UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Practical Class: Developmental Psychodiagnostic Assessment

2526-2-F5107P022

Learning area

Models and techniques for assessing psychological functioning

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

Students will:
• understand the specific features of case formulation in developmental age;
• gain knowledge of Personality Disorders in childhood and adolescence according to the PDM-2;
• understand the progression from assessment to treatment planning;
• learn the principles underlying clinical and forensic interventions with minors.

Applying knowledge and understanding

Students will be able to:
• structure a developmentally appropriate diagnostic setting for children and adolescents;
• interpret psychopathological personality functioning in developmental age;
• analyze clinical cases by integrating clinical, relational and contextual dimensions.

Making Judgements

The course develops the ability to independently evaluate complex clinical situations in developmental age by integrating multiple sources of information (observational data, interviews, test results, narratives, family and institutional context). Students learn to formulate coherent, well-founded diagnostic hypotheses and critically evaluate the appropriateness, limitations and ethical considerations of the diagnostic tools used with minors (e.g., Roberts-2, play observation, family assessment).

Activities supporting this ability include: discussion of clinical cases, scoring exercises with the Roberts-2, small-group simulated assessments and guided reflections on the complexity of diagnostic reasoning with minors.

Communication Skills

The course fosters communication abilities specifically connected to psychodiagnostic practice in developmental age, including the ability to convey complex information clearly and sensitively, adapting communication to the developmental level of the child and to different audiences (parents, teachers, colleagues, clinical and forensic professionals).
Activities include: writing short psychological reports, simulated feedback sessions, group work on protocol interpretation and oral presentations on diagnostic tools and clinical cases.

Learning Skills

The course provides theoretical foundations and practical tools that support autonomous and continuous learning in developmental psychodiagnostic assessment. Through direct work with test materials (e.g., Roberts-2), critical reading of scientific literature and practice with clinical cases, students develop the ability to identify and select reliable academic sources and to keep their diagnostic competence updated over time.
Activities supporting these skills include: guided study of test materials, scoring and interpretation exercises, independent reading of scientific articles and active participation in class discussions.

Contents

The purpose of this laboratory is several-fold. It reinforces the basic skills critical to set up a diagnostic process in the developmental age. Moreover, the laboratory will allow you to understand deeply the diagnostic process. The diagnostic process with children and adolescents raises issues about the specific setting, the relational aptitude and the choice of assessment tools for a developmental diagnosis, commonly defined as a states diagnosis and not yet as a traits diagnosis.

Detailed program

• Theory and technique behind the diagnostic setting with children and adolescents: the consulting room and the rules of play.
• The diagnostic tools: observation of the individual and of the family, children’s drawing, children’s play.
• Roberts-2: a story telling test for subjects from 6 to 18 years old. It provides a series of 16 pictures depicting social situations that are part of children’s and adolescents’ everyday experience. Children and adolescents are required to tell a story starting from pictures. Roberts-2 presents a standardized scoring system, organized in clinical and evolutionary scales that, when properly interpreted, are used to assess the child's personality through the measurement of its performance (problem solving strategies and decision making) in complex tasks.

Prerequisites

Skills related to clinical psychology (assessment, psychodynamic psychiatry, clinical reasoning).

Teaching methods

The teaching method is 50% hands-on and 50% interactive.
The teaching activity includes exercises, laboratory activities, and teacher-supervised activities.
All lectures will be delivered in person.
Clinical case studies will be helpful as practical examples and as a study of diagnostic functioning in developmental age. Exercises in administering and coding the Roberts-2 test will be useful for improving technical skills in managing test materials.
The course slides will be shared in advance of the lecture to help students understand the lecture topics.
Students will be invited to work in small groups to code some test answers as a final exam.

Assessment methods

Students must attend at least 70% of the lessons to get the necessary credits.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Ammanniti M., (2001). Manuale di Psicopatologia dell'infanzia". Raffaello Cortina Editore Ammanniti M., (2002). Manuale di Psicopatologia dell'adolescenza". Raffaello Cortina Editore

Kernberg P.F, Weiner A.S., Bardenstein K.K, (2000) “I disturbi di personalita? nei bambini e negli adolescenti” Tr. It. Giovanni Fioriti Editore, Roma 2001

Lingiardi V., McWiliamns N. (2018). "PDM-2. Manuale diagnostico psicodinamico”. Raffaello Cortina Editore

Lingiardi V., McWiliamns N., Speranza A.M., (2020). "Manuale diagnostico psicodinamico. PDM-2 0/18 - Infanzia e adolescenza”. Raffaello Cortina Editore

Parolin, L., Locati F., De Carli P. (2014) “Il test di Roberts-2”. Hogrefe Editore

Speranza A. M., Williams R. (2009). “Fare diagnosi nell’infanzia e nell’adolescenza”. In “La Diagnosi in psicologia clinica”. Raffaello Cortina Editore

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING