## **Theory and Methodology of Relational Social Work**

## Prof. Fabio Folgheraiter; Prof. Elena Cabiati; Prof. Maria Luisa Raineri

## Module 1: *Theory and Methodology of Social Work* (Prof. Fabio Folgheraiter)

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The module aims to explore the theoretical and methodological concepts of Social Work. It will present the concepts that guide workers in defining help interventions with users, families and community members. At the end of the course, students will have mastered the main analytical distinctions underlying professional reasoning. In general, they will be able to differentiate and interconnect the various areas within social service practices (social policy, social services and welfare policy and social work) as well as the various professions (clinical and social) operating in the welfare systems. With particular reference to the specific responsibilities of social workers, students will be able to show how help interventions are implemented and which types of networks workers interact with.

***COURSE CONTENT***

1. The specific nature of Social Work, differences with clinical professions and social policy interventions

2. The bio-psychosocial model; the definition of four main purposes of Social Work (assistance, repair, prevention, promotion) and levels of ability of action (self-sufficiency, self-realisation, heterorealisation)

3. Counselling in social help interviews; directivity non-directivity in Social Work

4. What is a network?: services network, people network, social network, coping network

***READING LIST***

F. Folgheraiter, *Teoria e metodologia del servizio sociale,* FrancoAngeli, Milan, 1998 (Part 1: p. 23-190).

F. Folgheraiter, *Scritti scelti,* Erickson, Trient, 2016 (chap. 4, chap. 15, chap. 25, chap. 28, chap. 30)

D. Stemberg, *L’auto mutuo aiuto: guida per i facilitatori di gruppo*, Erickson, Trient, 2001.

W. Miller-S. Rollnick, *Il colloquio motivazionale: preparare la persona al cambiamento*, Erickson, Trient, 2004, new edition.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will comprise lectures, practical classes and work in small groups. In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The final test for the module ‘Theory and Methodology of Social Work’ will assess content of lectures, reading list from the course programme and material published on the lecturer’s webpage.

Students will be assessed in oral and written format. The written assessment will comprise an essay on a topic chosen by the students from the basic ideas covered on the course; during the subsequent oral exam students will be evaluated on their knowledge of the topics addressed in the written essay more broadly and on other topics included in the course programme. Assessment criteria will be based on students’ ability to describe theoretical concepts and apply them in operating implications; ability to present issues clearly and accurately.

The exam mark in the module Theory and Methodology of Social Work is out of thirty and will be averaged with the marks of the other course modules.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students from undergraduate courses outside the L39 degree classification must attend at least two-thirds of the lectures. Working students may arrange a personalised study plan with the lecturer. The module is introductory in nature and has no specific prerequisites other than a general awareness of the meaning of interpersonal assistance practices and basic relational sensibility. The module is addressed to students that do not belong to the L39 degree classification.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.

Module 2: *Foundations of Relational Social Work* (Prof. Fabio Folgheraiter)

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the module is to explore the theoretical foundations of social workers’ professional capabilities through the lens of the relational paradigm. It aims to provide students with a comprehensive vision of professional work within the local welfare systems, connecting the *fieldwork* level with both the ‘top’ hierarchical levels (*managerial and policy making*) and the free *caring actions* (informal or organised) emerging from civil society. The workshop will examine the main dimensions of professional social work, with a particular focus on the following processes: a) helping and control processes in micro-social contexts (from *counselling*, to *case* *management*, small group working, etc.); b) responsible activation of the so-called “recipients” of professional interventions, in the spirit of peer support and empowerment; c) social awareness and community mobilisation, with a focus on active citizenship; d) involvement of social workers in active social care planning policies in local communities.

At the end of the course, students will understand the operations and professional tools used within the counter-intuitive paradigm of the RSW method. Moving away from the conventional unilateral deterministic paradigm, students will be able to understand social work responsibilities in terms of network and relational processes. Specifically, students will be able to use the scheme of the *Social Pentagram* as the main tool for professional reflection, referring both to the analysis of *coping processes* in the lives of users, families and local communities, and to the networking feature of fieldwork interventions of various users (social and healthcare workers).

