

Social Work (integrating: Social Work, Social Education)

Also relevant for Social Education, Special Education Studies and Nursing

Course: Social Education, Social Education

Group of courses: Law, Economics and Social Sciences

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Course objectives:

Knowledge: Students should be made aware of the social construction processes of gender and related gender attributions and expectations, which are reproduced at individual, institutional and societal levels. They have knowledge of intersectional institutionalisation processes of gender-related inequality (in conjunction with cultural affiliation, social background, age, disability and sexual orientation) and should understand the significance of gender relations for the various fields of action in social work.

Skills: Students should be able to develop and apply gender-reflective and deconstructive strategies as well as concepts for breaking down hierarchies and democratising gender relations (and the associated social inequalities), to put them in relation with other strategies of social inequality and to evaluate these approaches.

Wider competences: Students should gain personal and subject-related gender, diversity and anti-racist competences for dealing with difference (related to organisations and activities). They should also become capable of reflecting professional actions and attitudes (towards clients, in teams and management positions) in terms of culture and gender and of initiating corresponding learning processes while providing scientific support.

Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

The history of social work has always been a gendered history. Since the beginning of the 20th century, questions of gender relationships and gender relations have been debated in the field: They reflect the historical development and relativity of gender constructs and simultaneously influence the emerging social professions. To this day, gender is an influential category for social work:

- on the individual level, social workers relate to their clients as women or men and are perceived as such by their clients
- on the institutional level, the help and support offered by social work always entails a reaction to social gender and the associated attributions
- on the societal level, social work is confronted with specific life situations and problems, but also with the structural disadvantages and discrimination of gender groups (women as victims of violent partners, victims of sexual or racial harassment, etc.)

An additional factor is that care work is perceived as a female task in our society, and thus, social work is considered to be a typically female profession. This means that social work not only faces the manifestation of gender hierarchies in the areas and social problems it deals with. It is rather part of these hierarchies itself in the sense of 'doing gender'. It not only reacts to social problems, but also creates them through its specific perception, naming and programming of social phenomena.

Gender studies have prompted a wide range of analyses of gender relations and gender-reflexive strategies and concepts for fields of action in social work. Those carrying out this research come from the fields of social work and social education/educational science, as well as from sociology, psychology, political science, medicine, law and economics backgrounds. Like social work itself, their contributions are very practice-oriented and interdisciplinary.

Gender studies have mainly contributed to social work in the following areas (this list makes no claim to completeness):

Social work and social problems:

Gender issues are socially positioned in a complicated manner within social work, in power relations and interpretations of social reality. They can only be appropriately analysed and described with regard to the specific situation and context in question and in conjunction with further issues of social inequality. Research fields include:

- violence in gender relations (physical and sexualised violence against women and children, structural violence, legal aspects, etc.)
- difficult life experiences of women and men (such as sickness, unemployment, drug addiction, homelessness, persecution and flight, racism, etc.)
- body-related expectations that discriminate women and men in various ways (beauty norms, attribution of unequal abilities, age stereotypes, etc.)
- societal changes and their influence on the gendered division of labour in production and reproduction, social security, migration processes, etc.

Fields and target groups of social work:

Social work includes caring tasks organised by society, combating social problems and helping those affected to organise themselves. The broad range of fields and target groups mean that the subjects of empirical studies, theoretical analyses and gender-reflexive support and educational concepts are correspondingly broad. The examples below give a basic idea of some research fields:

- working with children and young people: enhancing the chances of realising more sexual and physical diversity, criticising the traditional care and breadwinner model
- working with families: critique of unjust gender arrangements, combating domestic violence against women and children, working with perpetrators
- social services: implementing gender mainstreaming and diversity management in organisations and planning, quality standards and controlling measures
- health work: gender-specific commonalities and differences in health behaviour, disease patterns, substance dependency
- working in a (post-)migrant society: supporting women and men with and without migration biographies
- working with the elderly: acceptance and support for differing lifestyles of older women and men in all life situations

Social work as a profession:

Social work is no longer an unbroken symbol of gendered labour. In fact, gender-differentiated attributions such as voluntary and client-based work for women, and full-time work in management positions for men appear rather dysfunctional in this modern, rationalised and economically organised social service profession. The professionalisation of social work has also been accompanied by changes in symbolic gender arrangements, making the profession more attractive for qualified women and men. However, empirical studies on the link between organisation and gender have found temporal disparities which can also apply to social work, as an area still dominated by women. According to these studies, gender differences lose their relevance, but are at the same time subtly conveyed and renewed in specific contexts and situations. Issues of social inequality between men and women in the field of social work are thus still virulent.

