Developmental Psychology

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COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course aims to provide students with the main and most relevant basic notions on the theoretical models, research areas, study and intervention methodologies of developmental psychology. Both classical and more recent contributions from the literature will be considered, with particular reference to a number of specific phases of the life cycle (infancy, childhood and adolescence).

Intended learning outcomes

*Knowledge and understanding*.

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

Know and understand the epistemological and methodological foundations of developmental psychology.

Know and understand the main theoretical paradigms relating to the different areas of motor, perceptual, communicative-linguistic, cognitive, emotional and affective-relational development.

Know and understand the main methods of evaluation and research in developmental psychology (with particular reference to interaction observation and the interview).

Know and understand the main models of evaluation and intervention in developmental psychology.

*Applying knowledge and understanding*.

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

Use the theoretical knowledge acquired to identify the developmental needs (psychological and educational) of children and adolescents.

Use the knowledge and concepts acquired to reason according to developmental psychology logic.

Develop a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical approach.

Understand the relationships between developmental psychology and health promotion, with particular reference to the main research, evaluation and intervention methodologies.

Use their psychological knowledge of developmental psychology in order to identify risk and/or protective factors characterising the different development paths and contexts.

Autonomous judging skills

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

Reason critically on the characteristics and developmental trajectories of typical development in the child and adolescent.

Communication skills

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

Display a correct command of the specific psychological lexicon of developmental psychology.

COURSE CONTENT

The course includes an introduction to the subject and method of developmental psychology, followed by an analysis of the main explanatory theories of development, with particular attention to the most recent approaches, to the overcoming of stadial theories, and to the changes of perspective introduced by interactionist and contextualist theories. Explicit reference will be made to the interpretative model of development based on the interconnection between protective and risk factors, which, in its application to the different phases of an individual's life, allows the evaluation of difficulties and problems from a perspective that is dynamic and attentive to processes, mechanisms and their mutual interaction.

The following areas will be explored:

*Unit 1: Research methodology in developmental psychology*

 Observational techniques

 Psychomotor development assessment tools

*Unit 2: The neurobiological bases of development*

 Neurological development

 Perceptual development

 Physical and motor development

*Unit 3: Cognitive development*

 Constructivist approach of J. Piaget

 Historical-cultural approach of L. Vygotskij and J. Bruner

*Unit 4: Evolution of children's games and drawing*

 Definitions and development of games

 Game evaluation

 Development of the design

 Evaluation of the design

*Unit 5: Communicational and linguistic development*

From gestures to first words

 The development of linguistic competence

 Learning written language

*Unit 6: The development of knowledge of oneself and others*

 Self-knowledge and awareness

 Knowledge and representation of others

 Theory of the mind

*Unit 7: The theory of attachment*

 Definition and theory of attachment

 Development and types of attachment

 Internal operational models of attachment in the life cycle

*Unit 8: The development of emotional competence*

 Definition and development of socio-emotional competence

*Unit 9: Social and moral development*

 Moral and social development theories

 The origins of morality and prosociality

 Cognition and moral socialisation

*Unit 10: Quality of family relationships*

*Process-oriented* model

 Risk and protection factors

 Violence against children

READING LIST

Caravita, S., Milani, L., & Traficante, D. (2018). *Psicologia dello sviluppo e dell’educazione.* Bologna: il Mulino.

Lecture notes and teaching material produced by the lecturers.

Texts of choice:

Boerchi, D., & Valtolina, G. (2021). *Nella mia classe, il mondo. I processi educativi nella scuola multietnica*. Parma: Edizioni Junior.

Cigala, A., & Corsano, P. (2011). *«Ricomincio da tre...». Competenza emotiva e costruzione del Sé in età prescolare*. Milano: Unicopli.

D’Amico, S., & De Vescovi, A. (2013). *Comunicazione e linguaggio nei bambini*. Roma: Carocci Editore.

Olivari, M. G., & Confalonieri, E. (2021). *Il corpo (im)perfetto. Cambiamenti corporei in infanzia e adolescenza e implicazioni psicologiche*. Milano: San Paolo Edizioni.

Di Blasio, P. (2000). *Psicologia del bambino maltrattato*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Donghi, E., Pagani, V., Appiani, F., & Caravita, S. (2018). *Bullismo online*. Milano: Maggioli Editore.

Midgley, N., Vrouva, I. (2014). *La mentalizzazione nel ciclo di vita. Interventi con bambini, genitori e insegnanti*. Milano: Cortina Editore

Traficante, D., & Zanetti, M. A. (2008). *Osservare lo sviluppo. Aspetti teorici, metodologici e applicativi*. Milano: Unicopli.

Zoia, S. (2004). *Lo sviluppo motorio del bambino*. Roma: Carocci Editore.

TEACHING METHOD

Frontal lectures, discussions on predefined topics, and the presentation of explanatory and/or illustrative videos of the theory.

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

The exam will comprise a written test, with the possibility of a supplementary oral test (at the discretion of the Examination Commission) based on the overall assessment of the student's answers and any discrepancies in the assessment of their individual answers. The written test will comprise 4 open-ended questions, which students will have one hour to answer. The questions will focus on the entire programme and will be formulated around specific topics, aimed at assessing: a) the acquisition of notions; b) the understanding of concepts; and c) the ability to re-elaborate (in terms of drawing links between the topics studied).

For students who choose the path based on lectures content, the questions will focus on: 1) the essential texts; 2) lecture notes and teaching material produced by the lecturers; and 3) a text of the student's choice, selected from the above list.

For students who choose the text-based path, the exam will focus on: 1) the essential texts; and 2) two texts of the student's choice, selected from the above list.

*Assessment criteria*: students will be assessed on the following: the a) completeness, b) relevance and c) correctness of their answers; and d) the appropriateness of their language. The answers to the open-ended questions will be given a mark from 0-3, based on the following criteria:

0 = missing or wrong answer

1 = answer with sporadic and unsystematically correct elements, overall mostly incorrect, irrelevant and ineffectively presented content.

2 = answer correctly contextualised with sufficient but incomplete content, and with some incorrect elements ineffectively or incompletely presented.

3 = correct, well presented, relevant and consistent answer.

In order to pass the exam, students will have to obtain at least a sufficient rating (equal to 1 mark) on all questions.

NOTES AND PREREQUISITES

A basic knowledge of cognitive and learning psychology and the main theoretical models of scientific psychology is required.

Should the current Covid-19 health emergency not allow face-to-face teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be communicated in good time 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.