***COURSE CONTENT***

1. Underlying the *Relational* *Social* *Work* method: elements of theories of social action and social relationship.

2. International definition of social work and its relational structure.

3. Social work from the various perspectives of social policy: *welfare state, welfare mix, welfare society*.

4. Case-centred networks and ways in which they differ from case management for building “individualised caring plans”

5. Community networks: self/help and mutual help groups and organisations, user and carer associations, civic networks for community planning.

6. Observation and guidance capabilities of coping networks: supervision and relational facilitation.

7. The principle of relational empowerment and promotion of social capital: engaging users in the activation of projects and participatory planning/managing of social services.

***READING LIST***

F. Folgheraiter (edited by), *La liberalizzazione dei servizi sociali,* Erickson, Trient, 2003 (six chapters: Introduzione, chap. 1, chap. 2, chap. 7, chap. 10, chap. 12).

F. Folgheraiter, *Fondamenti di metodologia relazionale: la logica sociale dell’aiuto,* Erickson, Trient, 2011 (first and second part).

F. Folgheraiter, *The Mystery of Social Work: critical analysis of global definition according to relational theory,* bilingual text, Erickson, Trient, 2012. [*P*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/folgheraiter-fabio/mistery-of-social-work-9788859000723-179545.html)

F. Folgheraiter, *Scritti scelti,* Erickson, Trient, 2016 (chap. 9, chap. 13, chap. 24, chap. 26, chap. 27, chap. 38).

F. Folgheraiter, *Il Manifesto del Metodo relazionale,* Erickson, Trient, 2017.

*Nota bene*: during the course Italian and foreign in-depth articles and essays will be recommended.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will comprise lectures for two thirds of the total hours and practical classes in small groups for the remaining third of the total hours, which will conclude with follow-up sessions in class. In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed in oral and written format. The first part of the written assessment will comprise an essay on a topic chosen by the students from the basic ideas covered on the course; the second assessment comprises exercises on the analytical concepts underpinning the *Relational Method* as well as an exercise of *case study* analysis*.* Students must pass the written assessment in order to access the subsequent oral exam, designed to evaluate students’ knowledge of the topic addressed in the written paper more broadly and thoroughly.

In the assessment, there will be a particular focus on students’ capacity for coherent and independent abstract reasoning (expressing content in their own words) as well as their ability to link concepts to their intrinsic meanings in practice.

There will be a single mark for the course, based in equal measure on the marks awarded for each module.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Given the *characterising* nature of the course in terms of professional profile, attendance is required to ensure optimal learning. To facilitate attendance for working students, lectures will always be held on Saturdays while the lectures held in other days of the week will be video-recorded.

Students from undergraduate courses outside the L39 degree classification must have attended the Module in ‘Theory and Methodology of Social Work’ before attending this module.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.

## Module 3: *The relational social work method in practice* (Prof. Maria Luisa Raineri)

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to guide students in developing links between abstract concepts and the practical/operational instances of social work, so that they acquire the necessary knowledge to implement social work according to the relational methodology in *highly complex* situations.

The module will present and analytically discuss ways to realise support functions in situations where there are ‘involuntary users’ and social workers called upon to carry out interventions with co-activity components: in particular intervention for the protection of minors, the elderly, and the disabled with conditions of particular weakness. The module will examine how to implement relational support functions in situations where networks have collective purposes at group or community level, with particular reference to the formalisation process of these networks.

*Intended learning outcomes*

At the end of the course, students will be able to identify the distinctive features of relational support actions as well as to set them in relation to real-life cases. They will also be able to build operational hypotheses on how to proceed to develop new networks and formalise them.

***COURSE CONTENT***

1. Relational support: identification of spontaneous coping and informal cross-linking (primary and secondary natural coping networks; the reporting person and their role in the coping network; observation of the natural coping network).

2. Relational support: development of new networks (catalysing formal coping networks in social interventions address to involuntary users; catalysing formal networks with collective aims).

3. Relational support: formalising coping networks (main indexes of formalisation for coping networks; basic actions for relational guidance).

4. Relational support in situations in which involuntary users are involved. Analysis of the following areas:

* child protection;
* negligence, mistreatment or abuse of adults or elderly in situations of weakness;
* problems of mental health;
* addictions;
* re-education in the context of criminal or penitentiary proceedings.

