

Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Social Work and Welfare Systems in Transition
Course Code	53146
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A
Language	German; Italian
Degree Course	Master in Social Work and Social Policy
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	Prof. Dr. Urban Nothdurfter, Urban.Nothdurfter2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/17145 Prof. Marco Accorinti, Marco.Accorinti@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/38180
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	1
CP	12
Teaching Hours	72
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	228
Planned Office Hours	36
Contents Summary	Comparative analysis of welfare models, institutional contexts, and reform dynamics. Focus on social justice and systemic transformation.
Course Topics	The course combines two modules: one on the comparative analysis of welfare systems and one on theories, ethics and research in social work.

	The broadened and comparative perspective enables critical engagement with social policy and social work in the context of the shifting orientation, structure, and legitimation of welfare systems. Rather than in isolation, questions concerning the role of social work and its scientific and normative foundations are discussed in connection with broader societal developments, welfare traditions, and policy contexts.
Keywords	Welfare systems, social policy, social work;
Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	Lecture, presentations, discussion
Mandatory Attendance	In accordance with the regulation
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	- Develop frameworks for system classification - Evaluate policy reform trajectories - Decode intersectional inequality mechanisms - Analyze: European welfare models using qualitative and quantitative comparison methods - Design: reform proposals considering demographic trends - Evaluate: social systems through intersectional justice criteria - Integrate: digital innovations into social interventions - Understand and apply social work theories - Reflect on and implement ethical principles in practice - Master social work research methods - Develop a critical stance on professionalization - Analyze: theoretical concepts and ethical issues in social work - Evaluate: ethical dilemmas and professionalization processes - Design: rigorous research frameworks - Apply: ethical principles in complex practical cases
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	
Assessment	Presentations, written assignments, written and oral exam
Evaluation Criteria	Knowledge of the course content Argumentation, presentation, and academic writing skills Critical and reflective thinking, particularly regarding the

	transformation of welfare systems and their impact on social work Comparative approach and sensitivity to differences between local, national, and transnational contexts Awareness of the normative and democratic implications of policy decisions and professional attitudes and practices
Required Readings	see module descriptions
Supplementary Readings	
Further Information	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	No poverty, Good health and well-being, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Reduced inequalities, Gender equality

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Comparative Analysis of Welfare Systems
Course Code	53146A
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A
Language	Italian
Lecturers	Prof. Marco Accorinti, Marco.Accorinti@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/38180
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	6
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	36
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	114
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	Comparative Analysis of Welfare Systems: Models, Historical Evolution, and Institutional Framework in the European Context. Focus on Social Equality and Reform Processes.
Course Topics	Analysis of social policy tools, multi-level governance, and

	financing models. Case studies on Nordic, Continental, and Mediterranean systems. Analysis of globalization effects and demographic shifts on welfare architectures.
Teaching Format	Lectures also with the aid of learning platform.
Required Readings	Kees Van Kersbergen and Barbara Vis Vu, Comparative Welfare State. Politics Development, Opportunities, and Reform, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014
Supplementary Readings	

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Social Work Theories, Ethics and Research
Course Code	53146B
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A
Language	German
Lecturers	Prof. Dr. Urban Nothdurfter, Urban.Nothdurfter2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/17145
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	6
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	36
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	114
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	Introduction to theories, ethical principles, and research methods in social work. Focus on professionalism, ethical competence, and critical reflection.
Course Topics	The course addresses central theoretical, ethical, and methodological foundations and interconnections in social work at an advanced level.

	At its core is a critical engagement with the production, application, and anchoring of knowledge within the profession and discipline as well as in the wider context of societal transformations. The course explores both classical and contemporary theoretical approaches, ethical foundations, and research perspectives in social work. Particular attention is given to how knowledge in social work has been and continues to be (re)produced, legitimized, hegemonized, marginalized, or instrumentalized within historical and current power structures.
Teaching Format	Lecture, close readings, presentations, discussion
Required Readings	Köttig, M., Kubisch, S., & Spatscheck, C. (2023). <i>Geteiltes Wissen–Wissensentwicklung in Disziplin und Profession Sozialer Arbeit</i> (p. 328). Verlag Barbara Budrich. Hammerschmidt, P., & Stecklina, G. (2022). <i>Klassische Theorien der Sozialen Arbeit</i>. Beltz Juventa. Hammerschmidt, P., Aner, K., & Weber, S. (2019). <i>Zeitgenössische Theorien Sozialer Arbeit</i>. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa. Lambers, H. (2018). <i>Theorien der Sozialen Arbeit: Ein Kompendium und Vergleich</i>. utb GmbH. Engelke, E., Borrmann, S., & Spatscheck, C. (2025). <i>Theorien der Sozialen Arbeit: eine Einführung</i>. Lambertus-Verlag. 8. Auflage Franz, J., & Unterkofler, U. (Eds.). (2021). <i>Forschungsethik in der Sozialen Arbeit: Prinzipien und Erfahrungen</i>. Verlag Barbara Budrich. Hölscher, D., Hugman, R., & McAuliffe, D. (Eds.). (2023). <i>Social work theory and ethics: Ideas in practice</i>. Springer Nature. Payne, M. (2021). <i>Modern social work theory</i>. Bloomsbury Publishing. 5th edition Healy, K. (2022). <i>Social work theories in context: Creating frameworks for practice</i>. Bloomsbury Publishing. Marson, S., & McKinney, J. (Eds.). (2019). <i>The Routledge handbook of social work ethics and values</i>. Routledge. Payne, M., & Reith-Hall, E. (Eds.). (2019). <i>The Routledge handbook of social work theory</i>. Routledge.

	Shaw, I., Orme, J., & Briar-Lawson, K. (Eds.) (2009). <i>The SAGE handbook of social work research</i>. Sage. Joubert, L., & Webber, M. (Eds.). (2020). <i>The Routledge handbook of social work practice research</i>. Routledge. Kleibl, T., Lutz, R., Noyoo, N., Bunk, B., Dittmann, A., & Seepamore, B. (Eds.). (2019). <i>The Routledge handbook of postcolonial social work</i>. Routledge. Sansfaçon, A. P., & Cowden, S. (2025). <i>The ethical foundations of social work</i>. Routledge.
Supplementary Readings	Additional literature and working materials will be communicated or provided during the course.