UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

# COURSE SYLLABUS

# Psychological Fundamentals of Expressive Techniques in The Lifespan

**2627-1-F5702R006**

## Course title

Psychological Foundations of Expressive Techniques in the Life Span

## Topics and course structure

The course integrates psychological theories with expressive practices in order to explore the crucial role these techniques play in human development across the lifespan. Through an approach that combines theory with practice, the course aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how expressive techniques can be used to promote psychological well-being, personal growth and social adaptation.
Students will be introduced to the principles of embodied cognition, a theory that emphasizes how cognitive processes are rooted in bodily experiences. This concept will be examined in the emotional, perceptual and linguistic contexts to understand how the body and mind interact dynamically to influence our understanding and interaction with the world.
Creativity will be another key pillar of the course, analyzed as an inherent capacity that evolves and manifests differently at different stages of life. Students will explore different forms of creativity, understanding how it can be stimulated and supported to foster cognitive and emotional development from childhood to adulthood and beyond.
Artistic expressiveness will be treated in their mutual interactions with psychological development, with an in-depth look into *embodied art*. Various artistic approaches-from visual arts to music, theater to dance-will be examined to understand how these forms of expression can facilitate self-expression, emotional processing, and personal growth. Through case studies and exercises, students will learn about the bsychological foundations for using these techniques in educational and training contexts.

The main topics covered will be:
**Embodied Cognition**
Definition and Fundamental Theories: Introduction to the concept of embodied cognition and its main theories.

Study of the interactions between body and mind.
Emotional Systems: Analysis of how bodily experiences influence emotions and emotional regulation.
Perceptual and Linguistic Systems: An exploration of the role of the body and movement in sensory perception and the integration of sensory information; The specific case of language as the exaptation of sensorimotor functions.
Embodied Art: The encounter between embodied cognition and creativity.

**Creativity in the Life Cycle**

Creativity and Cognitive Development: Analysis of the role of creativity in cognitive development and problem solving skills.
Strategies to Stimulate Creativity: Techniques and approaches to encourage creativity in educational and training settings.

**Artistic Expressiveness and Psychological Development**

Visual Arts and Psychological Development: Using visual arts for self-expression and emotional processing.
Music and Emotions: Studying the impact of music on emotions and emotional regulation.
Dance and the Body: Exploration of dance as a means to improve body awareness and mind-body integration.
Case Studies and Exercises: Analysis of real cases and development of skills to understand the psychological foundations of expressive techniques that can be used in educational and training contexts.

## Objectives

The general objectives of the course are to provide students with a thorough and applied understanding of the psychological basis of expressive techniques, exploring how they can promote cognitive, emotional and social development throughout the life cycle.
Through this teaching, with consistent and participatory attendance at course lectures, it is intended to promote the following learning, in terms of:

*Knowledge and comprehension skills*

Acquire knowledge of expressive, performative, and participatory languages for the implementation of educational activities. In particular, acquire knowledge of the psychological and neuropsychological foundations of these languages.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

Be able to apply artistic languages in organizational contexts and in informal and non-formal educational settings, drawing on their psychological underpinnings and effects.

*Independent Judgment*

Develop original reflections and project proposals in response to the needs of work contexts
Promote innovative research based on the synergy between educational and artistic skills
Foster critical and divergent thinking; analyze various professional contexts and identify their needs
Design, implement, and evaluate training initiatives using artistic languages, while also considering emerging issues of sustainability and social ethics in the contexts of intervention.

*Communication Skills*

Work in multidisciplinary teams within complex professional contexts and communicate effectively with partners in the educational, organizational, and artistic-cultural spheres, as well as with a broader audience.
Use artistic and expressive languages as training tools to promote critical and divergent thinking and as innovative means of communication.

*Learning Skills*

Use personal methods of self-promotion and tools to support one’s professional growth.
Develop reflective and metacognitive skills to assess the adequacy of one’s knowledge and skills and identify any areas that require further study..

## Methodologies

The course consists of 19 lessons (18 three-hour lessons and 1 two-hour lesson, for a total of 56 hours of teaching) and includes teaching activities such as lectures (25%) and interactive teaching (75%) such as participatory lessons and exercises with the support of artistic material (videos, images, music, etc.). Classes are conducted in Italian.
Classroom work will include role-playing, dialogue, discussion, and individual, pair, and small group exercises to promote the ability to recognize the potential of expressive techniques in psychological development and in promoting well-being and creativity in educational and training contexts.
Each lesson will include both lecture and interactive components: part of the lesson will be lecture-based, introducing content that will then be discussed and/or practiced. Some of the initial lessons on embodied cognition will have a higher percentage of lecture-based teaching, while each lesson will also include a participatory reflection on the topics covered, with the aid of various teaching aids (videos, audio, etc.). The lessons on creativity and expressive techniques will be more interactive, involving students in exercises, discussions, and/or small group activities supervised by the teacher.
The teaching activities will take place in person, and some lessons or parts of lessons (especially the lecture part) will be recorded and uploaded to the platform.
The teaching materials will be uploaded to the platform.
The teacher provides materials to support non-traditional students in their studies and exam preparation: short recordings (lecture part and, when possible, part of the exercises with related comments and discussions); video materials available online and provides articles and bibliographic references for further study on the platform. The teacher is available to organize, at certain times during the semester, evening online sessions to review the topics covered, reiterate some guidelines for exam preparation, and answer students' questions or address their concerns.

