

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. Teresio Poggio, Teresio.Poggio@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/32847
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 WORK 1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION AND DISCIPLINE Definitions; Development; Functions; Mandates; Fields of Action; Profession and Discipline. 2. THEORIES AND SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS Theories of Social Work; Reference Disciplines; Forms of Knowledge and Knowledge Production. 3. ETHICS OF SOCIAL WORK Values and basic principles; Professional ethics; Codes of ethics; Ethical competence. 4. PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONALIZATION 5. SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY 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, Housing; Labour market; Poverty & Income Maintenance; Social assistance; Social Exclusion.

	Part 3 – Cross-cutting themes: Gender and generations in contemporary welfare systems; Globalization and welfare systems; Social and political sustainability of the welfare state.
Keywords	Social work as a profession and discipline, social work theories, social work ethics, professionalism, social work and social policy. 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 WORK The module imparts basic knowledge about social work as a profession and discipline as well as about its social and socio-political embeddedness. Students deal with central terms, theoretical and scientific foundations, professional mandates, ethical principles as well as questions of professionalism and professionalisation. A special educational goal is to understand social work and social policy in their mutual context. Students should recognise how socio-political framework conditions shape social problems, social rights and support services and at the same time structure possibilities for action, tasks and areas of tension in professional social work. The module thus creates a basis for the reflexive examination of professional action in the broader social, institutional and political context. Expected learning outcomes Upon successful completion of the module, students will be able to: • describe central terms, functions, mandates and fields of action of social work and classify social work as a profession and scientific discipline; • explain basic theories of social work as well as the importance of reference disciplines, different forms of knowledge and scientific knowledge production; • to name central values, ethical principles and professional ethical foundations of social work and to reflect on their significance for professional action; • explain the basic characteristics of professionalism and

	professionalisation processes in social work and recognise the areas of tension associated with them; • Establish connections between social problems, socio-political framework conditions and the tasks and possibilities for action of social work. 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 interplay of family, market, state and other actors in welfare provision. The module introduces students to some of the key areas of social policy and to some of the main challenges to 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, inequality in society and - all in all - individual life chances. Through the adopted 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 welfare provision; • describe and analyse the interplay of the family, market, state 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 WORK The course aims to promote an active role of the students in the development of the topics and in the design of learning processes. Accordingly, different methods and instruments for monitoring learning success are provided. WRITTEN EXAM Closed and open questions about the content of the course (An open additional question for students who do not attend the course) WRITTEN ELABORATION ON A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE Detailed instructions are provided on OLE. Length: 2,500 words (3,500 words for students who do not attend the course)

	ETHICAL CASE REFLECTION Detailed instructions are provided on OLE. Length: 1000 words (1,500 words for students who do not attend the course) ORAL EXAM Also for students attending the event: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE COURSE SOCIAL POLICY Two different assessment routes are offered for the module Social Policy: 1. Standard assessment (all students), in two steps: 1.1. Final written test in class (50% of the final marks) - part 1: essay to be developed by the student in 90 minutes, on a theme that can be selected out of three themes proposed by the Instructor. 1.2. Final written test in class (50% of the final marks) - part 2: 30 minutes test that includes closed-ended multiple choice questions. 2. Attending students (who has attended 50% of the lectures at least), may choose the following 3 steps assessment procedure: 2.1. Final written test in class (40% of the final marks) - part 1: essay to be developed by the student in 90 minutes, on a theme that can be selected out of three themes proposed by the Instructor. 2.2. Final written test in class (40% of the final marks) - part 2: 30 minutes test that includes closed-ended multiple choice questions. 2.3. Active participation in class (20% of the final marks). It includes the discussion of a few preparatory readings and case studies. Important notes on both the assessment routes: A positive evaluation of both parts of 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 module activities and exam – the use of generative artificial intelligence tools is not allowed.
Evaluation Criteria	SOCIAL WORK The written exam serves to test knowledge and understanding of the content of the course. Knowledge and understanding are evaluated. The written elaboration on a theoretical perspective serves the independent and in-depth examination and discussion of a theory perspective chosen by the students. Attention to the rules of scientific work, reference to specialist literature, ability to summarise and argue, understanding the use and benefits of theories are assessed. Ethical case reflection serves the application-oriented reflection of ethical questions and dilemmas. Ethical argumentation, reflection and judgement are evaluated. The oral examination serves to discuss the examination achievements already completed and offers the opportunity for questioning, explanation and final reflection. Knowledge, understanding, argumentation and communication skills are assessed. The evaluation of active participation in the course takes into account attentive and interactive participation as well as preparation, discussion and critical reflection of the content covered. Weighting of the examination elements for students attending the course: WRITTEN EXAM 20% WRITTEN ELABORATION ON A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE 20% ETHICAL CASE REFLECTION 20% ORAL EXAM 20% ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE COURSE 20% Weighting of the examination elements for students who do NOT attend the course:

