# Epistemology of Psychology

## Prof. Giuseppe Lo Dico

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The fundamental aim of the course is to critically examine the main currents of contemporary psychology, implemented through the tools offered by the philosophy of science. With this in mind, before analysing the different epistemological paradigms in psychology, we will illustrate the basic concepts of the philosophy of general science and the epistemology of the human sciences. The course ends with an in-depth study on the topic of robotics.

At the end of the course, students will be able to critically express the contents learned, demonstrating a grasp of the specificity of the epistemological perspective taken when critically examining various psychological currents. They will also be able to get to the heart of the psychology models analysed, managing to highlight their various distinctive aspects and arguing for or against them. They will also gain a critical space for analysing and evaluating the epistemological consequences of robotics.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course presents the fundamental elements of general epistemology, the epistemology of the human sciences, and the epistemology of psychology; it concludes with an in-depth study of robotics.

Part One: *General Epistemology.*

What are scientific theories?

The relationship between the notion of theory and those of hypothesis and law

Deductive-nomological explanation vs. inductive-statistical explanation

Philosophical interpretations of the notion of probability

Explanation and prediction

Neo-positivism from the first to the third phase

Popper's rejection of the inductive method

Inductivism vs. anti-inductivism: Reichenbach and Popper compared

Popper's hypothetical-deductive method

Corroboration and rational prediction: WC Salmon's critique of Popper

Theoretical load and evolutionary epistemology in Popper

Post-Popperian Epistemology: T. Kuhn and P. Feyerabend

Theoretical load: moderate version and radical version

The dynamics of science: comparison between neo-positivism, Popperism and post-Popperian epistemology

Truth and verisimilitude in Popper

Realism and anti-realism about the undetectable in science

Part Two: *Epistemology of the Human Sciences.*

Explanation vs. understanding: the birth of the debate in the nineteenth century and contemporary perspectives

Analytical philosophy: philosophy of common language vs. causal approach (neo-positivism and cybernetics)

Popper's situational logic

The practical inference of von Wright

ND model and practical inference: analogy and difference

Part Three: *Epistemological Paradigms in Psychology*.

The debate on the scientific nature of psychoanalysis: Grünbaum vs. Popper

The epistemological status of psychology according to W. Wundt

The epistemological foundations of behaviourism

The epistemological foundations of the cognitive sciences

The epistemological foundations of the systemic-relational approach

The epistemological foundations of constructionism

In-depth study: *Psychology and common sense*

Main features of common sense

Science and common sense

The relevance of common sense for psychology

***READING LIST***

A. Corradini, *Epistemologia delle scienze umane. Un’introduzione al corso,* EDUCatt, Milan, 2018 (pp. 175).

M. Castiglioni-A. Corradini, *Modelli epistemologici in psicologia: dalla psicoanalisi al costruzionismo,* Carocci, Rome, 2011, New ed. (pp. 231).

G Lo Dico (ed.), *Psicologia e senso comune*, (pp. 100), anthology of texts available online.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

An oral exam in interview form covering all parts of the course, including the in-depth study. The exam is aimed at assessing students' assimilation of the course contents, and their ability to grasp the specificity of the epistemological perspective when examining the various psychological models. To this end, they will be assessed on their ability to present and critically elaborate the topics addressed, and their skill at arguing and critically examining problems.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No prerequisites are required.

Further information can be found on the lecturers’ webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.