Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Social Work in historical, inter- and transnational contexts
Course Code	51127
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 Prof. Claudia Lintner, claudia.lintner2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/30965
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	2
CP	6
Teaching Hours	36
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	114
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	The course combines a critical introduction to the history and development of social work with inter- and transnational perspectives. Starting from historical origins in the pre-modern era and in the context of industrialisation, it traces the development of social work as a profession and discipline up to the present day, examining its meanings and entanglements in different contexts and periods. The course broadens the focus to inter- and

	transnational dynamics of social work, analysing power relations and global inequalities, and reflecting on decolonial approaches and transcultural challenges. Participants thus develop a nuanced understanding of social work perspectives and possibilities for action within the context of current glocal tensions and challenges.
Course Topics	The integrated course provides a historical, international, and transnational perspective on social work, aimed at understanding how the profession and discipline have developed and continue to evolve within specific social, political, and cultural contexts and within broader global relations. By connecting historical reconstruction with contemporary critical perspectives, the course provides tools to critically examine the traditions, power relations, and boundaries that have shaped social work and to reflect on its role in addressing the challenges of increasingly interconnected societies.
Keywords	History of social work; professionalisation; academisation; methodologial development; complicity and resistance; International social work; transnational social work; European social work; glocalisation; decolonisation.
Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	Online and onsite teaching Lectures, discussions, and group work.
Mandatory Attendance	In accordance with the regulation
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	Knowledge and Understanding: • Develop a critical understanding of the historical trajectories of social work, including its origins, milestones, and contested narratives. • Recognise how social work has been both complicit in and resistant to systems of oppression, including colonialism, patriarchy, racism, and classism. • Understand how histories of social work have been shaped, silenced, or whitewashed, and engage with efforts to decolonize and pluralize these histories. • Comprehend the challenges and possibilities of social work in inter-, transnational, and global contexts, particularly in relation to histories of inequality and movements for justice. • Analyse the impact of societal and social policy developments

	at local, national, European, and international levels, situating them within broader struggles for rights, justice, and recognition. Application of Knowledge and Understanding: • Develop a historically, politically, and culturally reflexive professional stance, attentive to legacies of power, oppression, and resistance. • Apply historical and transnational perspectives to critically engage with contemporary dilemmas in social work, including issues of migration, global inequalities, and post-/decolonial transformations. • Connect critical historical insights with present-day practices to foster inclusive forms of social work across different contexts. Judgment: • Critically assess the professionalisation of social work, acknowledging its entanglements with state power, colonial projects, and social control, as well as its emancipatory and resistant traditions. • Analyse and evaluate how contemporary social and political developments—such as globalisation, populism, ecological crises, and struggles for decolonisation—affect the practice and ethics of social work. • Exercise reflexive judgment about the role of social workers in reproducing or challenging inequalities. Communication: • Acquire and use specialised concepts, language, and terminology for engaging with the history and transnational dimensions of social work, with attention to critical, intersectional, and decolonial vocabularies. • Communicate complex historical and transnational issues clearly and sensitively in the teaching languages, with awareness of diverse audiences and cultural contexts. Learning Strategies: • Develop strategies for independent and critical learning, research, and knowledge acquisition, especially in relation to marginalised, silenced, and decolonial histories of social work. • Strengthen the ability to engage with diverse sources and perspectives, also beyond mainstream or Eurocentric accounts. • Foster a commitment to lifelong learning and critical reflection on the ethical, political, and historical dimensions of social work in global and local settings.

Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	
Assessment	INTER- AND TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK Classroom presentations (20%) and short paper (40%) Integrated oral exam (40%) Assessment consists of three components: a classroom presentation (20%), a short paper (40%), and an integrated oral examination (40%). The final grade is calculated as the weighted average of these three components. Class room presentation (20%) take place during the semester and assesses students' ability to engage with selected topics of the course. The short paper (40%), submitted by the end of the semester, requires students to analyse and critically discuss a selected topic related to the contents of the module, drawing on relevant academic literature. The integrated oral examination (40%) assesses students' knowledge and understanding of the main concepts, theoretical perspectives, and topics addressed in the module, as well as their ability to establish connections between them and discuss their implications for social work. All three assessment components must be passed individually in order to pass the course.
Evaluation Criteria	The class room presentation and the short paper are intended to support students to develop their competences of addressing, researching and presenting a chosen topic related to the course contents. While the presentations are assessed with regard to both content and the effectiveness of communication, the short papers are additionally evaluated on their use of relevant literature, the critical discussion of the issues addressed, the coherence of structure and clarity of argument, as well as adherence to the conventions of

	academic writing. The integrated oral exam serves to evaluate knowledge and understanding of the module content as well as to make connections between the two modules of the course.
Required Readings	See module descriptions
Supplementary Readings	
Further Information	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Good health and well-being, Gender equality, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Reduced inequalities, Decent work and economic growth

