

## **Social Work Theories: epistemologies, classics and current issues**

### **Teaching periods**

Thursday 20 October 2022, 9h15-12h45: Introduction: B.Waldis ; 13h45-17h15: Social Work-Action Science: P Sommerfeld

Friday 21 October 2022, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Selected founding social work texts: B. Waldis

Thursday 1 December 2022, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Major disciplinary social work traditions: B. Waldis

Friday 2 December 2022, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Current, innovative social work theory: B. Waldis

### **Teaching team**

Peter Sommerfeld, Professor FHNW (October 20, 13h45-17h15)

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS

Marta Marques Castanheira, Assistant

### **Contenu**

Social Work can be considered an action-oriented (Sommerfeld) discipline. Yet the meaning and the implementation of this affirmation needs to be questioned as they depend on traditions of specific, language and approach based scientific communities and on historical as well as socio- and geopolitical positions. The scope of the seminar is to look at this affirmation about social work as from different disciplinary perspectives.

Starting with the anthropological lens on social work as an action-oriented discipline, based on the concept of situated knowledge (Haraway, Harding), the participants will receive inputs, read, present and discuss key texts on current, innovative social work theory; compare epistemological positions of social work founder texts (Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, UK and USA), on some major disciplinary traditions (community studies, social pedagogy, social welfare, social work) and current innovative orientations (critical social work, global social work, ecological social work).

It is crucial to understand and be able to argue how social action is entangled with professional practice of intervention and of research in social work. Based on the works of the above cited authors, the least we can affirm is that knowledge is situated, entangled in a power structured field. For the constitution of a scientific community we need to stipulate that understanding different positions is a possible endeavor.

- How do current positions of social work as a scientific discipline conceive of social work as an action science, be it in Anglo-Saxon, French or German scientific communities?
- How do they differ and what historical, disciplinary reasons can be given for it?
- How do the different scholars and social work practitioners create the link between research field and object, social work interventions, beneficiaries and scientific knowledge and discovery?
- Where do different social work perspectives set the focus, on social problems, on concepts, on methods, on political or scientific contexts?

### **Organisation**

Thursday and Friday 20 and 21 October 2022, 9h15-13h ; 14h-17h45

Thursday and Friday 1 et 2 December 2022, 9h15-13h ; 14h-17h45

### **Forme d'évaluation**

Read, summarize, present & discuss theoretical texts, find and use relevant sources of critique

### **Objectif d'apprentissage**

To know a minimum of founding texts in social work theory

To understand in an internationally comparative perspective, the development of social work theory

To reflect the societal context of social work theory development in Switzerland

To understand different school of thoughts in social work regarding social work as action science

To be able to argue the relevance of one or the other theoretical approach or concept

### **Compétences transférables**

To be able to apply the concept of situated knowledge when dealing with theories

To be able to reflect the societal context for theory development

To be able to argue the relevance of a given theoretical approach for a specific research question

## Literature

- Garrow, Eve E., et Yeheskel Hasenfeld. « The Epistemological Challenges of Social Work Intervention Research ». *Research on Social Work Practice* 27, n° 4 (juillet 2017): 494-502. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731515623649>.
- Haraway, Donna. « Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective ». *Feminist Studies* 14, n° 3 (1988): 575-99.
- Hegar, R. L. « Transatlantic Transfers in Social Work: Contributions of Three Pioneers ». *British Journal of Social Work* 38, n° 4 (15 avril 2008): 716-33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcn014>.
- Hothersall, Steve J. « Epistemology and Social Work: Enhancing the Integration of Theory, Practice and Research through Philosophical Pragmatism ». *European Journal of Social Work* 22, n° 5 (3 septembre 2019): 860-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2018.1499613>.
- Shields, Patricia, éd. *Jane Addams: Progressive Pioneer of Peace, Philosophy, Sociology, Social Work and Public Administration*. 1st ed. 2017. Pioneers in Arts, Humanities, Science, Engineering, Practice 10. Cham: Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Springer, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50646-3>.
- Sommerfeld, Peter. « Social Work as an Action Science: A Perspective From Europe ». *Research on Social Work Practice* 24, n° 5 (septembre 2014): 586-600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731514538523>.