## Online and offline teaching materials

Papers, videos, learning objects and other digital resources available from e-learning course repository.
Both attending and non-attending students are advised to register in order to access all course materials.

## Programme and references

Common texts

- Di Dio, C. (2025). *Psicologia del sistema motorio. Relazione, sviluppo, educazione*. Vita e Pensiero.
- Albanese, O., Peserico, M. (a cura di) (2009). *Educare alle emozioni con le artiterapie o le tecniche espressive*. Edizioni Junior. Soltanto i capitoli 1-4-5 della PARTE PRIMA, i capitoli 4-9-10 della PARTE SECONDA più due laboratori espressivi a scelta della PARTE QUINTA.
- Schon, D. (2018). *Il cervello musicale. Il mistero svelato di Orfeo*. Il Mulino
- Materials from the website https://www.georgekhut.com/media-art, in particular the "Research" section

Further study materials.
Texts or research articles (mainly in English) that will be posted on the e-learning page associated with the course by the beginning of class.

Students/students may contact the lecturer to arrange the possibility of studying on an English-language bibliography and/or the possibility of taking the exam in English

## Assessment methods

The exam can be taken in Italian or English and consists of a written test aimed at demonstrating the student's ability to critically rework and analyze the topics covered in all the texts listed in the bibliography. The written test was chosen as the exam method because it is consistent with the educational objectives of the degree program and is suitable for assessing the student's ability to understand, critically rework, and express the topics covered in the course.
The questions focus on:
topics covered in class (only for attending students);
reworking of the exercises carried out during the course (only for attending students);
volumes brought to the exam.

During the test, the following will be assessed:
level of knowledge of theory and models (Knowledge);
the ability to exemplify concepts (Comprehension);
the ability to use and apply (Applied knowledge and comprehension);
the appropriateness of language.

The assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors: the level bands are as follows

1. Insufficient
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts proposed.
   Ability to Apply Knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on embodied cognition, creativity, and principles of expressive techniques in the texts; able to summarize the contents of the texts presented only partially, unable to contextualize and compare them.
   Autonomy of Judgment: lacks critical thinking skills and autonomy of evaluation; depends exclusively on information provided by the teacher or critical bibliography.
   Communication Skills: has a stilted, approximate, stereotypical written expression; shows poor mastery of the specific language of the discipline.
   Learning Ability: has a limited ability to personally elaborate knowledge and connect it to their own educational experience; shows little awareness of the embodied foundations of expressive techniques and their usefulness as a means of promoting psychological well-being, personal growth, inclusion, and social adaptation, with a view to greater flexibility in different educational situations.

2. Sufficient - Good (18-24/30)
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, albeit with some gaps, inaccuracies on specific but non-essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of the texts.
   Ability to Apply Knowledge: The student is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify general considerations on embodied cognition, creativity, and principles of expressive techniques in the texts; the student is able to summarize the texts presented in a discreet manner, interpret them, contextualize them, and compare them correctly.
   Autonomy of Judgment: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to repeating the judgments of others.
   Communication Skills: has clear and sufficiently precise written expression, a decent command of the specific language of the discipline.
   Learning skills: has a reasonable ability to personally elaborate knowledge and relate it to their own experience in the educational field; demonstrates reasonable/good awareness of the embodied foundations of expressive techniques and their usefulness as a means of promoting psychological well-being, personal growth, inclusion, and social adaptation, with a view to greater flexibility in different educational situations.

3. Distinguished - Excellent (25-30/30)
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates in-depth and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes the proposed texts without uncertainty.

Ability to Apply Knowledge: The student is able to identify general considerations on embodied cognition, creativity, and principles of expressive techniques in the texts with confidence and effective personal observations; with adequate argumentative skills, the student is able to analyze, synthesize, interpret, contextualize, and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary connections.
Autonomy of Judgment: demonstrates excellent critical skills, autonomy of judgment, and originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.
Communication Skills: has clear, rigorous, fluent, and appropriate written expression, and excellent mastery of the specific language of the discipline.

Learning Skills: demonstrates excellent/outstanding independent learning skills, is able to effectively elaborate knowledge and connect it to their own educational experience; shows full awareness of the embodied foundations of expressive techniques and their usefulness as a means of promoting psychological well-being, personal growth, inclusion, and social adaptation, with a view to greater flexibility in different educational situations.

NB: Students with PUOI must email the document to the teacher before the exam. In addition to accepting requests certified by the PUOI, the teacher is available for any clarification on the topics of the lessons with interviews by appointment in person or remotely.

## Office hours

By appointment, writing to: eleonora.farina1@unimib.it
Office hours are held in the professor's office, room 4122, 4th floor, Agorà building (formerly U6). It is possible to request remote office hours, which take place in the professor's virtual room: https://unimib.webex.com/meet/eleonora.farina1

## Programme validity

Two academic years.

## Course tutors and assistants

Chiara Deprà
Marta Sala

## Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION