. The speakers will provide the attendants short texts and/or video material to read before the lecture.

The lessons will be held in English.

**1) 23rd February, 15:00-17:00**

**Prof. Vittorio Morfino**

**Freedom of thought in Spinoza**

My talk will focus on the text that in modernity constitutes a true bastion of freedom of thought, speech and research: the Theologico-Political Treatise and in particular its chapter 20. I will try to show the specific theoretical strategy through which Spinoza defends freedom of thought and speech: not from the point of view of the individual, for whom this freedom would be an inalienable right, but from the point of view of the state, which, by wanting to censor it, would end up making enemies of its citizens and losing legitimacy in front of them.

**2) 23rd March, 15:00-17:00**

**Prof. Mario Vergani**

**Freedom of research without conditions and university institutional conditions**

The university enunciates its mission as unconditional freedom of research, but this is realised under certain conditions, institutional, pedagogical, legal, economic, political in the broadest sense, which bind its practice and make its exercise effective. Where are they given and how can they be perceived in one's own activity? In a complex society, it is more difficult than in the past to recognise these constraints and the conflicts arising from them - between the political realm and the research system, between the different forms of knowledge, both scientific and of the human and social sciences. The discussion will be conducted on the basis of some examples relating to the organisation and functioning of the university system in Italy and by comparing it with some relevant moments of contemporary philosophical reflection on the theme.

**3) 20th April 2023, 15:00-17:00**

**Dr. Stefano Pippa**

**Towards a neoliberal academia. Remarks on the neoliberalisation of education and research**

The dominant representation of the role of education within liberal democracies, and the self-representation that the university still has of itself as a place of production of free knowledge, are increasingly belied by the progressive subsumption of the apparatus of knowledge production within the circuit of capitalist production. Various interpreters have described the new trend as a 'neo-liberalisation' of education at all levels, meaning an epochal change of status in the role and function of the apparatuses of knowledge and emphasising the risk that this transformation entails for the maintenance of the democratic ethos. The lecture will dwell on some of these theories (M. Nussbaum, W. Brown, C. Laval, P. Macherey and others), in order to focus on how the neo-liberal transformation of education, and of university in particular, represents a crucial terrain in the project of dismantling democracy that is proper to neo-liberal rationality.

**4) May 25th 2023, 15:00 – 17:00**

**Dr. Didier Contadini**

## **Truth, truthfulness et similia: critical considerations on research ethics**

Freedom of research is a key issue for those working in higher education and in academia. Various ethical aspects are linked to freedom of research. I shall focus on two of them: the way research work is carried out and (self-)perceived; social context as a point of origin and point of fallout of research. A crucial point is the question of the “truthfulness” inherent to research and its results, which I shall discuss by drawing on

Kant’s text on truthfulness and on Foucault’s discussion on parrhesia.

From here, I’ll approach the issue of FFP. I will then consider some striking historical cases that problematise the meaning, limits, and content of freedom of research. This will shed light on the oft-neglected role of socio-economic aspects. These aspects characterise the different ethical positions of researchers, who must currently come to terms with what has been called their “moral illiteracy”.

## **CFU / Hours**

1,5 CFU (12 hrs in total - 8 hrs lectures/seminars + 4 hrs students' work)

## **Teaching period**

23/02/2023 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm U1.11

23/03/2023 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm U1.11

20/04/2023 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm U7.09

25/05/2023 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm U1.11

**course registration on "Segreterie online":** from 30/01/2023 to 19/02/2023

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

QUALITY EDUCATION

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