Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Social Work in historical, inter- and transnational contexts
Course Code	51080
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	NN
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
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
Course Year/s	2
CP	10
Teaching Hours	60
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	190
Planned Office Hours	24
Contents Summary	The course combines a comprehensive and 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	See the individual course modules
Keywords	International social work; transnational social work; European social work; glocalisation; decolonisation.
Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	Lecture, group works, exercises, discussions
Mandatory Attendance	In accordance with the regulation
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	1. 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. - Analyze 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. 2. 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. 3. 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. - Analyze 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. 4. 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. 5. 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 ATTENDING STUDENTS: Partner work presentations and short paper (written together with parts attributed to single authors) (approx. 5000 words including references) (60%) Integrated oral exam (20%) (official exam date) Active participation in reading and discussion activities (20%)

	NON ATTENDING STUDENTS: Short Paper (approx. 4000 words including references) (40%) Written test (40%) Integrated oral exam (20%) (official exam date) Non attending students must contact the professor to agree the topic of their paper.
Evaluation Criteria	The partner work 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 acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI are discussed with the students. 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)	No poverty, 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	51080A
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-05/A

Language	English
Lecturers	Prof. Dr. Urban Nothdurfter, Urban.Nothdurfter2@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/17145
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
CP	5
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	95
Planned Office Hours	12
Contents Summary	This module explores the development of social work from inter- and transnational perspectives. It examines internationalisation and transnationalisation, colonial and neocolonial legacies, and tensions between global definitions and local practices. Key themes include migration, human rights, inequalities, and cross-border collaboration. Students engage with perspectives from the Global South, indigenous knowledges, and decolonial theory to develop a critical and reflexive understanding of social work in diverse contexts.
Course Topics	This module examines the development of social work from an inter- and transnational perspective. It addresses processes of internationalisation, including the emergence of international organisations and professional networks, 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. Key themes include migration, human rights, global inequalities and challenges, and cross-border professional collaboration. Through readings, discussions, group work, and reflection, participants develop a critical and reflexive understanding of social work in its diverse cultural and political contexts, challenging dominant narratives and critically engaging with processes of inter- and transnationalisation as well as with borders and bordering practices.
Teaching Format	Lectures, discussions, group work, and presentations
Required Readings	Cane, T. C., & Tedam, P. (2023). 'We didn't learn enough about racism and anti-racist practice': Newly qualified social workers' challenge in wrestling racism. *Social Work Education*, *42*(8), 1563-1585. Garrett, P. M. (2024). What are we talking about when we are talking about 'decolonising' social work? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 54(5), 2027–2044. Ioakimidis, V., & Trimikliniotis, N. (2020). Making sense of social work's troubled past: Professional identity, collective memory and the quest for historical justice. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 50(6), 1890-1908. Midgley, J. (2001). Issues in international social work: Resolving critical debates in the profession. *Journal of Social Work*, *1*(1), 21-35. Nothdurfter, U. & Pedroni, M. C. (in press). Ecosocial Challenges as an Opportunity to Rethink Social Work in a Critical Glocal Perspective. In P. Pentaris & J. Walker (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Glocal Social Work.* Routledge. Nothdurfter, U. (2020). Lost in Translations, United in Diversity or Based on Common and Critical Understandings: The Border

	Region of South Tirol as a Laboratory for European Social Work?. In *European Social Work After 1989: East-West Exchanges Between Universal Principles and Cultural Sensitivity* (pp. 153-165). Springer International Publishing. Schrooten, M. (2021). Transnational social work: Challenging and crossing borders and boundaries. *Journal of Social Work*, *21*(5), 1163-1181. Schrooten, M. (2024). Bringing the transnational into social work. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Transnational Studies* (pp. 143-154). Routledge. Selected chapters from the following books: Bartley, A., & Beddoe, L. (eds.) (2018). *Transnational social work: Opportunities and challenges of a global profession*. Policy Press. 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. Hugman, R. (2010). *Understanding international social work: A critical analysis*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Kessl, F., Lorenz, W., Otto, H. U., & White, S. (eds.). (2019). *European social work–A compendium*. Verlag Barbara Budrich.

	Negi, N. J., & Furman, R. (eds.). (2010). *Transnational social work practice*. Columbia University Press. Further working literature can be provided during the course.
Supplementary Readings	

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	History of Social Work
Course Code	51080B
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	Second semester
CP	5
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	95
Planned Office Hours	12
Contents Summary	The course provides an overview of the history of social work from its pre-modern predecessors to the present day. Both the local and national context as well as a European (and international) perspective are taken into account. Special emphasis is placed on the socio-historical development of social work as a profession in the context of social and socio-political development. Against this background, the life and work of selected pioneers of social work are discussed and their significance for the establishment of traditional lines in the development of the profession and its methods is demonstrated.

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	The lesson takes place remotely.
Required Readings	Selected chapters from the following books: 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. 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. Malleier, E., & Messner, M. (eds.). (2018). *Agnes, Ida, Max und die anderen: NS-" Euthanasie" und Südtirol: Vergessen und Erinnern*. Edizioni alphabeta Verlag. Müller, C. W. (2013). *Wie Helfen zum Beruf wurde: Eine Methodengeschichte der Sozialen Arbeit* (6. Aufl.). Weinheim und München: Juventa. Further chapters and articles will be made available during the course.
Supplementary Readings	