UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Developmental Psychology

2627-1-E2403P006

Learning area

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

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
The course introduces students to the challenges related to explaining development and identifying the mechanisms of change. It provides a basic understanding of the main theories of psychological development and the changes in psychological functioning and behavior that characterize perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and social development from birth to adolescence.

Applying knowledge and understanding
The course addresses the challenges involved in understanding and explaining development.
It includes the acquisition of basic knowledge of changes in behavior and psychological functions across the life cycle.
It promotes the development of the ability to critically evaluate the explanations of development offered by different theories.

Making judgments
By presenting and discussing developmental phenomena and empirical research, students will gain the capacity to independently assess the strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical approaches to psychological development, and to critically interpret research findings. The examination method, comprising open-ended questions and, upon request, an oral interview, encourages the development of independent judgment and critical thinking in explaining developmental phenomena.

Communication skills
The course promotes the development of communication skills through in-class discussion of research examples and opportunities for students to practice answering open-ended questions on course topics. The exam includes open-ended questions that require the use of appropriate language and the ability to reason, argue, and create connections between acquired knowledge, skills also required during the oral exam, when requested

Learning skills
The course provides the theoretical tools to foster autonomous learning and continuous updating in the field of developmental psychology. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on issues related to explaining development and identifying mechanisms of change, to engage with scientific literature, and to integrate interdisciplinary knowledge

Contents

Major theories of psychological development will be presented, as they relate to the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects of development from conception to adolescence, with particular emphasis on Piaget's theory.

Lectures will include examples of the most representative research in the field.

Detailed program

- Defining development
- Core issues in developmental psychology
- Theories and methods in developmental psychology (Behaviorism, Constructivism, Cognitivism)
- Cognitive development
- Development of language and communication
- Affective and emotional development
- Social development
- Moral development

Prerequisites

Nothing specific.

Teaching methods

In addition to frontal lectures (80% of the teaching hours), the course offers guided discussions of video presentations (20%).

The course is though in Italian. Nevertheless, for Erasmus students, course material will also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish.

Assessment methods

The exam is written with oral interview upon request. The written exam includes multiple choice questions and open questions. Multiple choice questions provide extensive evaluation of knowledge acquisition; open questions evaluate students' critical thinking on such knowledge.

Students may ask to attend an oral interview, in addition to the written exam, on all the topics included in the Syllabus.

Evaluation criteria are as follows:

- Multiple-choice questions: Accuracy of answers.
- Open-ended questions: Appropriateness of terminology, logical and formal organization of the text, ability to support claims, and capacity to identify connections between concepts.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. Lecture slides.

2. Macchi Cassia, V., Valenza, E., Simion, F. (2012). Lo sviluppo della mente umana. il Mulino.
   cap. 1 - Le domande centrali delle teorie dello sviluppo cognitivo
   cap. 2 - Il comportamentismo
   cap. 3 - Il costruttivismo di Piaget
   cap. 4 - La teoria dell'elaborazione dell'informazione
   cap. 5 - Lo studio delle competenze percettive e cognitive nella prima infanzia - par. 5.1, 5.2,5.3.

3. Santrock, J.W. (2021). Psicologia dello sviluppo (4° ed). McGraw Hill.
   In alternativa: Santrock, J.W. (2017). Psicologia dello sviluppo (3° ed). McGraw Hill.
   cap. 1 - Introduzione
   cap. 2 - Lo studio scientifico dello sviluppo infantile
   cap. 3 - Dagli inizi biologici alla nascita
   cap. 4 - Sviluppo fisico, motorio e percettivo
   cap. 5 - Approcci allo sviluppo cognitivo – solo par. 5.1, 5.4
   cap. 8 - Lo sviluppo del linguaggio
   cap. 9 - Lo sviluppo emotivo e affettivo
   cap. 10 - Il Sé e l'acquisizione dell'identità – solo par. 10.1, 10.2
   cap. 11 - Lo sviluppo morale – solo par. 11.1

4. Macchi Cassia, V., Quadrelli, E. (2023). Nati per apprendere. La mente del bambino nel primo anno di vita. Carocci editore.
   cap. 1 - Da dove partire
   cap. 2 - Le abilità motorie
   cap. 3 - Le abilità percettive

--> This bibliography will remain valid for 5 exam sessions: June, July, September 2026, and January and February 2027. Lecture slides will remain available until February 2027.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING