UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Methods and Techniques of Social Work II

2627-3-E3901N053

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Understanding
Students will acquire knowledge and understanding of the main theoretical and methodological foundations of Social Work, with particular attention to work with groups and communities, and to the forms of citizen participation. They will develop an understanding of social work research as a tool for reflexivity, evaluation, and professional innovation.
Applying Knowledge and Understanding
Students will develop the ability to design and facilitate self-help groups and to apply specific tools for collective and community-based interventions. They will also learn to critically analyze the theoretical and operational components of Social Work within group and community contexts, and to use research as a basis for reflecting on professional practices.
Making Judgments
Students will develop critical thinking skills regarding the different levels of Social Work intervention, adopting a tripartite and anti-oppressive perspective, in accordance with the ethical and deontological principles of the profession.
Communication Skills
The course aims to develop communication skills at three levels: a) the ability to effectively communicate theoretical concepts using appropriate technical and professional language; b) the ability to communicate effectively through professional writing; c) the ability to apply key communication techniques in group and community work.
Learning Skills
The course encourages the ability to autonomously update one's knowledge in relation to the evolving field of Social Work, fostering critical reflexivity as a key to continuous learning.

Contents

The course is structured into four modules:

1. Social Work Practice Guided by Theory: Case studies through the lens of anti-oppressive social work
2. Social Work with Groups
3. Community Social Work
4. Ecosocial work
5. Using Social Work Research to Reflect on Practice

Detailed program

The course explores the theoretical and methodological foundations of Social Work, with a focus on collective forms of intervention. Its goal is to consolidate and expand the methodological competences acquired in previous courses on the fundamentals and methods of social work, promoting students' abilities in analysis, planning, and evaluation within group and community contexts.
The first part of the course revisits Social Work methodology, with the aim of strengthening understanding of the method and examining the various stages of the helping process through discussion and case study analysis.
The second part focuses on group work, exploring the characteristics, dynamics, and potential of groups as a professional intervention tool. Particular attention is given to self-help groups and methodologies for group facilitation and leadership.
The third part addresses Community Social Work, understood as a key area for promoting collective well-being and citizen participation. Theoretical and methodological foundations will be explored, along with practical applications through participatory techniques such as future dialogues, neighborhood walks, and the World Café method.
Finally, a section of the course is dedicated to Social Work Research, viewed as a tool for reflexivity, evaluation, and professional innovation. Students will examine how research findings can critically inform practice, promoting reflexivity, lifelong learning, and innovation across diverse social work settings.
The teaching approach integrates theory and practice through lectures, guided discussions, case analyses, group work, and collective reflection sessions.

Prerequisites

Successful completion of the courses Fundamentals of Social Work and Methods and Techniques of Social Work I is required prior to enrollment.

Teaching methods

The course includes 18 interactive sessions, organized as follows:
• Eight in-person lessons using slides and video materials.
• Seven in-person interactive sessions with case study exercises (supported by slides, videos, and analysis worksheets).
• Three interactive online lessons.
The sessions alternate between theoretical discussion and individual or group exercises, designed to apply concepts to professional practice and develop technical and critical autonomy, in reference to the Code of Ethics for Social Workers.
Case studies are used as tools to stimulate critical reflection on the theoretical and ethical foundations guiding professional action.

Assessment methods

The final assessment consists of an oral examination with questions on the required readings and on the topics discussed during lectures.
Evaluation criteria include:
• Completeness and relevance of content,
• Appropriateness of language and terminology,
• Ability to apply theoretical, methodological, ethical, and deontological knowledge.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

1. Ferrario, F. (2001), Il lavoro di gruppo nel servizio sociale. Carocci (cap. 3)
2. Heap, J. (1986), La pratica del lavoro sociale con i gruppi. Astrolabio.
3. Lois Carey (2020), Making the transition from casework to group work, in Social Work with Groups, DOI: 10.1080/01609513.2020.1820423 (no cap. 6-7-8)
4. Maci F. (2022) Costruire progetti di aiuto insieme alle famiglie: il modello della Family group conference, in Ciliberto J. e Piccin M. (a cura di), Le pratiche collaborative nei servizi di cura e tutela, Carocci, Roma.
5. Allegri E. (2015), Il Servizio sociale di comunità, Carocci, Roma (no cap. 3)
6. Pavani L. e Allegri E. (2026), Fare lavoro ecosociale di comunità, in Nothdurfter, U. e Fazzi, L. (a cura di), Il lavoro ecosociale in Italia: sfide aperte e occasioni di cambiamento. Il Mulino, pp. 91-119. DOI: 10.1401/9788815416735/c2 or, artenatively, Allegri E. e Pavani L. (2026), Ecosocial Community Work: Tensions, Transformations and Situated Practices in Italian Local Welfare Services. Relational Social Work, n. (10)1, pp. 3-26. DOI: 10.14605/RSW1012602

Additionally, students must select two articles (one in Italian and one in English) to present and discuss during the oral exam. The list of articles will be provided by the instructor during the first class.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS