



Course information 2011–12

SC3057 Social policy

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of social policy in economically developed welfare states. Because it is not possible to cover all aspects of this complex social science discipline in one programme of study, this course concentrates on the theoretical and ideological foundations of social policy before moving on to explore the nature of welfare in a range of different countries.

Prerequisite

None apply.

Aims and objectives

In particular, the course aims to:

- Introduce you to key concepts in social policy such as 'welfare', 'need', 'poverty', 'citizenship' and 'exclusion'.
- Examine competing ideological approaches to 'welfare', looking particularly at neo-liberal, social democratic, 'third way', Marxist, feminist, anti-racist and anti-disablist perspectives.
- Introduce you to key contemporary debates in social policy – in particular: the nature of policy making, and its impact on service users, and the challenge of 'globalisation'.
- Introduce and critically analyse the concept of 'welfare regime'.
- Provide an overview of the different welfare systems operating in 'advanced' welfare states.
- Critically explore the nature of welfare and the delivery of social policy in key regime types.
- Examine the development of social policy in supra-national context (e.g. the European Union, institutions of global governance).

Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list.

- Alcock, P., K. Rowlingson and M. May *The Student's Companion to Social Policy*. (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Baldock, J., N. Manning and D. Vickerstaff *Social Policy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Hill, M. *Social Policy in the Modern World* (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Pierson, C. and F. Castles (eds) *The Welfare State Reader* (Cambridge: Polity)

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- ✓ demonstrate an understanding of the complexities associated with the study of social policy as a core subject area in the social sciences.
- ✓ discuss and critically analyse key social policy ideas and concepts.
- ✓ compare and contrast competing ideological perspectives on welfare.
- ✓ demonstrate a familiarity with key social policy debates – particularly where these relate to the nature and impact of 'globalization' and the nature of welfare state change in contemporary societies.
- ✓ use the 'welfare regime' concept to discuss how concepts of 'welfare', and welfare systems themselves, are constructed in different societies.
- ✓ use examples from particular areas of social policy (e.g. labour market policies, health policies, social care) to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of different welfare systems.
- ✓ describe and critically analyse the 'governance' of social policy at national, regional and supra-national levels.

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three hour unseen written examination.

Syllabus

This is a description of the material to be examined, as published in the *Regulations*. On registration, students will receive a detailed subject guide which provides a framework for covering the topics in the syllabus and directions to the essential reading

The syllabus comprises the following topics:
The nature of social policy as an academic discipline within the social sciences. Key contemporary issues in social policy, including the nature of policy-making, the 'mixed economy of welfare' and the nature of 'globalisation'.

Key concepts and principles in social policy: need, poverty and risk; social citizenship and 'belonging'; equality and social inclusion/exclusion.

Key ideological positions and debates: neo-liberalism, Marxism, democratic socialism and the 'third way'; feminism and anti-racism; disability.

Key issues in social policy: the impact (if any) of 'globalisation' and the nature of global economic pressures; shifts in welfare provision – aspects of welfare state retrenchment including conditionality, personal responsibility and 'workfare'; policy delivery – the respective merits of the mixed economy of welfare: state, private and voluntary sectors; financing welfare – general taxation, user charging and means testing.

Comparative social policy (1): Welfare regimes. An introduction to, and critical assessment of, Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typology.

Comparative social policy (2): the nature of policy provision in some key welfare regimes, taking examples from pensions, health policies and social care. Countries include: Australia, USA, UK; Sweden, Denmark; the Netherlands, Germany, France; Japan, S. Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Supranational challenges to national welfare systems: the role of the European Union; possibilities for the 'global governance' of welfare.

Students should consult the *Programme Regulations for degrees and diplomas in Economics, Management, Finance and the Social Sciences* that are reviewed annually. The Prerequisites, Exclusions, and Syllabus are subject to confirmation in the *Regulations*. Notice is also given in the *Regulations* of any courses which are being phased out and students are advised to check course availability.