# Psychology of Adoption, Foster Care and Family Enrichment

## Prof. Rosa Rosnati; Prof. Raffaella Iafrate

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

**Course aims**

The course aims to help students acquire both theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence regarding the forms of family reception, with particular reference to foster care and adoption, and the fundamental competencies and a number of instruments useful for the planning and carrying out of preventive interventions while accompanying couples and parents through different family transitions, in particular adoption and fostering.

**Intended learning outcomes**

*Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course students must be able to recognise the main results of research, understand the complexity of family situations with particular emphasis on adoption and foster care.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course, the student should be able to design intervention from the perspective of prevention and promotion during the different stages of supporting families with fostering and adoption.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course includes the discussion of theoretical perspectives, an overview of international research on foster care and adoption, and the presentation of some tools for getting to know family relationships and accompanying adoptive and foster families in the different phases of the process. In particular, Family Enrichment Pathways (FEP) and their application in foster care and adoption will be presented. The lecturers will alternate throughout the course, which will be divided into the following work units:

Unit 0: Introduction to the course: foundational aspects of Family Psychology

* Families with natural, adopted, foster children
* Resources and needs of families
* Family transitions, regulatory and non-regulatory critical events, needs and resources, development tasks

Unit 1: Foster care

* Parenting records
* Foster care: critical issues and development tasks
* Research: fostering as a critical event for its protagonists
* Intergenerational development tasks of relinquishing and fostering families
* Legal and psychological aspects regarding the protection of minors
* New forms of the family welcome

Unit 2: Adoption

* Adoption: theoretical references and development tasks. The construction of the adoptive pact
* Some statistical data on the trend of national and international adoptions
* Trends in adoption research
* Adoption: research on adaptation and recovery. Long-term results
* Adoption: adolescence, construction of ethnic identity.
* Research on family relationships
* Communicative openness on adoptive issues. The tools for accompaniment
* The search for origins
* Crises and adoption failures

Unit 3: Family enrichment and interventions for adoptive and foster families

* Prevention and enrichment
* From marital enrichment to Family Enrichment Pathways (FEP)
* The FEP: training modules
* Some examples of FEP
* Design and management of an enrichment intervention
* Conducting the opening and closing groups of a FEP
* Evaluation of FEPs
* Planning accompaniment pathways for adoptive and foster families

***READING LIST***

For the path based on lecture contents:

Students will prepare by studying the lecture notes and materials published on the Blackboard platform, supported by the following texts:

1. E. Scabini, G. Rossi, *Allargare lo spazio familiare: adozione e affido, Studi Interdisciplinari sulla famiglia*, n. 27, Vita e Pensiero, Milan.
2. R. Rosnati (ed. by), *Il legame adottivo. Contributi internazionali per la ricerca e l’intervento,* Unicopli, Milano, 2010chapp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9; the chapters remaining should be read-only).
3. L. Saviane, I. Comelli, *Affido familiare: sguardi e orizzonti dell’accoglienza,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2013.
4. Iafrate, R. Rosnati, *Riconoscersi genitori. I Percorsi di Promozione e Arricchimento del Legame Genitoriale,* Erickson, Trento, 2007.

For the text-based path

Students will prepare by studying the following texts:

1. E. Scabini-G. Rossi, *Allargare lo spazio familiare: adozione e affido,* Studi Interdisciplinari sulla famiglia, n. 27, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2014.
2. R. Rosnati (edited by), *Il legame adottivo. Contributi internazionali per la ricerca e l’intervento,* Unicopli, Milano, 2010 (capp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9; i restanti sola lettura).
3. L. Saviane-I. Comelli, *Affido familiare: sguardi e orizzonti dell’accoglienza,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2013.
4. R. Iafrate-R. Rosnati, *Riconoscersi genitori. I percorsi di promozione e arricchimento del legame genitoriale,* Erickson, Trento, 2007.
5. R. Iafrati-R. Rosnati-A. Bertoni, *Promuovere la generatività: i percorsi di promozione e arricchimento dei legami familiari,*in E. Scabini-G. Rossi (eds.), *Promuovere famiglia nella comunità,* Studi interdisciplinari sulla famiglia, n. 22, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2007, pages 113-140.
6. O. Greco-I. Comelli-R. Iafrate, *Tra le braccia un figlio non tuo. L’esperienza degli operatori e delle famiglie nell’affidamento di neonati,* Franco Angeli, Milano, 2011 (chapters 3-8).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures during which the different course subjects and assignments for small groups will be presented. In addition, video material will be shown and visiting professional experts will talk about their reported experiences.

Support material will be provided on Blackboard, which will prove useful for exam preparation.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Final assessment consists of a short reading text with open questions and an oral exam. Both exams should be taken on the same exam session.

1. The short written test consists of five open-ended questions. To gain admission to the oral exam, students must have passed and obtained a level of sufficiency in at least 4 of the 5 questions.

2. The oral test consists of an interview.

In the written test students should demonstrate knowledge of the content and key concepts of the subject. In the oral interview students should show that they are able to navigate the topics and basic issues discussed during lectures. Students will be assessed on their understanding of the topics, their understanding of cases, while taking into consideration the complexity and identify the resources and ultimately design appropriate interventions.

Assessment will also be based on the appropriate use of specific terminology, the relevance of the answers, the structure of students’ arguments and discourse consistency, students’ ability to identify connections between theoretical aspects and real cases, the ability to design interventions which are consistent with both requirements and resources.

The five open-ended questions in the written test will carry the same number of marks and will be expressed in thirtieths.

The oral test can lead to an increase or decrease in the evaluation of the written test in a range that varies from 0 to (+/-) 3 points.

The single, final mark will consider the written test and the oral interview.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students should have prior knowledge of the basic notions of social psychology of the family and group psychology: students who do not possess prerequisites will be given a specific reading list with additional material.

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.