History of Psychological Thought

## Prof. Nicolò Maria Gaj

COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The main aim of the course is to provide students with the basic tools for understanding the historical development of the main theoretical currents present in psychology, from its birth as an empirical science to the present day. The adoption of the historiographical perspective aims to highlight the theoretical and methodological articulations that characterise the guidelines considered, allowing us to grasp the conceptual evolution of the discipline over time. The course will conclude with the in-depth study of a topic, which this year concerns introspection in the history of psychology.

*Knowledge and understanding*: At the end of the course, students will be able to know and describe the main theoretical orientations of twentieth-century psychology, grasp its conceptual and methodological specificities, examine its dimensions of mutual continuity and discontinuity, and appreciate its relevance within the current structure of the discipline. This year's in-depth study will allow students to investigate the historical and conceptual evolution of introspection, one of the key notions of psychology.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*: Students will be able to place the theoretical currents examined within the historical evolution, as well as analyse the different psychological models. These reflections will allow them to approach the study of the discipline with autonomy of judgment.

COURSE CONTENT

The course syllabus includes the study of direct sources. Through the critical reading of the authors' texts, the historical development of the discipline will be reconstructed, with particular regard to the theoretical and methodological dimensions. Specifically, the programme is divided as follows:

MODULE 1: *The Origins of the Discipline as an Empirical Science*

*Unit 1*: G.T. Fechner, the mind-body relationship and psychophysics

*Unit 2*: W. W. Wundt, the statute of psychology and introspection

*Unit 3*: W. James and the stream of consciousness

*Unit 4*: E. Titchener and J. R. Angell: structural psychology vs. functional psychology

*Unit 5*: F. Brentano and the classification of psychic phenomena

MODULE 2: *Physiological Psychology*

*Unit 1*: I. P. Pavlov and the conditioned reflex

*Unit 2*: K. Lashley and the fundamental nervous mechanisms of behaviour

*Unit 3*: The rise of the neuroscientific perspective

MODULE 3: *The Phenomenological Approach and the Theory of Form*

*Unit 1*: W. Köhler: the theory of Gestalt

*Unit 2*: M. Wertheimer and productive thinking

*Unit 3*:K. Lewin and the structure of the mind

MODULE 4: *Psychoanalysis*

*Unit 1*: S. Freud and the foundations of psychoanalytic theory

*Unit 2*:The influence of psychoanalytic thought on psychology and society

MODULE 5: *Behaviourism*

*Unit 1*: J. Watson and psychology from the behaviourist's point of view

*Unit 2*: B. F. Skinner: two types of conditioned reflex

*Unit 3*: E. Tolman: the notions of purpose and cognition in the behavioural field

MODULE 6: *The Birth of the Psychometric Perspective*

*Unit 1*: A. Binet and individual psychology

*Unit 2*: C. Spearman and the two-factor theory of intelligence

MODULE 7: *Cognitivism*

*Unit 1*: F. Bartlett and the concept of "schema"

*Unit 2*: U. Neisser and the human-computer analogy

MODULE 8: *Social Constructionism*

*Unit 1*: J. Bruner: the worlds of Nelson Goodman

*Unit 2*: K. Gergen: from language games to possible worlds

MODULE 9: *Introspection in the History of Psychology*

*Unit 1*: Introspection in empirical and experimental psychology between 1800 and 1900

*Unit 2*: Introspection, Gestalt and Behaviourism

*Unit 3*: Eclipse and survival of introspection: psychoanalysis and beyond

READING LIST

Gaj, N. (2023). *Storia del pensiero psicologico. L’introspezione nella storia della psicologia*. Anthology of texts available at the Press Centre, Largo Gemelli 1.

TEACHING METHOD

The course includes classroom lectures with the support of slides and discussions on specific topics. In addition to the frontal lectures, the course includes 6 hours of practical activities (such as group work, case studies and simulations) aimed at enhancing students' learning and their involvement with the course material.

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

A written exam consisting of four open-ended questions. Each answer will be assigned a mark from 0 (fail) to 30, while the overall mark will be based on the average of the marks obtained for the four answers. The exam is aimed at assessing the degree to which the student has managed to assimilate the contents of the course and grasp the theoretical and methodological specificities of the guidelines analysed, as well as their mutual relationship within the historical development of the discipline. To this end, the exam will assess the student's ability to present the contents learned, to identify key conceptual nodes and to critically analyse the problems posed in the scientific development of the discipline.

The results of the practical activities will be subject to a final assessment according to methods specified in class.

NOTES AND PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, an interest and intellectual curiosity in the course topics is assumed.

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