

Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Fundamentals of Social Work and Social Policy
Course Code	51121
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A
Language	English; German
Degree Course	Bachelor in Social Work
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	Prof. Dr. Urban Nothdurfter, Urban.Nothdurfter2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/17145 dr. Maria Chiara Pedroni, MariaChiara.Pedroni@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/48833
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	1
CP	11
Teaching Hours	66
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	209
Planned Office Hours	33
Contents Summary	The course introduces the foundations of social work and social policy. FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK: This module introduces key concepts, theories, and ethical foundations of social work. It focuses on social work as a profession and academic discipline, its functions, mandates, and

	fields of action, as well as questions of professionalization and the political dimension of social work. SOCIAL POLICY: This module aims at introducing students to the fundamentals of the welfare state, its developments in a comparative perspective, its recent trends and current dilemmas. The interplay of family, market and state in welfare provision is also comparatively addressed. The main areas of social policy are introduced.
Course Topics	SOCIAL POLICY Part 1 – Fundamentals: Social problems, their stratification in society and during the life course. Rationale for public intervention and for the welfare state. Historical developments of the welfare state in Western Europe. The interplay of family, market and the state in welfare provision. Different national trajectories and welfare regimes. Recent trends and major challenges. Part 2 – Introduction to the main social policy areas: Care and long-term care; Education; Family; Health, Housing; Labour market; Pension system; Poverty & Income Maintenance; Social assistance; Social Exclusion. Part 3 – Cross-cutting themes: Gender and generations in contemporary welfare systems; Not-for-profit sector; Globalization and welfare systems; Social and political sustainability of the welfare state.
Keywords	Social Policy, Welfare Regimes, Welfare State.
Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	Frontal lectures, short exercises and case studies, discussion in class.
Mandatory Attendance	In accordance with the regulation
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	SOCIAL POLICY The module provides students with foundational knowledge of social policy and the welfare state, their historical development, main institutional arrangements, and transformations. Particular attention is given to different welfare models and to the respective

	roles of the state, market, family, and other actors in the provision of welfare. The module introduces students to key areas of social policy and to contemporary social, economic, and demographic challenges affecting welfare systems. A particular educational objective is to enable students to understand social policies not only as specific programmes and interventions but also as institutional arrangements that shape social rights, patterns of inequality, opportunities for social participation, and responses to social needs. Through comparative perspectives, students develop the ability to recognise differences between welfare systems and to critically reflect on how social policies address changing social problems and needs. Expected learning outcomes Upon successful completion of the module, students will be able to: • explain key concepts, principles, and historical developments of social policy and the welfare state; • identify and compare major welfare state models and different arrangements for the provision of welfare; • describe and analyse the roles of the state, market, family, and other actors in welfare provision; • identify key areas of social policy and explain their main objectives, instruments, and institutional characteristics; • recognise and discuss major contemporary challenges and transformations affecting welfare states and social policies; • apply basic concepts and analytical perspectives of social policy to the analysis of social problems and policy responses in different contexts; • use relevant social policy concepts and terminology appropriately when discussing and analysing social policy issues.
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	Knowledge and understanding: Basic knowledge and understanding of social work as a profession and discipline, its mandates, theories, and scientific as well as ethical foundations. Basic understanding of fundamental social policy fields and issues; knowledge of welfare arrangements, traditions, and models; main current developments and challenges. Applying knowledge and understanding: Application of the acquired knowledge when dealing with social issues and policy

