



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Comparative Analysis of Welfare Systems

2425-1-F8701N068-F8701N051M

Learning objectives

The primary objectives of the course are to provide the conceptual and methodological tools useful for the analysis of European welfare regimes and models of capitalism from a comparative perspective, and for the study of social policies in the Italian context.

Contents

The course delves into the study of European welfare regimes rooted within contemporary capitalism, focusing on both different models and the processes of convergence and divergence among countries. The complex relationship between social cohesion and economic competitiveness is discussed, along with the role of agency and the institutional context. Special attention is given to the Nordic model, the continental regime, the Anglo-Saxon system, and Mediterranean capitalism. Finally, the main socio-economic transformations currently affecting European countries, the challenges of welfare, new social risks, and the policies developed to create systems of protection and security for citizens are examined, with a particular focus on the Italian context.

Detailed program

The first part of the course introduces key concepts for studying European welfare regimes and contemporary capitalism. A comparative perspective is adopted to examine the regulatory framework and functioning of different institutional arenas, and to understand how these promote specific combinations of social cohesion and economic competitiveness. The course explores how welfare policies can influence not only the well-being of citizens but also the economic capacity and international competitiveness of countries. The role of agency, defined as the ability of social, economic and political actors to influence change, and the institutional context, which includes the structures and rules governing interactions among welfare system actors, are considered.

The second part of the course explores the different approaches to welfare adopted in European countries, with particular attention to the Nordic model, characterized by a high level of social protection and universal policies; the continental regime, emphasizing inclusion but also challenged by new forms of dualism; the Anglo-Saxon system, known for its more liberal approach; and finally, Mediterranean capitalism, with its specific characteristics such as the centrality of the family in the social protection system.

The third part of the course focuses on the main socio-economic transformations currently affecting European countries, analyzing how demographic changes and technological innovations are influencing welfare systems. Emerging challenges, such as new social risks related to job insecurity, population aging, and increasing social diversity, are discussed. The policies developed to address these challenges are analyzed in detail, with a particular focus on the Italian context. Reforms undertaken to improve social protection, strategies to promote inclusion and equity, and initiatives aimed at sustaining economic competitiveness within the framework of sustainable welfare are examined.

Prerequisites

None

Teaching methods

Teaching includes a lecture/erogative component (60%) and a participatory component (40%), in which students are invited to carry out group work, readings and short papers.

Assessment methods

The exam is written and consists of answering 4 open questions on the two required text-books within 90 minutes.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Ranci, C., Pavolini, E. (2024) Le politiche di welfare, Bologna, Il Mulino (new edition)
Burroni, L. (2016) Capitalismi a confronto, Bologna, Il Mulino

Additional monographic texts and scientific articles on topics of interest to the student can be agreed upon.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | REDUCED INEQUALITIES