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Inter- and transnational Social Work
Course Code	51127A
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A
Language	English
Lecturers	Prof. Claudia Lintner, claudia.lintner2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/30965
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	
CP	3
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	18
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	57
Planned Office Hours	9
Contents Summary	This module examines the development of social work from an inter- and transnational perspective. It addresses processes of internationalization by addressing the tension between a global understanding and definition of social work and the risks of professional imperialism and epistemic injustices. Applying a

	transnational lens, the module also critically analyses how global interconnections, power relations, and historical legacies shape the profession and discipline of social work. Students explore the colonial and neocolonial roots of social work and engage with perspectives from the Global South, indigenous knowledges, and decolonial theory. The module addresses key issues such as migration, human rights, global inequalities, cross-border collaboration, and contemporary global challenges. Participants develop a critical and reflexive understanding of social work across diverse cultural and political contexts and are encouraged to question dominant narratives while critically examining processes of inter- and transnationalisation, as well as borders and bordering practices.
Course Topics	- Social work in inter- and transnational perspectives - Colonial and neocolonial legacies in social work - Decolonial perspectives, Indigenous knowledges, and Global South approaches - Contemporary global challenges and their implications for social work - Borders, bordering practices, and social work
Teaching Format	Lectures combined with interactive class discussions.
Required Readings	• Cox, D., & Pawar, M. S. (2006). *International social work: Issues, strategies, and programs*. SAGE • Healy, L. M. & Thomas, R. L. (2020). *International social work: Professional action in an interdependent world*. Oxford University Press, 3rd edition. • Healy, L. M., & Link, R. J. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook of international social work: Human rights, development, and the global profession*. Oxford University Press. • Mapp, S. C. (2020). *Human rights and social justice in a global perspective: An introduction to international social work*. Oxford University Press.
Supplementary Readings	Further information and working literature can be provided at the beginning of the course.

Course Constituent Title	History of Social Work
Course Code	51127B
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	
CP	3
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	18
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	57
Planned Office Hours	9
Contents Summary	The module provides an overview of the history of social work, from its premodern precursors to the present day. It considers the local and national contexts as well as European, international, and decolonial perspectives. Particular emphasis is placed on the sociohistorical development of social work as a profession in the context of broader societal and political developments. Against this background, the course examines the lives and work of selected pioneers of social work and critically discusses their role and legacy in establishing professional and methodological traditions.
Course Topics	The module provides a comprehensive overview of the history of social work from its pre-modern predecessors to the present day. Both local and national contexts as well as a European and international perspectives are taken into account. Special emphasis is placed on the socio-historical development of social work as a profession and discipline in the field of tension between social and socio-political developments. A critical perspective is adopted that reflects on the entanglements of social work in colonial power structures and its complicity with hegemonic power relations. At the same time, forms of resistance

	and emancipatory practices within the history of social work are analysed. The focus is also on the life and work of selected pioneers of social work, whose significance for the establishment of traditional lines in the development of the profession and methods is emphasised and placed in the context of the historical and political conditions mentioned. Prehistory: Dealing with poverty through the ages Pauperism, industrialisation, social question COS & Settlements History of methods History of professionalisation and academisation Social work under National Socialism and Fascism Social work and colonialism History of social work in Germany and in international and European comparison History of social work in Italy History of social work in South Tyrol
Teaching Format	Synchronous online classes with presentations, guided discussions, analyses of historical sources and documents, and individual and group work.
Required Readings	• Amthor, R.-Ch. (2016). *Einführung in die Berufsgeschichte der Sozialen Arbeit* (2. Aufl.). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa. • Fargion, S. (2009). *Il servizio sociale. Storia, temi e dibattiti*. Roma/Bari: Laterza. • Hering, S., & Münchmeier, R. (2014). *Geschichte der Sozialen Arbeit: Eine Einführung* (5. Aufl.). Weinheim und München: Juventa. • Ioakimidis, V., & Wyllie, A. (eds.) (2023). *Social Work's Histories of Complicity and Resistance*. Policy Press. • Müller, C. W. (2013). *Wie Helfen zum Beruf wurde: Eine Methodengeschichte der Sozialen Arbeit* (6. Aufl.). Weinheim und München: Juventa.
Supplementary Readings	• Lorenz, W. (2006). *Perspectives on European social work: From the birth of the nation state to the impact of globalisation*. Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich. • Lorenz, W., Havrdová, Z., & Matoušek, O. (2020). *European social work after 1989: East-West exchanges between*

	universal principles and cultural sensitivity. New York: Springer. More detailed information, as well as references to additional book chapters and academic articles, will be provided in written form at the beginning of the course. Additional literature will be made available on the learning platform.