	challenges, as well as concerning the practice of social work. Making judgments: Development of professional analysis and reflection skills, as well as the ability to critically assess how social (policy) issues are dealt with and managed in social work. Communication skills: Development of language and skills for professional and academic communication and argumentation. Learning skills: Systematic acquisition of the fundamentals in social work and social policy; and their utilization in reflexivity and discussion. Ability to address new themes in these fields, using reference resources.
Assessment	SOCIAL POLICY Two different assessment routes are offered for the module Social Policy: 1. Standard assessment (all students), in two steps: 1.1. Individual project work (50% of the final marks): 3-4 pages mini-essay, with critical reflections, to be delivered not later than 7 days before the exam. The theme can be selected by the students from a list of subjects prepared by the instructor (with a couple of short related readings). The list will be available in the Reserve Collection at the start of the course; 1.2. Final written test (50% of the final marks): 30-40 minutes test that includes closed-ended multiple choice questions and a few short open-ended questions. 2. Attending students (who has attended 50% of the lectures at least), may choose the following 3 steps assessment procedure: 2.1. Individual project work (50% of the final marks), as specified for the standard assessment; 2.2. Final written test (25% of the final marks): 30-40 minutes test as specified for the standard assessment; 2.3. Active participation in class (25% of the final marks). It includes the discussion of a few preparatory readings and case studies. Important notes both the assessment routes:

	A positive evaluation of both the individual project and the final written test is needed in order to pass the exam, irrespective of the overall weighted average marks attained. Please also note that – given the mentioned educational objectives and the simple tasks required in the development of the final project work – the use of generative artificial intelligence tools is not allowed. The lecturer reserves the right to complement the assessment procedure with an oral discussion in order to assess the real contribution of the student to the materials submitted for assessment.
Evaluation Criteria	SOCIAL POLICY In general, what is evaluated is the acquisition of the module contents as well as their understanding and reflexive application in relation to current questions and problems. Evaluation criteria are as follows: 1. In the individual project's mini essay, attention is paid to: 1.1 proper reference to specialist literature and the module contents, and to the ability to summarise the texts considered in the project and other contents (40% of the evaluation); 1.2. the ability to offer a critical discussion of the texts considered – and of possible other reference literature - and to link the latter to other contents of the module (40% of the evaluation). 1.3. the ability to write with a logical structure and clear argumentation (20% of the evaluation). 2. In the written test (closed-ended and open-ended questions) attention is paid to knowledge of the module key themes and concepts, on the accuracy and the ability to evaluate alternative understanding of concepts, as shown in the ability to correctly answer the test questions (100% of the evaluation). 3. Attendance is a prerequisite for participation in class. In active participation, attention is paid to: 3.1. contribution to the critical discussion in class of a few preparatory readings (25% of the evaluation); 3.2. contribution to the critical discussion in class of a few case studies (25% of the evaluation); 3.3. contribution to the critical discussion in class on the module

	topics and key concepts, in general (25% of the evaluation); 3.4. the ability to make connections between themes and concepts discussed in the module (25% of the evaluation). 4. An oral discussion, may complement the assessment of the project's mini essay. The evaluation would be driven by the criteria discussed at point 1 and would be focused on assessing the authorship and originality of the miny essay submitted.
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, Decent work and economic growth, Reduced inequalities, Gender equality

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Fundamentals in Social Work
Course Code	51121A
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	FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK: This module introduces key concepts, theories, and ethical

	foundations of social work. It focuses on social work as a profession and academic discipline, its functions, mandates, and fields of action, as well as questions of professionalization and the socio-political dimension of social work practice.
Course Topics	The course offers a foundational introduction to social work as a profession and academic discipline, equipping students with knowledge and skills for critical engagement and theory based reflection on key themes and core challenges. First, the course addresses definitions and concepts, developments, functions, mandates, and recurring tensions in social work. Students gain an overview of developmental trajectories, professionalisation processes, and fields of practice, learning to understand social work as both a professional activity and a scientific field. A further focus lies on the theoretical and academic foundations of social work, including its key theories, the role of related disciplines, and questions of knowledge forms, as well as the critical and participatory production and application of knowledge in professional contexts. The course also introduces the ethics of social work, addressing normative foundations and ethical principles, highlighting different ethical approaches, and fostering ethical reflection and decision making as core aspects of professional competence. Special emphasis will be placed on fostering an awareness of the political dimension of social work. Course content will be critically examined within the broader context of social issues and social policy dynamics, with a focus on the challenges inherent in professional practice at the intersection of political entanglements and the pursuit of social justice.
Teaching Format	Lectures, exercises, discussion
Required Readings	Graßhoff, G., Renker, A. & Schröer, W. (Hrsg.) (2018). <i>Soziale Arbeit: Eine elementare Einführung</i>. Springer VS. Thole, W. (Hrsg.) (2012). <i>Grundriss Soziale Arbeit: Ein einführendes Handbuch</i>. Springer VS, 4. Auflage.

