# Philosophy of the Human Sciences

## Prof. Antonella Morandi Corradini

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

*Course aims*: 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, the course will illustrate the basic concepts of general philosophy of science and the philosophy of the human sciences. The course ends this year with an in-depth study, that this year concerns the theme of the Bayesian approach to science.

*Knowledge and understanding* at the end of the course, students will have learnt the basics of general philosophy of science and philosophy of psychology, as well as how to appropriately intertwine these with their existing psychological knowledge.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding* students will be able to critically apply the contents learned, demonstrating that they have grasped the specificity of the epistemological point of view taken in the critical examination of the 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. The study of the Bayesian approach to science will eventually allow students to become aware of the relevance of the probabilistic results that it achieves.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1: *General Philosophy of Science.*

Unit 1: Scientific theories

What are scientific theories?

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

Unit 2: Explanation and prediction in science

Deductive-nomological explanation vs. inductive-statistical explanation

Philosophical interpretations of the notion of probability

Explanation and prediction

Unit 3: Justification in science

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

Theory-ladeness and evolutionary epistemology in Popper

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

Theory-ladeness: moderate version and radical version

Unit 4: The dynamics of science

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

Unit 5: Scientific realism

Truth and verisimilitude in Popper

Realism and anti-realism about the unobservable in science

Module 2: *Philosophy of the Human Sciences.*

Unit 1: Historical development and contemporary perspectives in the debate between human and natural 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)

Unit 2: Explanation in the human sciences

Popper's situational logic

The practical inference of von Wright

ND model and practical inference: analogy and difference

MODULE 3: *Epistemological Paradigms in Psychology.*

Unit 1: The debate on the scientific nature of psychoanalysis: Grünbaum vs. Popper

Unit 2: The epistemological status of psychology according to W. Wundt

Unit 3: The epistemological foundations of behaviourism

Unit 4: The epistemological foundations of the cognitive sciences

Unit 5: The epistemological foundations of the systemic-relational approach

Unit 6: The epistemological foundations of constructionism

MODULE 4: *In-depth Analysis: The Bayesian approach to science*

*Unit 1:* Bayesianism and evidence

*Unit 2:* Procedures and experiments

***READING LIST***

A. Corradini, *Epistemologia delle scienze umane. Un’introduzione al corso*, EDUCatt, Milan, 2018 (pp. 150).

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

A. Corradini (Ed.) *L’approccio Bayesiano alla scienza* (pp. 100), anthology of texts available at the Copisteria Caminadella, via Caminadella 22.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lessons.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Written examination. At the discretion of the Examination Committee, a supplementary oral test of the written test may be granted.

This exam is aimed at assessing the degree to which the student has succeeded in assimilating the contents of the course, managing to grasp the specificity of the epistemological point of view in examining the various psychological models. To this end, it will take into account the student’s ability to expose and critically elaborate the topics covered and the quality of argumentation and critical penetration of the problems.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No prerequisite is required.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to 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.