UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cyberpsychology

2627-2-F5112P015

Learning area

Learning area in social psychology, economic psychology, and decision-making processes, with particular reference to the study of individual and collective behaviours in digital environments. The Cyberpsychology course explores how digital technologies influence communication, identity construction, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and processes of social influence online. Within this perspective, the course also examines the cognitive, affective, and motivational mechanisms that guide individuals' decisions in digital contexts, including environments mediated by social media platforms, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence systems. This learning area therefore integrates the contributions of social psychology with those of economic psychology and decision-making research, providing theoretical and methodological tools to understand how people interpret, evaluate, and act within technologically mediated contexts.

Learning objectives

1. Knowledge and understanding
   By the end of the course, students will have developed an in-depth understanding of cyberpsychology as an emerging field within psychology, with a specific focus on the relationship between humans and technology across the offline–online continuum.
   They will be able to describe and critically engage with the psychological and social impact of new technologies—including virtual reality, social media, smartphones, and artificial intelligence—on the self, interpersonal relationships, and individual and collective behavior.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding
   Students will be able to analyze and interpret the dynamics of digital and online environments through a psychosocial lens, drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical research.
   They will develop the ability to critically assess case studies and scientific literature related to the psychological impact of emerging technologies, and apply this knowledge to concrete, interdisciplinary contexts (e.g., educational, organizational, clinical, and social settings).

3. Making judgements
   Students will be able to formulate independent and well-founded evaluations of the psychological implications of digital technologies. They will demonstrate the ability to identify opportunities and challenges, integrate different sources of evidence, and reflect on the ethical dimensions of digitally mediated interactions.

4. Communication skills
   Students will be able to clearly and effectively communicate the core concepts, findings, and implications of cyberpsychology to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
   They will be capable of collaborating in interdisciplinary settings, using appropriate terminology and adapting their communication style to suit different audiences and professional contexts.

5. Learning skills
   Students will develop the ability to independently update and expand their knowledge in response to the fast-paced evolution of digital technologies and their psychological implications.
   They will be equipped to integrate new insights into a coherent theoretical and methodological framework, maintaining a critical and reflective attitude toward technological innovation.

Contents

The class aims to address the use and impact of digital technologies with respect to the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of individuals both at the level of the individual and at the cosial level, exploring the psychological implications of cyberspace, the web, the metaverse, and emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence, social media, and smartphone usage.

Most recent theoretical models and theories analysing behaviour, emotions and consequences (positive and negative) of the relationship between individuals and technology will be presented.

Detailed program

The course introduces students to cyberpsychology as an emerging field concerned with the study of psychological and social processes in digital environments. It will examine forms of technology-mediated communication, identity construction and self-expression online, group dynamics and social identity in digital contexts, as well as the main mechanisms of social influence, inclusion, and exclusion that characterize online interactions. The course will also address the role of virtual reality as a tool for psychological research and will analyze how individuals perceive and interact with artificial intelligence agents.

MAIN TEACHING AREAS

- Cyberpsychology: an emerging field
- Technology-mediated communication
- Identity and self-expression online
- Group dynamics and social identity online
- Principles of social influence in digital environments
- Exclusion and inclusion in digital spaces
- Virtual reality for research
- Perception of and interaction with artificial intelligence agents

Prerequisites

No previous knowledge is required. A good understanding of the basis of Social Psychology enables a more aware fruition of the course contents.

Teaching methods

Type of teaching activity: 28 in-person classroom lectures, corresponding to 56 hours and 8 ECTS credits. The course is mainly based on a lecture-based teaching method. During the lectures, the instructor encourages the active participation of students through classroom discussions and interactive activities. In addition to traditional classroom lectures, part of the teaching will involve guided discussion of scientific articles and in-class debates. This approach aims to stimulate critical thinking and promote direct engagement with the topics covered, allowing students to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired to real-life situations.

The course materials, including lecture slides, scientific articles, and audio recordings of the lectures, will be made available on the course e-learning page, so that they can also be accessed by non-attending students. In addition, a science communication podcast on Spotify (CYBERPSICOLOGIA: IL PODCAST), related to the course topics, will be available as an integrative resource to support further exploration and accessible dissemination of the main topics covered: https://open.spotify.com/show/7MDNMES4H9hHToCqmt28sD. Optional links to multimedia and science communication content—such as TV series, YouTube clips, podcasts, or popular science articles—will also be suggested during the lectures as complementary resources to the main course topics.

Assessment methods

The exam consists of a written test that includes both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Its aim is to assess students' understanding of theoretical concepts as well as their ability to critically apply this knowledge to the analysis of digital contexts.

Assessment criteria include the accuracy of responses, the ability to construct coherent arguments, to synthesize information, to make meaningful connections between concepts, and to critically interpret real-world scenarios.

No oral integration of the written exam grade is foreseen. No mid-term assessments are scheduled.

Erasmus students may contact the instructor to arrange the use of English-language materials and/or to take the exam in English.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Manuale di Cyberpsicologia (Laterza, 2026).
The full reading list (mainly additional scientific papers) will be provided at the beginning of the course and published on the e-learning platform.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION