

COMPARATIVE SOCIAL WORK: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON CORE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL WORK (12 ECTS)

Introduction

This subject is an international online course on it's learning with teachers and social work students from countries in Europe. The Educational programme have been developed by the VIRCLASS/SW-VirCamp Consortium Partners under leadership of Høgskolen i Bergen.

Rapid changes in European society, increasing mobility and local differences in social and economic factors influence the living conditions and thereby the social problems in various parts of Europe. This has serious implications for the field of social work and for the framework and the role of social workers, and makes the need for intercultural exchange more and more important if we are to be able to understand and combat social exclusion, racism and xenophobia. With an open learning environment, social workers living and working in very different situations will have the opportunity to learn from each other and to share information and knowledge important for their work with their clients. These professional challenges need to be met by different methods and educational programs for social workers. This comparative course is important for professional social workers directly involved with clients from different parts of Europe and for bachelor and postgraduate students who will need an international perspective on social work for their future career. Module 2 is an e-learning course with three themes/modules over 12 weeks. and starts 11 November 2013 and ends 10 February 2014.

MODULES-THEMES:

Theme 2A: Discrimination Oppression and Ethnic Diversity as Phenomena in Europe. Anti-oppressive approaches to social work

This module will allow the student to understand commonalities and differences in terms of the how societies marginalise certain groups of people. In what way are social work theories and methods suitable to deal with questions concerning discrimination and oppression. In some places anti-discriminatory practice has come to be seen as integral to good social practice; in other words, one cannot have good social work practice without it. But how far is this reflected in the reality of everyday practice, and to what extent are students given the knowledge and skills they need to practice it? The module will demonstrate that discrimination and oppression are not homogenous concepts but focus on different target groups in various ways, and therefore are different in their manifestations in relation to these groups. A range of disadvantaged groups will be considered, but particular emphasis will be put on cultural and ethnic diversity, and racism. The implications of discrimination and oppression of marginalised groups for European social welfare and social work will be considered.

Theme 2B: Poverty and welfare systems. Anti-oppressive approaches to social work.

Poverty is one of the core problems for social work throughout the world. This module deals with how social work in Europe can meet and deal with the challenges of social problems caused by poverty

Social problems are created in a national, European and global context. Every country has its own way of dealing with social problems depending on different historical, cultural, religious and political backgrounds. The commonalities are that all countries have to deal with social problems through resources from the family, voluntary organisations, the state and the market. The difference is that all countries have a "welfare mix" of their own.

A cross-cultural comparison of social work and welfare systems in Europe should facilitate understanding of social problems in the different parts of Europe and should improve strategies and methods of social work.

This module will focus on anti-oppressive approaches in social work. A central question is: How can social workers fulfil the values written in The International Federation of Social Workers definition of social work: "In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion".

Theme 2C: Social work Practice in a European Context

The traditional background of social work has been connected to two different roots of origin, the individual casework tradition and the community work tradition. Modern social workers in Europe have to deal with social problems that need multiple methods for solution. Knowledge about society and law as well as psychological understanding of the human nature is important and is paid great attention in the educational programmes in Social Work. However, achieving "Best Practice" is in many part of Europe a challenge to the educational programmes.

Social work emerges in the space between person and environment or person-in-situation. In a comparative study of social work in Europe we will focus mainly on system- and critical- theories and methods. We believe it will be interesting to see how these theories and methods will appear when they are used in different contexts on similar problems and with people from different countries. A central question will be what skills and competences are needed in different social contexts?

Competences

-Professional development: Students will be able to describe, analyse and compare social problems, social work and social work education in European countries Students will be able to expand knowledge and reflect upon commonalities and differences in historical development of social work and social work today Students will be able to compare commonalities and differences in chosen social issues, and the legal and social policy framework for social work and social work education

-Cooperation: Students will be able to work together with students and teachers from other countries in a virtual classroom Students will give and share information about their own country in a problem solving process

Method

Students will be able to collect and present data in an international context Students will be able to use methods for comparative international studies

Organization and Study methods

Through the whole study program students will work with a problem oriented focus, and by solving tasks they will reflect on situations concerning social work and being a social worker in their own country compared with the situation in other European countries.

Assessment

There will be a portfolio assessment. This means that the course will be task centered and as part of the learning process students will receive feedback on their tasks during the course. Students will have an opportunity to improve their first presentations as a consequence of feedback and progress in learning. All tasks have to be completed before the final assessment. Completed tasks will be collected in a portfolio, and a number of these tasks will be required for the presentation portfolio. The maximum number of words in the presentation portfolio is 5000, plus a reflection note of 1000 words with reflection on learning experience. Information about which tasks student will be required to deliver for final assessment/presentation portfolio will be given to students approximately three weeks before the final assessment. The final marks for each module will be given from A-F (F is not approved).

Credits and Certificate

Credits and Certificate will be given by your own university as partners in SW-VirCamp
These modules can in combination with study abroad and/or placement abroad and the final BA theses written in English (or with an English abstract) in a comparative international perspective on social work give the students a BA with an international profile. Starts/ends

Curriculum plans

For more information about the courses go to:<http://vircamp.net/e-courses-centre/>