

Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Welfare and Social Policy in a Changing Economy: Actors, Institutions, and Transformations
Course Code	27301
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-08/A
Language	English
Degree Course	Bachelor in Economics, Politics and Ethics
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	dr. Michela Giovannini, Michela.Giovannini@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/home/research/competence-centre-management-cooperatives/team/person//50283
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
Course Year/s	Free choice
CP	6
Teaching Hours	36
Lab Hours	6
Individual Study Hours	-
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	<p>This course explores the evolution, structure, and challenges of welfare systems in contemporary capitalist societies, with a specific focus on the interplay between economic dynamics, political institutions, and civil society. Drawing from economic sociology and comparative welfare studies, it analyzes how social policies respond to old and new social risks, how welfare is produced by a plurality of actors (state, market, third sector), and how these processes shape—and are shaped by—economic and social transformations.</p> <p>Special attention is given to European welfare regimes, social</p>

	investment strategies, and the growing role of social enterprises and hybrid organizations in the provision of welfare. Students will be encouraged to critically assess the changing configurations of the welfare state and to connect theoretical concepts with real-world case studies and policy debates.
Course Topics	<p>1. Introduction to Welfare and Social Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions, scope, and relevance in economic and political systems • The role of social policies in addressing inequalities and market failures <p>2. Historical Evolution of Welfare States</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From industrial welfare to the post-war European welfare state • The golden age and the restructuring of welfare under globalization <p>3. Theories of Welfare and Welfare Regimes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esping-Andersen and beyond: varieties of capitalism and welfare production • Institutional and economic sociology approaches • Measuring welfare: from GDP to Human Development Index (HDI), social determinants of health and well-being indicators <p>4. Social Risks and Policy Responses in the 21st Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old and new social risks: ageing, migration, precarization, climate change • Policy trends: activation, social investment, conditionality <p>5. The Changing Architecture of Welfare Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare mix: public, private, non-profit, and informal actors • From government to governance: networks, partnerships, and co-production <p>6. The Role of Third Sector and Social Economy Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social enterprises, cooperatives, NGOs: economic actors with social missions • Hybridization, accountability, and sustainability challenges <p>7. Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal constraints, digitalization, environmental transitions • Debates on universal basic income, care economy, and post-growth welfare
Keywords	welfare systems, social justice, health systems, gender studies, social economy organizations
Recommended Prerequisites	None

Propaedeutic Courses	None
Teaching Format	Lectures, group work, guided discussions
Mandatory Attendance	Recommended, but not mandatory
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	<p>ILO (Intended Learning Outcomes)</p> <p>ILO 1 Applying knowledge and understanding</p> <p>ILO 1.1 ability to understand the role of governments in market economies;</p> <p>ILO 1.2 ability to historically contextualise economic thinking and assess the role of technology and social change on the evolution of economic thinking;</p> <p>ILO 1.3 ability to understand how policy choices are formulated and how these decisions affect the economy</p> <p>ILO 2 Ability to apply knowledge and understanding</p> <p>2.1 ability to understand the role of the state in relation to different political-economic issues and to weigh up possible solutions in the political-economic field</p> <p>ILO 3 Making judgements</p> <p>ILO 3.1 Acquisition of the capacity for judgement and methodological tools useful for the critical analysis of data, sources, assumptions and implications of scientific practice, of the political, ethical and legal context within which economic phenomena are set and with which they interact</p> <p>ILO 4 Communication skills</p> <p>ILO 4.1 Fluency (oral and written) in Italian, German and English, including translation between these languages. Intercultural competence. Conceptual awareness, ability to summarise and express oneself in writing, particularly in the drafting of scientific or science-based documents</p> <p>ILO 5 Learning skills</p> <p>ILO 5.1 Promotion of critical thinking and analytical skills to focus on complex problems in their long-term dynamics and the variety</p>

	of their implications, including ethical ones
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	<p>This course explores the evolution, structure, and challenges of welfare systems in contemporary capitalist societies, with a specific focus on the interplay between economic dynamics, political institutions, and civil society. Drawing from economic sociology and comparative welfare studies, it analyzes how social policies respond to old and new social risks, how welfare is produced by a plurality of actors (state, market, third sector), and how these processes shape—and are shaped by—economic and social transformations.</p> <p>Special attention is given to European welfare regimes, social investment strategies, and the growing role of social enterprises and hybrid organizations in the provision of welfare. Students will be encouraged to critically assess the changing configurations of the welfare state and to connect theoretical concepts with real-world case studies and policy debates.</p>
Assessment	<p>The final grade will be based on two components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam (70%) with open questions (ILO 1,2,3,4,5) • Group presentation (30%) (ILO 1,2,3,4,5) <p>Students will work in small groups to prepare a presentation on a topic related to the course.</p>
Evaluation Criteria	<p>The written exam evaluates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Personal understanding and re-elaboration of course content o The ability to construct coherent and well-argued responses o Critical reflection and clarity of written expression <p>Presentations will be assessed based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Relevance and depth of content o Ability to apply theoretical concepts to real-world cases or data o Clarity, structure, and teamwork in delivery
Required Readings	<p>Selected chapters from: Daniel, B., Morgan, K. J., Obinger, H., & Pierson, C. (Eds.). (2021). <i>The Oxford handbook of the welfare state</i>. Oxford University Press.</p>
Supplementary Readings	<p>Additional readings will be handed out during the course</p>
Further Information	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>No poverty, Partnerships for the goals, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth,</p>

	Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate action, Life below water, Life on land, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Zero hunger
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