UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Developmental Psychology - M-Z

2526-1-G8501R003-G8501R003M-MZ

Course title

Developmental Psychology (M-Z)

Topics and course structure

After a brief historical overview of the discipline and reflections on the methodologies mainly adopted, the development of the main psychological dimensions (motor, emotional, affective, cognitive, linguistic, social and moral) will be persented in the light of the main theoretical models and their potential application in the educational school context.

Specifically, the following topics will be covered:
Physical-motor development;
Emotional development, focusing on the definition of emotion, theories on the origin and development of emotions, the construct of emotional competence, and practices of emotional socialization within the family and at school (such as dialogic reading);
Affective development, with an in-depth analysis of attachment theory;
Cognitive development, through the study of the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, as well as theories on the development of social understanding (or theory of mind);
Communicative-linguistic development, with a detailed study of prelinguistic communicative skills during the first year of life and the subsequent development of language;
Social development, with particular attention to the construction of the self as a social being, the constructs of empathy and social behavior, and an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of bullying;
Moral development, with a special focus on the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg.

Objectives

The course aims to introduce students to the knowledge and in-depth study of the main theoretical models of psychological development as a complex and multidimensional process that involves individuals throughout their entire life cycle. In particular, this course seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of the presented theoretical constructs, as well as the ability to relate different knowledge and models to one another.

Knowledge and Understanding
Knowledge and comprehension of psychological development, with particular attention to its historical and social development.
Understanding of the perspectives and theoretical models related to psychological development processes.
Applying Skills
Utilizing essential theoretical references to understand the dimensions and implicit variables in the teaching-learning process.
Applying theoretical knowledge and operational tools related to observation techniques.
Developing research pathways in the psycho-educational field to enhance professional practice.
Reflecting on one's professional role by identifying and critically analyzing the intervention models implemented.
Making Judgements
The ability to interpret and understand the needs and behaviors of children in preschool and primary school in light of contemporary social contexts.
The capacity to critically examine educational events and developmental processes, analyze them in-depth, and reflect on them.
An openness to renewing teaching practices through research, experimentation, and innovation.
Communication Skills
The ability to clearly and articulately communicate analysis and assessment results, using appropriate scientific language during classroom discussions.
Learning Skills
The ability to expand one's basic psychological knowledge, also in relation to advancements in scientific research.
Promoting original and critical reflection on empirical and theoretical outcomes in developmental psychology, integrating new knowledge for continuous skill improvement.

Methodologies

The course will be mainly lecture-based (80%), with also interactive teaching (20%).
In addition to lectures, some brainsotrming activities and classroom exercises will be offered.
Lessons will be in Italian

Online and offline teaching materials

Slides, video
Additional and alternative materials to support non-traditional students in their study and exam preparation will be provided (e.g., some recordings of in-person lessons; slides with examples and links to audiovisual materials).

Programme and references

1. Caravita, Milani, Traficante (Eds., 2024), Psicologia dello sviluppo e dell’educazione (II edizione). Il Mulino,

Bologna (no chapters X, XII, XIII, XIV, XV).
2. Cassibba, Salerni (2023), L'osservazione nei contesti educativi. Carocci Editore, Roma (Only chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6).
3. Ornaghi, Agliati, Gandellini (2026), La lettura dialogica nella continuità 0-6. Dalla ricerca psicologica alla pratica educativa. Edizioni Junior-Bambini S.r.l., Reggio Emilia.

Students who want to extend the exam over two years must agree on an updated bibliography with Prof. Ornaghi.
A bibliography in English will be provided for international students.

Assessment methods

The exam consists of a written test structured in two parts: a first part with 10 multiple-choice questions and a second part with three open-ended questions (duration: 70 minutes).
Evaluation criteria: The assessment will consider the in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topics covered during the course, the use of discipline-specific language, as well as the ability to relate different course topics.
The exam, consisting of a multiple-choice section and a section with open-ended questions, is designed to assess both theoretical knowledge and the ability to analyze, apply, and critically reflect on the topics covered. This structure aligns with the course objectives, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the skills acquired, the knowledge gained, and the use of discipline-specific language.
To ensure a transparent evaluation, the following grading criteria, shared with the students, will be applied: up to a maximum of 10 points for the multiple-choice questions (1 point for each correct answer) and up to a maximum of 7 points for each of the three open-ended questions.

1. Low Range (0-17/30): Insufficient
Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates poor and fragmented knowledge of the topics, with difficulty in understanding key concepts in developmental psychology.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: Inability to apply theoretical concepts to real cases or contexts.
Autonomy of Judgment: Lack of critical thinking and independent evaluation skills; reliance on information provided by the professor.
Communication Skills: Poor oral/written expression; technical and scientific language is either absent or used inappropriately.
Learning Skills: Limited ability to process and connect knowledge; low autonomy in studying.
2. Medium Range (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
Knowledge and Understanding: The student has a general understanding of the main topics of the discipline, although with some uncertainties or gaps.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: Fair ability to apply acquired knowledge to simple situations but struggles with complex problems.
Autonomy of Judgment: Partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to reprocessing known information.
Communication Skills: Sufficient to good clarity in exposition, with an acceptable use of technical language, though not always rigorous.
Learning Skills: The student demonstrates a sufficient ability to learn and make connections between topics but requires support for independent study.
3. High Range (25-31/30): Very good - Excellent
Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the topics, mastering the complexity of developmental psychology.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: High ability to critically and independently apply theoretical knowledge to complex situations.
Autonomy of Judgment: Excellent critical thinking skills, autonomy in evaluating theories and data, demonstrating originality and problem-solving ability.
Communication Skills: Precise and appropriate scientific language; clear, fluent, and rigorous exposition both orally and in writing.

Learning Skills: The student exhibits excellent autonomous learning skills, the ability to integrate knowledge, and interdisciplinary connections.

Office hours

By appointment (veronica.ornaghi1@unimib.it)

Programme validity

2 academic years

Course tutors and assistants

Alessia Agliati, Elisa Brazzelli, Greta De Salvia, Sabina Gandellini, Marta Radice

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING