

Social Work Theories: decolonizing social work

Teaching periods

Tuesday 14 February 2023, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Introduction – Decolonising social work: Kris Clarke & B.Waldis

Wednesday 15 February 2023, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Community work & social welfare: B. Waldis

Thursday 16 February 2023, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Historical perspective & research methods: B. Waldis

Friday 17 February 2023, 9h15-12h45; 13h45-17h15: Epistemology & social work training: B. Waldis

Teaching team

Kris Clarke, Social Work Professor, University of Helsinki (14 February 2023)

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS (14 February – 17 February 2023)

Marta Marques Castanheira, Assistant

Content

The seminar starts from the international definition of social work with the premises of social change for more social justice and the consideration of different types of knowledge and deals with different dimensions of "decolonising social work". After an introductory day with Kris Clarke and a discussion on her text on epistemic decolonisation of social work (2022), the seminar does focus on different dimensions relevant in social work: the community work dimension, the intervention & professional dimension and the epistemological & training related dimension.

The term "decolonising" is used broadly, yet it bears a fundamental critique of power relations in all the social work dimensions cited above and also in terms of advocacy (Spivak 1985). Seen in this light, the term is suitable for discussing the contradictions that any critical social work has to deal with: geopolitical (post-)colonial entanglements and blocking out, the national legal frameworks for social work and social policy, the power structures in organisations and the power relations in social relationships with the addressees.

The seminar aims to raise awareness of international power relations, because they influence the framework conditions of social work, mostly national in character. In addition, the seminar is dedicated to a critical perspective on a current theoretical debate in social work. Finally, the seminar offers space for discussion about the limits within which decolonising social work can be implemented in the practice of intervention, research and theory-based teaching.

- What does in fact mean the notion of decolonising and how does it relate to the notion of post-coloniality or a perspective from the margins?
- How much do we need to de-globalise social work when adopting a decolonising social work perspective?
- What does "decolonising social work" imply regarding decentring social work theory from concepts coined by European and Anglo-Saxon academia?
- What are the consequences for research methods, organisations, interventions and training if decolonising social work is taken seriously?
- What new historical perspective on social work in Switzerland would a decolonising perspective entail?

Evaluation Form

Read, summarize, present & discuss theoretical texts, find & use relevant sources of critique, imagine possible applications (consult moodle platform for specific tasks)

Learning Goals

- To know the concept of decolonising social work imbedded in a theoretical background and with relevant dimensions for social work
- To be able to argue the salience of a decolonising social work perspective for a specific topic
- To reflect the societal context in Switzerland regarding decolonising social work

Transferable Competences

- To be able to discuss a theoretically founded perspective of a key concept
- To be able to argue the relevance of a key concept for a given dimension of a discipline
- To be able to reflect the societal context for a given key concept

Selected Bibliography

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- Clarke, Kris. 2022. « Reimagining Social Work Ancestry: Toward Epistemic Decolonization ». *Affilia* 37 (2): 266-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099211051326>.
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- Tomicic, Ana, et Filomena Berardi. 2018. « Between Past and Present: The Sociopsychological Constructs of Colonialism, Coloniality and Postcolonialism ». *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 52 (1): 152-75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9407-5>.
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