# Psychological Expert Opinion on the Developmental Age

## Prof. Cecilia Ragaini

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

The course aims to provide students with the tools for understanding a court’s questions, as well as the assessments needed to provide an appropriate, comprehensive and unambiguous response.

For this purpose, students need to learn how to identify, in each specific situation, the methodology with which to assess relevant figures and most appropriate diagnostic testing tools.

At the end of the course, students will be able to analyse expert opinions, recognise the main areas which require in-depth study within different court situations.

In particular, students will have the necessary tools for implementing the assessment of a minor, beginning with observation and the completion of a psychiatric examination.

Students will also be able to identify the main areas of in-depth study concerning the assessment of parenting skills during a technical consultation.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course includes an initial introduction to the work of experts that contextualises the psychologist's clinical work within different legal frameworks.

The course will focus on the psychological examination of the minor, as a primary tool for evaluating and answering the Judge's questions. It will also briefly touch on the most commonly used tests in the clinical field that may have greater validity in the legal field.

The course will explore the specific aspects of technical advice in civil cases (whether for the Court of Law or the Juvenile Court) and of expert opinion in criminal cases where minors are an injured party or witnesses to an alleged crime. Starting with an analysis of the different questions, the course will examine the various clinical and procedural methods and conclude with the drafting of the expert's final report.

The assessment of minors will be integrated with the analysis of the observation of relational dynamics and of their qualities, also with respect to minors’ significant and attachment figures.

**Unit 1**

Framing the work of the clinical psychologist within the expert framework.

**Unit 2**

Psychodiagnostic evaluation of the minor: medical history, psychic examination, parent-child observation.

**Unit 3**

The court appointed expert witness in civil and criminal matters where minors are an injured party or witnesses to an alleged crime. Analysis of questions, evaluation tools and drafting of the expert report.

**Unit 4**

In-depth study on the evaluation of parental skills in the expert field.

***READING LIST***

***For the path based on the course contents***

L. Cursio, *Guida pratica alla consultazione psicodiagnostica in età evolutiva, nuove prassi cliniche e transculturali*, edizione aggiornata ed ampliata, Franco Angeli 2013 (Part One in full, Part Two only chs. 1-6).

S. Codognotto-T. Magro, *La testimonianza del minore. Strumenti e protocolli operativi,* Maggioli, 2012 (up to p. 160).

E. Manco, *Lo psicologo in tribunale: come effettuare una consulenza tecnica in separazioni, divorzi e affidamento di figli minori*, Psiconline, 2012 (from p. 9 to p. 103, Part One: Le fasi del processo di consulenza e la valutazione delle parti; from p. 207 to p. 296, Part Three: La stesura della relazione peritale).

*Buone pratiche per la valutazione della genitorialità: raccomandazioni per gli psicologi*, by the Order of Psychologists of Emilia Romagna, Pendragon, 2009 (chs. 1 to 6).

Slides and any materials provided during the course.

***For the text-based path***

M. Ammaniti (edited by), *Manuale di psicopatologia dell’infanzia,* Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 2001 (the following chapters: Chapter 2, La diagnosi in età infantile; Chapter 4, Genitorialità: situazioni a rischio e psicopatologiche; Chapter 5: Disturbi della regolazione; Chapter 6, Disturbi affettivi; Chapter 9, Disturbi del sonno; Chapter 10, Disturbi dell’attaccamento; Chapter 12, Disturbi post traumatici da stress e abusi; Chapter 13, Disturbi psicosomatici).

L. Cursio, *Guida pratica alla consultazione psicodiagnostica in età evolutiva, nuove prassi cliniche e transculturali*, updated and extended version, Franco Angeli 2013 (first Part in full, second Part only chs. 1-6).

S. Codognotto-T. Magro, *La testimonianza del minore. Strumenti e protocolli operativi,* Maggioli, 2012 (up to p. 160).

E. Manco, *Lo psicologo in tribunale: come effettuare una consulenza tecnica in separazioni, divorzi e affidamento di figli minori*, Psiconline, 2012 (da p. 9 a p. 103, Parte Prima: Le fasi del processo di consulenza e la valutazione delle parti; from p. 207 to p. 296, Part Three: La stesura della relazione peritale).

*Buone pratiche per la valutazione della genitorialità: raccomandazioni per gli psicologi*, a cura dell’Ordine degli psicologi dell’Emilia Romagna, Pendragon, 2009 (from Chapter 1 to 6).

Slides and any materials provided during the course.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures, videos of actual counselling with particular attention to the correct way to conduct a psychological examination, practical exercises in groups, reading of and commenting on actual counselling in class, analyses of test sets used in counselling.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

A written exam that will focus on the course contents, the texts and the topics indicated in the Faculty Guide published on the website www.unicatt.it in the appropriate section; there will be the possibility, at the request of the Exam Commission and/or the student, of an oral exam for a further in-depth evaluation and integration to be carried out according to the procedures established by the Commission.

*For the path based on the course contents*, the first part of the exam will focus on an excerpt from a consultation (observation of a minor, interview with a minor, or observation of a parent/child relationship); students will have the following half hour to compile the psychological examination of the minor observed.

The second part will last an hour and will consist of two open-ended written questions related to the exam syllabus, closed questions (multiple choice and true/false), and fill-ins.

*For the text-based path,* the *first part* of the exam will be an open-ended written question (time 20 minutes) on the supplementary Manual that students will have had to prepare.

The *second part* will be the same as that relating to the content-based path*,* will last one hour, and will consist of two open-ended written questions relating to the exam syllabus, closed questions (multiple choice and true/false), and fill-ins.

***Assessment criteria***

In assessing students’ learning, consideration will be given to the completeness, relevance and correctness of their answers, as well as the appropriateness of the language used.

The answers to the open-ended questions will be assigned a mark from 0 to 5 each

0 = missing or wrong answer

1 = answer highlighting only one or a few relevant elements of the investigation, with a prevalence of incorrect, irrelevant or ineffectively presented contents

2 = answer with various missing elements, relevant for content and formal purposes, only partially correct

3 = answer partially correct, not complete, sufficient in form or with inappropriate terminology

4 = correct answer, presented with coherence and relevance but incomplete or with inappropriate terminology

5 = complete answer in every aspect of the investigation, correct, reasoned, presented with consistency, relevance and with specific and appropriate terminology

The answers to the fill-ins will be assigned a mark from 0 to 3 each

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, some incorrect elements ineffectively or incompletely presented.

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

Multiple-choice questions will be assigned a mark of 0 or 1 depending on their correctness.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students should possess skills related to the psychology of development and basic knowledge of legislation regarding the protection of minors.

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](http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), or on the Faculty notice board.