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

## Prof. Maria Luisa Raineri; Prof. Elena Cabiati; Prof. Francesca Biffi

## [Module 3 is cross-listed as ‘*Social and Relational Work in Child Protection’*]

## Module 1: *Theory and Methodology of Social Work* (Prof. Maria Luisa Raineri)

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

The module aims to examine the theoretical foundations of the professional skills of social workers in the light of the relational paradigm. The aim is to present an integrated vision of professional work within local welfare systems, linking the requests of the professional level in the field (fieldwork) with those of the ‘superior’ hierarchical levels (the managerial/executive level and the political-administrative level) and with the free display of (informal or organized) care emerging from the civil society. The module will examine the main dimensions of the professional action of social workers, with particular attention to the processes of: a) help and control in micro-social contexts (from counselling to case management, work in small groups, etc.); b) responsible activation of the so-called ‘recipients’ of professional interventions, in the spirit of mutual aid and empowerment; c) social awareness and community mobilization, with attention to active citizenship; d) the involvement of social workers in the active planning of local welfare policies.

At the end of the module, students will be able to reflect on professional actions and tools within the counter-intuitive paradigm of the RSW Method. Breaking away from the conventional unilateral deterministic paradigm, students will be able to think of social work in terms of networks and procedures. Specifically, they will be able to use the *Social Pentagram* scheme as a supporting structure for their professional reflection, with reference both to the analysis of *coping processes* in the life situations of users, families and local communities, and for the interventions of the various (social and healthcare) professionals in the *fieldwork*.

***COURSE CONTENT***

1. The basics of the *Relational Social Work Method*: elements of theory of action and social relationship.

2. The international definition of Social Work and its variations in a relational key.

3. Social work in the different orientations of social policy: *welfare state, welfare mix, welfare society*.

4. Case-centred networks and differences with the case management procedure for creating ‘individualized care plans’.

5. Community networks: groups and organizations of self/mutual help, user and carer associations, civic networks for joint planning.

6. The principle of relational *empowerment* and the promotion of social capital: the involvement of users in activating projects and in active planning/management of social services. Empowerment and participation of users and active citizens in the design and co-design of interventions targeting communities

7. Observation and guidance skills of coping networks:

7.1. The identification of spontaneous coping and informal networking

7.2. The development of new networks

7.3. The formalization of coping networks

7.4. Relational facilitation in situations involving involuntary users, with particular reference to the field of juvenile protection.

***READING LIST***

F. Folgheraiter, *Fondamenti di metodologia relazionale: la logica sociale dell’aiuto,* Erickson, Trent, 2011

F. Folgheraiter, *The Mistery of Social Work: critical analysis of global definition according to relational theory,* with parallel Italian translation, Erickson, Trent, 2012.

M..L. Raineri, *Il metodoo di rete in pratica,* Erickson, Trent, 2004

For in-depth study:

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

F. Folgheraiter (edited by), *La liberalizzazione dei servizi sociali,* Erickson, Trent, 2003

F. Folgheraiter, *Scritti scelti,* Erickson, Trent, 2016 (specifically: chs. 9,13, 24, 26, 27, 38).

***TEACHING METHOD***

The module is taught through frontal lectures and group exercises.

***ASSESSMNT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

In this module, students will be assessed on the module content, the reading list and the content relating to the practical activities (available on Blackboard).

The test will be written and will consist of a paper based on a topic chosen from two or more options, or on (4-6) open-ended questions, mainly on brief analyses of operational situations. The test will last 120 minutes. The evaluation will take into account the following criteria: relevance of answer; adequacy of content; completeness and structuring of expressed concepts; presentation clarity and correct grammatical, syntactical and lexical accuracy. Particular attention will be paid to students’ ability to reason abstractly in a coherent and autonomous way (using their own words) as well as being able to connect concepts to their intrinsic operational sense.

If necessary, the lecturer may request students to take an additional oral test aimed at discussing or deepening any part of the essay. The mark will be out of thirty.

There is one final mark for all three modules of the course and will be awarded by taking into equal account the marks obtained in each module.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Given the professional nature of the course, attendance is compulsory for best learning.

The course requires students’ knowledge of some basic conceptual categories about social work (in particular: features of social work and differences with clinical professions and social policy interventions; concepts of assistance, repair, prevention, promotion). Students who come from an undergraduate course other than L39 will be provided, upon request, with a short list of preparatory readings to enhance the course learning experience.