	Fargion S. (2009). <i>Il servizio sociale. Storia, temi e dibattiti</i>. Laterza. Gray, M., Midgley, J., Webb, St. A. (eds.) (2012). <i>The SAGE Handbook of Social Work</i>. SAGE.
Supplementary Readings	Kessl, F., Kruse, E., Stövesand, S., & Thole, W. (2017). <i>Soziale Arbeit: Kernthemen und Problemfelder</i>. UTB. Cloos, P., Lochner, B. & Schoneville, H. (2020). <i>Soziale Arbeit als Projekt: Konturierungen von Disziplin und Profession</i>. Springer VS. Lambers, H. (2023). <i>Theorien Sozialer Arbeit. Ein Kompendium und Vergleich</i>. UTB. Hammerschmidt, P. & Stecklina, G. (2022). <i>Klassische Theorien Sozialer Arbeit</i>. Beltz Juventa. Hammerschmidt, P., Aner, K. & Weber, S. (2019). <i>Zeitgenössische Theorien Sozialer Arbeit</i>. Beltz Juventa. Hölscher, D., Hugman, R. & McAuliffe, D. (2023). <i>Social Work Theory and Ethics</i>. Springer. Healy, K. (2022). <i>Social work theories in context: creating frameworks for practice</i>. Bloomsbury. Sansfaçon, A. P., & Cowden, S. (2025). <i>The ethical foundations of social work</i>. Routledge. Fazzi, L. (2017). <i>Teoria e pratica del servizio sociale: un'introduzione</i>. Franco Angeli. Sanfelici, M. (2024). <i>Fondamenti del servizio sociale anti-oppressivo</i>. Carocci. Detailed information on the selected literature and study materials for the individual thematic areas and teaching units will be provided at the beginning of the course and made available on the OLE learning platform.

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Social Policy
Course Code	51121B
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A

Language	English
Lecturers	dr. Maria Chiara Pedroni, MariaChiara.Pedroni@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/48833
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	5
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	95
Planned Office Hours	15
Contents Summary	This course provides an introduction to the main concepts and theoretical perspectives of social policy, examining its historical development, normative foundations, and role in promoting well-being, social citizenship, and social justice. Particular attention is devoted to the emergence and development of the welfare state, the different configurations of welfare systems, and the major transformations that have shaped social policy in recent decades, with reference to processes of globalization, demographic, economic, and political change, as well as the challenges posed by growing social inequalities. The course also explores some of the main areas of social policy intervention, including poverty reduction, social protection, health, long-term care, and social assistance systems. By the end of the course, students will have acquired the conceptual tools necessary to understand the functioning of welfare systems, interpret their transformations, and critically analyse social policies in different national and international contexts.
Course Topics	- Introduction to social policy: concepts, definitions, and theoretical perspectives - Historical development of social policy and the welfare state - Welfare state models and welfare regimes

	-Contemporary transformations of welfare systems -Social inequalities and poverty -Pension systems -Health and long-term care policies -Social assistance and personal social services
Teaching Format	Lectures, discussions
Required Readings	Alcock, P., Haux, T. McCall, V. & May, M. (2022). <i>The Student's Companion to Social Policy 6th edition</i>. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 9781119744870 Béland, D., Leibfried S., Morgan, K.J., Obinger, H. & Pierson C. (2021). <i>The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State</i> 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780198828389.
Supplementary Readings	Further information and literature can be provided at the beginning of the course.