5. Relational support of networks with collective purposes. Case analysis in the following areas:

* catalysation, development and formalisation of networks of self-help/mutual help and *peer* support in the field of child protection, problems of mental health, serious marginalisation, addictions;
* catalysation, development and formalisation of groups of not specific self-help/mutual help for ‘mixed’ life problems;
* catalysation, development and formalisation of networks for community initiatives;
* how networks with collective purposes can contribute to case work.

***READING LIST***

F. Folgheraiter, *Fondamenti di metodologia relazionale. La logica sociale dell’aiuto,* Erickson, Trient , 2011. (Only Part 3).

M.L. Raineri, *Il metodo di rete in pratica,* Erickson, Trient, 2004.

Further details on the reading list regarding the analysis of the cases covered in class will be provided during the course. All unpublished material used for analysis and exercises will be made available to students on the course Blackboard page.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The module is based on the analysis of case studies and projects, around which the theoretical content of the course programme will be presented. Frontal lectures of some case studies by the lecturer will alternate with analysis carried out by students in individual and/or small groups exercises.

The module aims to encourage students to use situations or projects based on students’ own personal work experience (during their university internship and/or previous internships, work or volunteer work).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The final exam for this module will focus on contents of lectures, reading list included in the course programme, supplemental material that will be communicated during the course and contents regarding practical exercises (available on Blackboard).

Students will be assessed in oral and written format through a written essay and its oral discussion. The essay will include a case study analysis or a project according to the relational social work perspective, with the relative network diagrams (social pentagrams) and a basic reading list. Students will have to submit the essay to the lecturer at least 10 days before the final exam. It must be a word or pdf file and be between 3,000 and 6,000 words including a short reading list.

Assessment of the exam will be based on the following criteria: relevance of content; completeness and articulation of the expressed concepts; precise use of network graphic diagrams; clarity of speech and grammatical, syntactic and lexical correctness. The mark will be out of thirty.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Prerequisites*

This module is addressed to students who have an undergraduate degree in Social Services (L39). Contents are in close continuity with the undergraduate courses in Social Service Methodology and those in the module by Prof. Folgheraiter. Students are expected to know this content which is necessary to ensure optimal learning.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

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## Module 4: *Relational management principles and methods* (Prof. Elena Cabiati)

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course – focused on management and middle-management functions in the field of welfare services – aims to help students develop the skills they need to become team coordinators and service coordinators, and therefore carry out organisational, administrative, technical-methodological, and networking tasks.

Starting from the concept of Relational Coordination, the course will illustrate the principles, the skills, and the technical/methodological knowledge that are necessary to face the challenges of operational practice, within complex organisational contexts and in the observance of social and health policies.

Furthermore, the course aims to guide students towards a critical analysis of the mechanisms and the dynamics (often unintentional) that may characterise welfare services and practices – at a micro and macro level – so that the responsibilities and the potential of coordinators are focused on the promotion of effective and sustainable aid measures.

At the end of the course, students will be able to identify the key concepts of relational management in the field of social and health services, as well as the strategies that may be used in the future by welfare professionals.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The module will cover the following themes and concepts from a theoretical and methodological point of view:

1. The tasks of Relational Coordinators at the management level
2. The transition from operator to coordinator
3. Teamwork and interprofessional collaboration
4. Workload management
5. Monitoring and assessing operational processes
6. The moderation and facilitation of team meetings
7. Guided reflection based on case studies
8. Professional welfare support

***READING LIST***

Il testo di riferimento del modulo è il seguente:

E. Cabiati, (2020). *Il coordinamento d'équipe passo dopo passo. Metodologia e strumenti per i Servizi di welfare.* Trento, centro Studi Erickson.

During the course further optional readings will be suggested.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures, practical classes and discussion in small groups.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam will be written and will consist of a written essay. For each exam session, the lecturer will provide three different titles for the students to chosen from. The exam will be assessed through the following criteria:

- coherent and complete content;

- connections between theory and practice;

- appropriate vocabulary and language;

- clear presentation of content;

The final mark of the Module will be expressed out of thirty

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Prerequisites*

The module has no specific prerequisite.

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Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.