



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Politica Sociale

2627-2-E3902N013

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

The course provides students with an in-depth understanding of social policies and the welfare state as key dimensions of public intervention in contemporary societies. Through the study of major theoretical approaches and empirical evidence, students will acquire the conceptual tools needed to understand social needs, social risks, social citizenship, social protection and welfare mix. Particular attention is devoted to the historical development of welfare systems, the main welfare models that have emerged in Europe and the distinctive features of the Italian welfare state. The course also examines the social, demographic and economic transformations that have reshaped social needs and welfare systems over recent decades.

Applying knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course, students will be able to apply sociological concepts and analytical tools to the study of social problems and welfare policies. They will be able to analyse social policies with reference to their objectives, eligibility criteria, policy instruments, actors involved and outcomes.

Students will also be able to apply the knowledge acquired to specific policy fields, including poverty reduction, family policies, social inclusion, long-term care and interventions addressing social marginalisation, developing a critical understanding of policy design, implementation and evaluation processes.

Making judgements

The course aims to foster students' ability to formulate independent and critically informed judgements on social problems and institutional responses. Students will engage with different theoretical and political perspectives on welfare and learn to assess their assumptions, implications and consequences.

At the end of the course, students will be able to interpret statistical data, policy documents and research reports, critically evaluating the effectiveness, equity and sustainability of social policies and reflecting on the ethical, social and distributive implications of public policy choices.

Communication skills

Students will develop the ability to use the specialised language of social policy and welfare studies appropriately and effectively. They will be able to present and discuss concepts, data and research findings in a clear and rigorous manner, building coherent arguments supported by empirical evidence. Course activities will also enhance students' ability to adapt their communication to different audiences, including social service professionals, public administrators, policy makers, third-sector organisations and citizens.

Learning skills

The course provides students with the theoretical and methodological tools required to continue studying social policy issues independently. Through engagement with academic literature, policy documents, research reports and statistical sources, students will develop the skills necessary for lifelong learning and for critically understanding ongoing transformations in welfare systems.

Contents

The course provides an introduction to social policy and the welfare state in contemporary societies. It examines how social needs and social risks are addressed through public policies and explores the institutions, actors, and governance arrangements involved in the provision of social protection and welfare.

The course introduces the main concepts and theoretical approaches in social policy before examining the historical development of the welfare state, the principal welfare regimes, and the distinctive features of the Italian welfare system. It then focuses on policies addressing new social risks and emerging forms of vulnerability, with particular attention to the changing roles of the state, the market, families, and the third sector, as well as to local welfare and multi-level governance.

Detailed program

The course introduces the key concepts and analytical frameworks of social policy. It explores the meaning and scope of social policy, examining how societies identify social needs, address social risks, and organise systems of social protection. Core concepts include social needs, social risks, social citizenship, the welfare state, social protection, and the welfare mix, together with the main theoretical approaches to the analysis of social policy.

The course then examines the historical development of the welfare state, from its origins to the major reforms of recent decades. Particular attention is devoted to the main European welfare regimes and to the distinctive features and recent evolution of the Italian welfare system.

The following section focuses on new social risks and the policy responses developed to address them. Topics include labour market change, family transformation, migration, and population ageing, together with policies aimed at tackling poverty, promoting social inclusion, supporting families, and responding to long-term care needs.

The final section examines the organisation and governance of local welfare. Particular attention is devoted to the role of local governments, third-sector organisations, and community networks in the planning, delivery, and innovation of social policies and social services.

Prerequisites

No prior knowledge of social policy or social work is required.

Students are expected to have the general academic skills needed to engage successfully with university-level study, including the ability to read and critically analyse academic texts, communicate effectively in both written and spoken form, and engage in reasoned discussion.

A basic understanding of contemporary social, economic, and demographic issues may be helpful, but is not

essential. Similarly, any previous familiarity with social work, social policy, or welfare systems may facilitate learning but is not a prerequisite for attending the course or successfully completing the assessment.

Teaching methods

The course is taught in Italian and delivered entirely in person.

Teaching is organised over 56 hours and combines lectures (Didattica Erogativa – DE) with interactive learning activities (Didattica Interattiva – DI).

- 42 hours of lectures (approximately 75% of the course) focus on the main concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence underpinning the study of social policy, the welfare state, and contemporary systems of social protection.
- 14 hours of interactive learning activities (approximately 25% of the course) include case-based learning, individual and group exercises, discussions of research articles and policy documents, and guided classroom discussions designed to foster active participation, critical thinking, and the application of theoretical concepts to contemporary social issues.

Teaching materials, required readings, and additional learning resources will be made available through the course e-learning platform.

Online teaching may be exceptionally adopted only in the event of major disruptions to rail transport or other unforeseen circumstances that make in-person teaching impossible, and in accordance with University regulations.

Assessment methods

Student learning is assessed through an individual 100-minute written examination.

The examination consists of:

Five multiple-choice questions (0–1 point each), assessing knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, theories, and analytical frameworks covered in the course.

Three short-answer questions (0–5 points each), assessing students' ability to define key concepts, explain theoretical approaches, and use appropriate disciplinary terminology.

One essay question (0–10 points), assessing students' ability to critically analyse a social policy issue, apply theoretical concepts to the interpretation of social phenomena and case studies, and develop clear, coherent, and well-supported arguments.

Assessment is based on the accuracy and completeness of students' knowledge, their ability to apply theoretical concepts and analytical tools to the analysis of social policy issues, the quality of their critical reasoning and argumentation, their ability to integrate different topics covered throughout the course, and their appropriate use of disciplinary terminology.

Upon request, international and Erasmus students may take an alternative 100-minute written examination in English, consisting of two essay questions. The English-language examination is assessed according to the same criteria as the standard written examination.

The final grade is awarded on the Italian 30-point grading scale (30/30).

There are no mid-term assessments.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Ranci C. e Pavolini E. (2015), Le politiche di Welfare, Il Mulino, Bologna [with the exception of the following chapters: VI "Le politiche di sostegno alle transizioni istruzione-lavoro; "X "Politiche attive del lavoro e apprendimento permanente"].

Gori C., a cura di, (2022), Le politiche del Welfare Sociale, Mondadori, Milano [only the following chapters: "1. Le politiche del welfare sociale; 2. I servizi alla persona; 8. Il welfare mix"].

Additional compulsory reading materials will be indicated and uploaded at the beginning of the course.

An alternative reading list in English is available upon request for international and Erasmus students. Unless requested otherwise, they will follow the standard reading list for the course.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES
