

Social Work Theories: epistemologies, classics and current issues (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Thursday October 26 & Friday October 27 (9h15-17h15)

Thursday November 23 & Friday November 24 (9h15-17h15)

Teaching team

Peter Sommerfeld, Professor FHNW

Annamaria Colombo, Professor HEFR HES-SO

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS, UniNE

Venue

University of Neuchâtel, Ave. du 1er mars, 26, room B29

Content of the seminar

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?



Form of evaluation

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

Learning goals

- 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

Transferable skills

- 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

Pre-condition and registration

Registration as a PhD student at a Swiss university or pedagogical contract as a future PhD student of the ITTS.

Registration at messagerie.itts@unine.ch until October 12.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.