	WRITTEN EXAM 30% WRITTEN ELABORATION ON A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE 20% ETHICAL CASE REFLECTION 20% ORAL EXAM 30% 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 first part of the written test (essay): 1.1 proper reference to specialist literature and the module contents related to the theme selected, and to the ability to summarise the relevant contents of the module (40% of the evaluation); 1.2. the ability to offer a critical discussion on the theme selected and to link the theme to other contents of the module, as relevant (40% of the evaluation). 1.3. the ability to write with a logical structure and clear argumentation (20% of the evaluation). 2. In the second part of the written test (closed-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 only a prerequisite for participation in class. In the evaluation of 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).
Required Readings	see module descriptions

Supplementary Readings	
Further Information	SOCIAL POLICY Please refer to the module dedicated Open Learning Environment (OLE) for further module resources and information. Handouts for each lecture will be available soon after class. https://ole.unibz.it/course/view.php?id=13450
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</i>

	<i>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. Teresio Poggio, Teresio.Poggio@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/32847
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	The module Social Policy 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	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 some of the main social policy areas: Care and long-term care; Education; Family; Housing; Labour market; Poverty & Income Maintenance; Social assistance; Social Exclusion. Part 3 – Cross-cutting themes: Gender and generations in contemporary welfare systems; Globalization and welfare systems; Social and political sustainability of the welfare state.
Teaching Format	In person teaching: frontal lectures, short exercises and case studies, discussion in class.
Required Readings	1) The following selected chapters from Alcock, P., Haux, T. McCall, V. & May, M. (2022). The Student's Companion to Social Policy 6th edition. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 9781119744870 (thereafter, the COMPANION):

	• Chapter 1 (P. Alcock), What is Social Policy?, pp. 5-10• • Chapter 3 (N. Manning), Social needs, Social Problems, Social Welfare and Well-being, pp. 18-23 • Chapter 32 (S. Pemberton & G.J. Arriaga-Garcia), Poverty and Social Exclusion, pp. 216-221. 2) The following selected chapters from Béland, D., Leibfried S. Morgan, K.J., Obinger, H. & Pierson C. (2021). The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780198828389 (thereafter, the HANDBOOK): • Chapter 6 (G. Hooijer, & D. King), The Critics of Welfare: From Neoliberalism to Populism, pp. 52–70; • Chapter 23 (M.G. Schmidt), European and National Social Policy, pp. 396–416; • Chapter 30 (A. Österle & H. Rothgang), Long-Term Care, pp. 524-540; • Chapter 36 (Th. Bahle & K. Wendt), Social Assistance, pp. 624-640; • Chapter 43 (J. Hook & L. Ruppanner), Gendered Outcomes, pp. 750-766; • Chapter 48 (M. Ferrera), The South European Countries, pp. 843–62. 3) The following selected chapters from Pierson, C., Castles, F.G. & Naumann, I.K. (eds.) (2014). The Welfare State Reader, 3rd edition. Cambridge & Maiden (MA): Polity Press. ISBN: 978-0745663685 (thereafter, the READER): • A. Briggs, The Welfare State in Historical Perspective, pp. 14-27; • C. Crouch & M. Keune, The Governance of Economic Uncertainty: Beyond the 'New Social Risks' Analysis, pp. 326-337; • G. Esping-Andersen, Three Words of Welfare Capitalism, pp. 136-151; • T. H. Marshall, Citizenship and Social Class, pp. 28-37.
Supplementary Readings	Further information and literature can be provided at the beginning of the course, and on the OLE.