



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

History of Philosophical and Scientific Thought

2526-2-E2401P144

Learning area

Interdisciplinary competences.

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Fundamental concepts and themes in the history of Western philosophical and scientific thought from its origins to the 20th century.
- Intellectual, social and economic factors that have characterised the development of Western philosophical and scientific thought in different historical periods.
- Epistemological, social and cultural implications of different philosophical and scientific theories and traditions.

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Improvement of the student's cultural background, increasing his critical attitude and awareness of scientific investigation as a tool for the management and solution of collective issues.
- Development of the ability to detect the complexity of philosophical and scientific questions in the humanities and in a broader social and cultural perspective.
- Development of the ability to read and analyse a philosophical and scientific text, as well as the ability to contextualise it within a specific tradition of thought and a specific cultural and social issue.
- Development of an adequate capacity for conceptual thinking.
- Development of the ability to define, from the point of view of the history of ideas, a theoretical question and to use the acquired theoretical competences also in different theoretical-operational contexts.

Making judgements

- Development of the ability to critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize new and complex ideas (also in relation to emerging global problems) both through guided and/or personal reading of texts from the Western philosophical-scientific tradition, and through group discussions and seminars.

Communication skills

- Development of the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions clearly and consciously to specialist and non-specialist interlocutors and in different training and work contexts.
- Development of a solid capacity for active listening, negotiation and working in interdisciplinary groups, as well as understanding and critically analyzing different points of view.

Learning skills

- Development of the ability to continue the study path independently, strengthened by a greater critical awareness and a renewed theoretical-conceptual and methodological sensitivity.

Contents

Title > Mental illness and philosophy

The course is divided into two parts.

a) After some preliminary considerations on the nature of philosophical and scientific enquiry and its conceptual-methodological specificities, the **first** insitutional part will analyse some of the main moments in the history of Western philosophical and scientific thought from antiquity to the 20th century.

b) The **second** part of the course, structured as a monographic module, will begin with a concise historical-epistemological framing of the concept of psychopathology and the major orientations in modern and early 20th-century psychopathology. It will then focus on an in-depth analysis of the fundamental philosophical and clinical-methodological premises of phenomenological psychopathology, with particular attention to the work of Eugène Minkowski and his original interpretation of mental disorders as modifications of the lived experience of temporality.

Detailed program

General part > Fundamentals of history of philosophical and scientific thought

- Preliminary considerations and fundamental concepts.
- The origins of Greek thought.
- Plato's philosophical-scientific ideal.
- Philosophy and science in Aristotle.
- Greek philosophy and Christianity: St Augustine.
- Methodological perspectives in the Medieval Age.
- Renaissance philosophy (Telesio, Bruno, and Campanella) and the birth of modern science.
- Galileo Galilei and the experimental method.
- Francis Bacon.
- Descartes and mechanism.
- Isaac Newton's natural philosophy.

- Rationalism, empiricism and the Kantian solution.
- Will, reason and suffering: Schopenhauer.
- Positivism and Evolutionism: Comte, Mill, Darwin.
- Nietzsche and Bergson: becoming, consciousness and life.
- Husserl's phenomenology and the *Crisis of European Sciences*.
- Karl Jaspers between psychopathology and philosophy of existence.
- Spengler and the *Decline of the West*.
- Logical positivism (the Vienna Circle).
- Popper and falsificationism.
- Change and revolution in science: Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend.

Monographic part > **Mental illness and philosophy**

- Preliminary considerations on the concept of *psychopathology*.
 1. The epistemological status of psychopathology.
 2. *Descriptive* psychopathology and *structural* psychopathology.
- The two strands of modern psychopathology: from Pinel to Kraepelin, and from Pinel to Freud.
- The phenomenological turn: Jaspers, Binswanger, and Minkowski.
- Temporality and psychopathology in the work of Eugène Minkowski.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge (high school) of the history of Western philosophy.

Teaching methods

28 in-person lecture-based classes.

Teaching methods consist in direct exposure, group discussion, analysis of historically and scientifically significant texts, and possible in-depth seminars. The course is held in Italian.

Class attendance is strongly recommended. Non-attending students are required to attend a preliminary meeting in preparation for the exam.

Assessment methods

The verification of learning will be carried out through a **oral examination**. The questions are aimed at testing the effective acquisition of the topics illustrated during the course, as well as to ascertain the ability to manage the contents of the proposed bibliography and the capability to critically deal with them.

There is no midterm exam.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Jaspers, K. (2010 [1949]). *Introduzione alla filosofia*, a cura di P. Chiodi. Milano: Raffaello Cortina (pp. 1-122).
- Berti, E., & Volpi, F. (2007). *Storia della filosofia dall'antichità a oggi*. Roma-Bari: Laterza (tomo A: pp. 3-30, 38-45, 50-82, 89-98, 104-119, 179-186, 198-200, 239-245, 250-253, 261-263, 299-323, 325-346, 388-394, 418-419, 422-432, 477-480, 483-496; tomo B: pp. 78-85, 140-145, 149-157, 169-175, 186-187, 198-200, 223-229, 233-235, 269-273, 365-372).
- Civita, A. (1999). La clinica moderna e la malattia mentale. In Civita, A., & Cosenza, D. (a cura di), *La cura della malattia mentale*. Vol. I. *Storia ed epistemologia* (pp. 89-132). Milano: Bruno Mondadori [in scansione].
- Civita, A. (1999). *Psicopatologia. Un'introduzione storica*. Roma: Carocci (pp. 11-23, 63-141).
- Minkowski, E. (2025). *Esistenza e psiche. Per una clinica della temporalità vissuta*, a cura di A. Molaro. Milano: Raffaello Cortina (pp. 8-71, 83-198, 247-280).
- Slides and further reading.

All students are reminded that it is strictly prohibited to disseminate and/or reproduce any course materials (including slides, texts, audio, or video recordings) online or elsewhere without the explicit written permission of the instructor. Any violations will be duly reported to the University's Legal Office and the relevant authorities.

Foreign students (Erasmus) may contact the lecturer to arrange an examination programme in English or French.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
