



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Philosophy of Mind and Theory of Affections

2324-1-F8501R024

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#### Course title

*Starting with Descartes: perspectives and vanishing points*

#### Topics and course structure

As Hegel said, in the history of philosophy Descartes represents the beginning of modernity. His conceptual revolution pertains to the discovery of egoity as a closed sphere separated from the objects outside, as well as from other subjects. More precisely, Descartes was the founder of a mode of philosophizing, which has decisively marked all of modernity, the urgency of which lay in the identification and description of subjective procedures - today we would say that the one invented by Descartes is a philosophy of mind - functional to the foundation of the object: the fact that every good philosopher disquisitioned deep logical-mathematical problems (such as Pascal or Leibniz) or even borrowed from geometry the argumentative structure of his own theological-political treatises (such as Spinoza), must be placed, precisely, on the background of this evident attempt at foundation.

Throughout the course, through a first-hand reading of Cartesian texts, as well as reference to philosophers who have dealt with problems akin to Descartes', we will attempt to problematize the picture just sketched by showing its hypothetical vanishing points, particularly those concerning **the status of subjectivity and that of its affections through the analysis of the body-mind plexus.**

#### Structure

After a brief general introduction to Descartes' philosophy (two-three lectures), the lectures will focus on reading and commenting, as participatory as possible, on the texts.

**Teaching does not presuppose specific knowledge.**

#### Objectives

Through this teaching, with constant and participatory class attendance, it is intended to:

- foster the study of philosophy;
- foster an autonomous reworking of the theoretical perspectives explored in class;
- provide students with conceptual and methodological tools that can be helpful in the context of their specific course of study.

## Methodologies

The course uses the following methodologies:

- lectures;
- class discussions on texts included in the syllabus for the exam or on texts functional to their understanding;
- participation of scholars presenting current research.

## Online and offline teaching materials

Texts, PPP slides.

## Programme and references

**Required readings:**

- Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, in *Philosophical Works vol. 1*, Editori Laterza, Bari-Rome, 2009.
- Descartes, *Metaphysical Meditations*, in *Philosophical Works vol. 2*, Editori Laterza, Bari-Rome, 1992.  
(The sections of the *Metaphysical Meditations* to be brought to the exam will be indicated in the course of the lectures).

By **choice**, **one** text from the following (the titles on the list of choice volumes will increase over the course of the lectures):

- M. Merleau-Ponty, *L'occhio e lo spirito*, Editor SE, Milan, 1989.
- M. Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia della percezione*, Bompiani, Milan, 2018 (pp. 151-212).
- É. Balibar, *Spinoza politico. Il transindividuale*, Castelvecchi, Roma, 2022 (pp. 175-218).
- D. J. Chalmers, *Più realtà. I mondi virtuali e i problemi della filosofia*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 2023 (pp. 77-148).
- T. Nagel, *Cosa si prova ad essere un pipistrello?*, Castelvecchi, Roma, 2013.
- Daniel C. Dennett, *Sweet Dreams. Illusioni filosofiche sulla coscienza*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 2006 (pp. 23-52).
- G. Simondon, *Deux leçon sur l'animal et l'homme*, Ellipses, Paris, 2020.
- A. Koyré, *Lezioni su Cartesio*, Jouvence, Milano, 2022.

**During the course of the lectures, reference will be made several times to works drawn from literature, painting, video art and cinema.** During the course, materials relevant to the works commented on in class will be uploaded to the appropriate section of the *e-learning* page. The exam will in this sense represent a space where

interested students can share, **if they wish**, their personal insights into these works.

**The bibliography for the exam will be the same for frequent and non-frequent attendees.**

**To facilitate study for non-frequent attendees, documents (articles, excerpts etc.) will be uploaded in the appropriate section of the course page to facilitate study of the examination bibliography.**

## **Assessment methods**

The examination will take place orally at the end of the teaching, during the examination sessions.

There will be no in-progress tests.

The oral interview will focus on the texts in the bibliography.

The criteria of the evaluation will concern the acquisition and awareness of the content of the texts in the bibliography and, in equal measure, the critical skills matured by the student.

## **Examination procedure and evaluation criteria.**

The exam begins with the exposition of a topic of your choice, followed by one or more questions on the other exam topics.

The final grade takes into account the evaluation of three aspects (whose weight in the final grade is expressed in parentheses):

the knowledge of the concepts and topics set out in the texts to be studied (50%);

ability to articulate discourse and develop analysis (30%);

property of language and exposition (20%).

## **Office hours**

Prof. Giacomo Clemente receives by previous appointment via email.

## **Programme validity**

The programs are valid for two academic years. However, interested students, upon notification to the Professor, are free to carry the examination program even after the passage of the two years.

## **Course tutors and assistants**

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

QUALITY EDUCATION | LIFE BELOW WATER | LIFE ON LAND

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