UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Thought and Communication

2526-3-E2401P016

Learning area

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS USEFUL TO UNDERSTAND, PROMOTE AND CHANGE INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Higher level cognitive processing: human reasoning and judgment processes

- The relationship between thinking and communication

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Ability to analyze reasoning problems from a pragmatic perspective

- Ability to analyze theories and experiments through the development of critical and argumentative thinking

Making judgements

- The course encourages an acquisition of knowledge that goes beyond simple mnemonic learning, rather promoting the ability to reflect critically about classical experiments on thinking. In addition, the course aims to develop - through group acitivities, discussion of experiments and the development of a research project - the ability to analyse scientific research in Cognitive Psychology, reasoning in critical way about the tools used, the design followed and the results obtained.

Communication skills

- A further objective of the course is to develop the student's ability to describe, explain and comment the theories learned and the results of the research reported in the relevant literature not only during the exam but throughout the whole course and in front of the class (through group activities and the development of a research project).

Learning skills

- The active participation in the classroom activities, the development of a research project, and the critical reflection on the topics of the course, will make the student able to develop the skills necessary to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.

Contents

The course will explore and discuss the main theories and recent experimental evidence on thinking and reasoning, decision making, and communication.

Detailed program

- Probabilistic reasoning and decision making (with a focus on bounded rationality)

- Problem solving: the representation of the task

- Pragmatics of communication

- The pragmatic approach to the study of thinking

- Some applications: nudge and food communication, communication in healthcare contexts

Prerequisites

Students are assumed to have completed the exam of General Psychology 2 and thus some notions about the study of thinking are taken for granted. Students lacking such basic knowledge should contact the teacher.

Teaching methods

Two different teaching methods:

- 12 DE lessons in presence
- 16 DI lessons in presence with group activities-activity under the supervision of the professor (discussions of experiments, literature and project works).

The material (slides and, when possible, scientific articles) is made available on the e-learning site of the course. Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.

Students can deepen the knowledge of some course topics through the development of a research project (with a written essay - project work - and a presentation) that moves from a critical analysis of an experiment or a problem.

Assessment methods

The exam is oral. The questions are aimed at ascertaining the effective acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to critically analyze the research literature on the relationship between thinking and communication. The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesize, create links, and critically read the research literature. For this examination mode no mid-term assignments are graded.

For students involved, during the lessons, in the development of a research project an ad hoc examination will be offered. This will consist in:

- Mid-term assignment: Groupwork on development and presentation of a research project on a reasoning problem (40% of final grade)

- End-term assignment: Individual essay on the research project (50% of final grade)

- Oral interview on the essay and on the project (10% of final grade).

The evaluation criteria are the ability:

- to choose an open question in literature (or a problem) and to connect it to the scientific literature
- to build a research project and to give a presentation and write an essay on the project.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Bonner, C. et al. (2018) Heuristics and biases in cardiovascular disease prevention: How can we improve communication about risk, benefits and harms? Patient Education and Counseling, 101, 5, 843-853.
- Friedman, H. H. (2017) Cognitive Biases that Interfere with Critical Thinking and Scientific Reasoning: A Course Module (June 30, 2017). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2958800
- Lee, C.J. (2006) Gricean Charity. The Gricean Turn in Psychology. Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 36, 2, 193-218.
- Macchi, L. (1994) Il ragionamento probabilistico. Ruolo delle euristiche e della pragmatica. Firenze: Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano, 156.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1983). Extensional versus intuitive reasoning: The conjunction fallacy in probability judgment. Psychological Review, 90, 4, 293-315.
- Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. (2009) Nudge. La spinta gentile. Introduzione e Parte prima (Umani ed econi: Distorsioni ed errori; Resistere alla tentazione; Seguire il gregge; Quando servono i pungoli?; L'architettura delle scelte). Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore
- SLIDE DEL CORSO

Detailed information about other materials will be published on the course webpage (e-learning website).

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Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING