UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

# COURSE SYLLABUS

# Psychology of Art

**2627-2-E2006P014**

## Learning area

**2: Psychosocial aspects underlying communication.**

## Learning objectives

***Knowledge and understanding***

Upon completion of the course the student will know:

- The main theories and methods with which psychology has approached the arts.
- The relationship between style, shape and content, which are essential for a conscious interaction with any work of art.
- The role of structure in aesthetic appreciation.
- The various ways in which art and communication may interact.

***Applying knowledge and understanding***

Upon completion of the course the student will:

- Know how to sunder the aesthetic experience into its three basic components, namely perceptual, cognitive and emotional;
- Relate to works of art regardless of one's own taste;
- Understand the role of "story telling" in art appreciation.

***Making Judgements***

- Development of the ability for critical analysis in relation to the visual arts, in particular with regards to important key points, such as the relationship between space and light in the work of art, the history of the work and the different narratives that revolve around it. This ability will be obtained through a targeted analysis of works of art taken from different eras, as well as with discussions and seminar activities that will be animated during the course.

***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 ability to listen actively, to negotiate and to work in groups, including interdisciplinary ones, as well as to understand and critically analyse different points of view.

***Learning Skills***

- The course aims to provide not only basic notions but also logical tools that can aid the continuation of one's study path in an autonomous way, strengthened by a greater critical awareness and a renewed theoretical-conceptual and methodological sensitivity.

## Contents

How psychology approaches the arts will be analysed, as well as the similarities and differences between the practices of art and science. The following relationships will be discussed: 1) shape, content, and style; 2) art and communication; 3) the role of beauty and the ugliness in art; 4) Creativity; 5) the role of art criticism in the past and the present; 6) art, brain and health

## Detailed program

• Definitions of art and the psychology of art.
• Psychological approaches to the arts: theories, materials and methods.
• Art and science.
• Creativity.
• The role of light in visual art.
• Art and neuroscience.
• Form and content; style and taste.
• Art and communication.
• Art and everyday life: experiences, applications and creative possibilities.

## Prerequisites

It is assumed that the student already passed a course such as Introduction to Psychology and that s/he possesses basic knowledge about history of art.

## Teaching methods

56 hours total. Classes are in-person lecture based.
Lectures, discussions, video presentations, optional exercises. Optional exercises allow to accumulate bonus points. If the student accumulates at least 10 bonus points, these may positively affect the final score of the exam.
The course is in Italian. Non-Italian speakers can discuss an alternative program with the professor.

## Assessment methods

Written exam with optional oral integration.
The exam is written, with thirty multiple-choice questions and three essay questions. if all 30 multiple-choice questions are answered correctly a score of 15 is obtained. The second part of the written test is available only to those who have scored at least 7.5/15 (i.e. if at least half of the multiple-choice questions are answered correctly).
As for the 3 essay questions, each of these are worth 6 points maximum, a score that is obtained when all four of the following evaluation criteria are met:
the correctness of the answer;
the ability to argue critically;
the ability to summarize;
the ability to create connections between the topics covered during the lessons.
N.B.: Attending students who have accumulated at least 10 bonus points by completing the optional exercises are entitled to an extra point in the exam if they have scored at least 18 in the written test. The oral exam is optional and carried out in relation to the written exam, and it can determine a maximum increase of 3 points.

## Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. Manfredo Massironi (2013). L'osteria dei dadi truccati. Milano: Mimesis. (tutto, escluso i racconti).
2. Daniele Zavagno & Daniele Della Vedova (2025). Fenomenologia della luce. Tra percezione e arte. Milano: Mondadori Università (solo la seconda parte del libro).

For erasmus students who are unable to read in Italian:
Rudolf Arnheim, Art and visual perception (The entire book).

All materials published on the course's webpage (lesson slides, movies, images, papers, documents) are also material of study.

## Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS