

| <b>Title of subject: Special Course – The Autism Spectrum</b>  |                       |   |  |   |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Credits:</b><br>2   | <b>Semester:</b><br>2 | <b>Number of lessons per week:</b><br>2 | <b>Type:</b><br><u>Lecture</u><br>Seminar<br>Practical | <b>Appraisal:</b><br><u>Examination</u><br>Practical mark |
| <p><b>Description of the subject:</b><br/>The main aim of the course is to give a concise but broad-scope introduction to our fundamental knowledge on autism spectrum disorders and their broader phenotype (together: the autism spectrum [ASp]), with a specific emphasis on results of neurocognitive studies from the last decade and their relevance on clinical theory and practice.</p> <p><b>Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essentials of history of concepts and theories on autism and AS. Central models of conceptualizing autism and AS.</li> <li>• Definition, diagnostic categories, diagnostic procedures, behavioral characteristics, developmental aspects, variations, endophenotyping.</li> <li>• Epidemiology and etiology. Genetic susceptibility and environmental risk factors.</li> <li>• Psychological theorizing on autism and ASp. From early low-level single-mechanism hypothesis to recent multi-factorial explanatory models. Mapping autistic cognition to autistic behaviour.</li> <li>• Neural and neurodevelopmental aspects. Brain development trajectories, local and global connectivity issues, cortical activity regulation issues. Mapping autistic brain to autistic cognition.</li> <li>• Beyond diagnostic categories: ASp and studies on the broader phenotype.</li> <li>• Basics on treatment. Early recognition, early intervention, psycho-educational approaches, support into adulthood.</li> <li>• Perspectives beyond developmental psychology: illustrations from human rights issues, assistive technologies and the issue of autistic talent.</li> </ul> <p>For credit, students have to demonstrate a firm knowledge on the central concepts in relation to autism and ASp, including all the above aspects from topics (1)-(7), with a special emphasis on causal models, cognition-behaviour mapping, and their relevance to principles of clinical practice and treatment.</p> |                       |   |  |   |
| <p><b>Required readings:</b><br/>Boucher, J. (2008). <i>The Autistic Spectrum: Characteristics, Causes and Practical Issues</i>. Basingstoke: SAGE.<br/>Matson, J. L., &amp; Sturmey, P. (Eds.) (2011). <i>International Handbook of Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders</i>. New York: Springer.<br/>Volkmar, F., Paul, R., Klin, A., &amp; D. Cohen (Eds.) (2005). <i>Handbook of Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders</i>. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.<br/>Wing, L. (1996). <i>The autistic spectrum. A guide for parents and professionals</i>. London: Constable.</p>  |                       |   |  |   |