# History of Philosophy (Second-level degree)

## Prof. Giuseppe D'Anna

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

The course aims to address the theme of “catastrophe” in the modern era. Earthquakes, plagues, floods represent real upheavals in the lives of women and men, pushing them to question about their finitude, their existence, and the causes of the catastrophes. One of the symbols of all the catastrophes in history can be considered the event that shook the European world on November 1, 1755: the Lisbon earthquake. This “catastrophic” event not only marked a new era for Europe but set in motion a philosophical reflection that involved the greatest philosophers of the time. Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant gave particularly deep insight on this tragic event and dedicated some writings to it. Through the writings of these three authors, students will reflect on the nature of the catastrophe in a philosophical perspective, and establish how this theme, so tragically topical today, has always constituted one of the fundamental points of reflection on the relationship between man and nature, and on the very nature of man, his destiny, his responsibility, and his finitude.

In particular, the aims of the course are the following:

1. Provide students with an overall historical-philosophical and theoretical framework of the concept of catastrophe in the modern era and an introductory overview of the thought of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant on the relationship between man and nature.
2. Carry out a critical comparison between Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant concerning the idea of catastrophe and their different perspectives deriving from their different philosophical positions.
3. Problematising modern ideas of catastrophe in light of present scenarios

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Accurately know and learn the philosophical and cultural significance of the concept of “catastrophe” in modern times through the thought of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant.
2. Know and develop the ability to apply the philosophical lexicon learnt during the analysis of texts to the historical-philosophical context taken into consideration and apply the same ability to other historical-philosophical contexts.
3. Know how to communicate and argue philosophical positions relating to the topics covered, having in mind the historical-conceptual elements and lexical tools learnt during the course.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course will focus on the analysis of the thought of Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant focused on catastrophe and contextualised with the thinkers of their time and the philosophical currents of that period. The textbooks analysed will be the following short writings of the three authors on the Lisbon earthquake of 1755: Voltaire, *Il poema sul disastro di Lisbona*; J.J. Rousseau, *Lettera a Voltaire sul disastro di Lisbona*; Kant, *Sulle cause dei terremoti in occasione della sciagura che ha colpito l’Europa occidentale verso la fine dell’anno scorso*; Id., *Storia e descrizione naturale degli straordinari eventi del terremoto che alla fine del 1755 ha scosso gran parte della terra*; Id., *Ulteriori considerazioni dei terremoti recentemente accaduti*. These short texts will allow students to understand the responses of philosophy in the face of terrible and catastrophic events and, moreover, which of these responses may still be relevant for the present era, which seems to be no less rich in catastrophes than the past ones.

***READING LIST***

Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, *Filosofie della catastrofe,* a cura di A. Tagliapietra, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 2022 (the textbooks of the three authors analised are all contained in this volume).

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be delivered by means of lectures with active student participation, both in terms of class discussion and of submitting papers for presentation and discussion during the course. Moreover, during the course, the lesson will be held as a seminar with the participation of specialists in the subject matter with whom students will be invited to interact. The material available to students will be optimised with the support of the Blackboard platform on the University website (*http://blackboard.unicatt.it*).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam.

The exam is designed to ascertain: 1) that students have read the course texts closely and in full; 2) students’ ability to present the content and logical structure of these texts faithfully and accurately; 3) students’ aptitude for presenting arguments and clearly expressing even difficult and complex concepts; 4) students’ use of appropriate style and lexicon.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The prerequisite for attending the course is the knowledge of a manual of History of Philosophy. Further information may be provided at the beginning of lectures and posted on the lecturer’s noticeboard in the Department of Philosophy.

In the event that the health emergency should continue, both teaching activities and any forms of learning monitoring, both in progress and final, will be provided also remotely through our University's Blackboard platform, the Microsoft Teams platform and any other tools envisaged and notified at the beginning of the course, so as to ensure the full achievement of the formative objectives set out in the study plans and, at the same time, the safety of our students.

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