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: *Coordination of teams and services* (Prof. Elena Cabiati; Prof. Francesca Biffi)

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

The module focuses on management and middle-management functions in welfare services. The course aims to accompany students (aspiring future team and service coordinators) in developing the knowledge, skills and sensitivity necessary to carry out organizational, administrative, technical-methodological and networking functions.

Starting with the concept of Relational Guidance, the module will examine the principles, skills and technical and methodological competences useful for supporting teams of professionals in facing the challenges of operational activities within articulated organizational contexts and within the framework of the social and socio-health policies of reference.

One the objectives of the course is to stimulate critical thinking on the (often unaware) mechanisms and dynamics that can characterize the services and aid practices, at a micro and macro level. It aims to focus on the responsibilities and potential of the coordinators in favouring effective and sustainable aid pathways.

At the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key elements of relational management for the coordination of social and socio-health services, as well as the strategies useful for this role in their near future.

***COURSE CONTENT***

During the module, the following topics and concepts will be examined, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view:

1. The Relational Guide function at managerial level
2. The transition from operator to coordinator
3. Teamwork and interprofessional collaboration
4. Workload management
5. Monitoring and evaluation of operational processes
6. Conducting and facilitating team meetings
7. Guiding reflection on case studies
8. Support for well-being of professionals

***READING LIST***

The reference textbook for the module is:

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

Further optional readings will be suggested during the course.

***TEACHING METHOD***

In addition to the frontal lectures, the course includes meetings (for a total of 10 hours) aimed at carrying out exercises and group reflections on talks by experts who carry out coordination functions within the welfare services. These meetings will be taught by Prof. Francesca Biffi.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam will be written and will consist of an essay. For each exam session, there will be three different topics for students to choose from. The test will assess students on the following elements:

* Knowledge of module content;
* Ability to link theory and practice (including critical thinking skills on acquired concepts);
* Use of appropriate vocabulary and clarity of presentation.

Students will be given a score equal to 0/0.25/0.5/0.75/1/1.25/1.5/1.75/2 for each of the three elements.

The final mark for the module will be out of thirty and will count towards the overall mark of the course ‘Theory and Methodology of Relational Social Work’.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Prerequisites*

There are no prerequisites to attend the 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: *Cross-cultural Social Work* (Prof. Elena Cabiati)

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

The module focuses on cross-cultural social work, that is social work with people, groups and communities with a migratory background. The course aims to help students develop the sensitivity, knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to direct help action that is effective and respectful of cultural differences. One of the objectives of the course is to stimulate critical thinking on the (often unintentional) mechanisms and dynamics that may produce or fuel discriminatory dynamics in welfare services and which are incompatible with the purposes of social work. Specific attention will be paid to the needs and experiences of children, teenagers and families in the juvenile protection system.

At the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key elements of cross-cultural social work, as well as the strategies which are useful for exercising anti-discrimination practice.

***COURSE CONTENT***

During the module, the following topics and concepts will be examined, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view:

1. Otherness, culture and cross-culture in social work

2. The historical roots of cross-cultural social work

3. Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism: critical approaches and operational styles for social work

4. The relational approach in cross-cultural social work

5. Language barriers and collaboration with linguistic and cultural mediators

6. Service culture, inclusion and exclusion mechanisms

7. The relationship between culture and violence in social work interventions

8. Psycho-social investigation with migrant families

9. The cross-cultural variable in foster care and community care

10. Assistance of immigrant women facing violence and with unaccompanied foreign minors

***READING LIST***

The main reference textbook is as follows:

E. Cabiati, (2020). *Intercultura e social work. Teoria e metodo per le relazioni di aiuto,* Erickson, Trent.

Further optional material will be suggested during lectures.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures, practical activities and small group discussions.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam will be written. The written test consists of 7 open-ended questions (each question will be assigned a mark equal to 0/0.25/0.5/0.75/1 based on correctness and completeness of answers. Among the assessment criteria, the students’ ability to develop links between theoretical concepts and practical/operative instances will be taken into consideration.

The final mark for the module will be out of thirty and will count towards the overall mark of the course ‘Theory and Methodology of Relational Social Work’

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Prerequisites*

There are no prerequisites to attend the 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.