Social work as a discipline:

Gender-related theories in social work science were rare in the past. Recent publications now illustrate the increasing awareness of gender as a category of inequality in social work theory building. Theories on social construction processes of gender and intersectionality, and occasionally also on body-related, queer and post-colonial concepts are particularly being considered.

Qualification processes:

The ability to reflect on one's professional attitudes and behaviour in a gender-conscious way is essential for quality assurance in social work. This requires that gender is anchored in the general discourses of social work (in teaching and research, training and further education). In other words, there is a need for a debate on professionalisation and quality, which makes gender-conscious reflection an essential element of professional social work. Women's and gender studies have already made significant progress in this direction.

Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:

Like other diversity aspects, gender issues cut across all areas of social work, and should thus ideally be integrated into all modules ("Social Work as a Profession", "Social Work as a Science", "Concepts and Methods", "Social and Legal Parameters", "Fields and Projects", "Social Management", "Supervision and Training", "BA and MA Thesis"). However, this means that teaching staff must be qualified to address gender issues: the university should undertake the necessary training, accompanied by an evaluation process.

An additional gender and/or diversity module can be integrated into Bachelor's and/or Master's curricula (with the specific level of knowledge and skills).

Modules could be made up of the following elements:

- basic theories and empirical findings of the social constructivist and ethno-methodological gender and diversity perspectives
- basic theories and empirical findings of the socio-structural perspective of gender in conjunction with other dimensions of social inequality (intersectional perspective)
- gender/diversity in social work fields: empirical studies on target groups and professionals in care professions and critical discussion of concepts of help and education
- gender mainstreaming/managing diversity: academic findings and methods for teaching personal and professional skills, promoting gender-inclusive conditions in organisations and enabling specialists to (co-)design GM processes
- gender/diversity as a political perspective, e.g. human rights/anti-discrimination/anti-racist perspectives, debates on social justice and critical evaluation of social movements in Europe and the rest of the world

Degree Stage:

At Bachelor's level, gender issues should be an integral part of all modules throughout the course of study. If, in addition, a gender or diversity module is offered, it can take place in either semester. During the practical phase, students have the opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge on gender and diversity competences to the respective fields of action and to critically reflect upon their effects on target groups and team constellations taking gender and anti-racist aspects into account.

At Master's level, students should deepen their knowledge of these issues, e.g. in study projects or by developing research topics for seminar papers or the Master's thesis.

Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

- Bereswill, Mechthild (2016): Hat Soziale Arbeit ein Geschlecht? Antworten von Mechthild Bereswill. Freiburg: Lambertus.
- Bütow, Birgit/Munsch, Chantal (Hg.) (2017): Soziale Arbeit und Geschlecht. Herausforderungen jenseits von Universalisierung und Essentialisierung (Forum Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung Band 34). Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Czollek, Leah C./Perko, Gudrun/Weinbach, Heike (2009): Lehrbuch Gender und Queer: Grundlagen, Methoden und Praxisfelder (Studienmodule Soziale Arbeit). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Ehler, Gudrun/Funk, Heide/Stecklina, Gerd (Hg.) (2011): Wörterbuch der Sozialen Arbeit und Geschlecht. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Giebeler, Cornelia/Rademacher, Claudia/Schulze, Erika (Hg.) (2013): Race, class, gender, body in Handlungsfeldern der Sozialen Arbeit: Theoretische Zugänge und qualitative Forschungen. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Gruber, Christine/Fröschl, Elfriede (Hg.) (2001): Gender-Aspekte in der Sozialen Arbeit. Wien: Czernin.
- Kessl, Fabian/Plöcker, Melanie (Hg.) (2010): Differenzierung, Normalisierung, Andersheit. Soziale Arbeit als Arbeit mit den Anderen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Lutz, Helma/Amelina, Anna (2017): Gender, Migration, Transnationalisierung. Eine intersektionale Einführung. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Rose, Lotte/May, Michael (Hg.) (2014): Mehr Männer in die Soziale Arbeit!? Kontroversen, Konflikte und Konkurrenzen. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- Sabla, Kim-Patrick/ Plöcker, Melanie (Hg.) (2013): Gendertheorien und Theorien Sozialer Arbeit. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.

Journals:

Occasional articles can be found in:

- Gender. Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft. | [Website](#)
- Zeitschrift für Frauenforschung & Geschlechterstudien.
- FZG – Freiburger Zeitschrift für GeschlechterStudien. | [Website](#)
- Widersprüche. Zeitschrift für sozialistische Politik im Bildungs-, Gesundheits- und Sozialbereich. | [Website](#)
- neue praxis. Zeitschrift für Sozialarbeit, Sozialpädagogik und Sozialpolitik. | [Website](#)
- sozialmagazin. Die Zeitschrift für Soziale Arbeit. | [Website](#)
- Betrifft Mädchen. | [Website](#)