

## Syllabus

### Course description

<b>Course title:</b>	Information and communication skills for Social Work
<b>Course year:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Semester:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Course code:</b>	51042
<b>Scientific sector:</b>	M-PED/03
<b>Degree:</b>	Bachelor in Social work
<b>Lecturer:</b>	Dr. Valentina Gobbett Bamber
<b>Credits:</b>	2
<b>Total lecturing hours:</b>	30
<b>Total Hours of availability for students and tutoring:</b>	6
<b>Office hours:</b>	Teams tutorials with students, individually / in pairs / in small groups, can be organized flexibly so as to meet students' needs (see 'Teaching format' below) through emailing <a href="mailto:Valentina.Bamber@unibz.it">Valentina.Bamber@unibz.it</a>
<b>Attendance:</b>	According to the regulation
<b>Teaching language:</b>	English
<b>Propaedeutic course:</b>	none
<b>Course description:</b>	<p>The course focuses on information and communication aspects of professional engagement in social work. Topics and themes dealt with stem from socio-constructivist conceptualisations of human communication. Such themes include social work-specific aspects of <b>communication skills</b> in the light of the currently widespread implementation of <b>digital technologies</b> in social work practice. Themes in focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles</li> <li>- Purposes</li> <li>- Access</li> <li>- Developing an understanding of empathetic communication through digital technologies</li> <li>- Developing empathetic communication capabilities and continuing professional development through digital technologies</li> <li>- Developing an awareness of digital communication skills in multicultural settings</li> <li>- Ethical aspects</li> <li>- Creativity and innovation</li> <li>- Challenges</li> <li>- Opportunities and affordances</li> </ul> <p>In relation to digital environment interactions, the course focuses on specific challenges and constraints, opportunities and affordances arising from the use of digital technologies as they can be seen to impact communication in social work settings.</p> <p>The course additionally includes a brief introduction to conversation analysis transcription conventions as relevant to social work domains in order to 1. provide relevant data for analyses of social interactions, and 2. foster an awareness of, and the development of, capabilities in principled communication in a range of diverse online social work settings.</p>
<b>Specific educational objectives:</b>	Educational objectives for the course include supporting the development of participants' knowledge and judgement, applied / enacted knowledge (professional capabilities / skills) vis-à-vis digital environment communication in social work domains. This is carried out through a variety of activities and tasks which additionally aim to support holistically the students' awareness and

	engagement in lifelong learning / professional development strategies.
<b>List of topics covered:</b>	<p>Digital technologies and communication skills in social work</p> <p>Socio-constructivist worldviews of human communication</p> <p>Empathy and digital technologies</p> <p>Active listening and digital technologies</p> <p>Communicating in multicultural settings: cultural and linguistic issues</p> <p>Creativity and innovation in communication through digital technologies</p> <p>Reflexivity</p> <p>Data-driven reflexivity and skills development: analysing online communication</p>
<b>Teaching format:</b>	<p>Integrated approach combining interactive lectures, individual / pair- / small group tasks supported by appropriate readings, input in a range of media, ongoing lecturer feedback, and project work.</p> <p>Lectures are delivered <i>interactively</i> via Teams. Given the emphasis on the development of the students' information and communication capabilities for their professional domains in a range of settings, the lectures are designed to be of optimum benefit to students through lecturer-supported <u>synchronous participation via Teams</u>. Students are warmly encouraged to <u>participate actively, and to ask questions at all times: before / during / after lectures through Teams, and at other times via email.</u></p> <p><u>In the case of students who have work commitments and/or any students who wish to engage in additional lecturer-supported activities, such lectures are complemented by Teams tutorials with students in small groups on the basis of their requirements (see 'Office hours' above).</u></p>
<b>Learning outcomes:</b>	<p>In relation to <b>knowledge and understanding</b>, on completing the course students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have deepened and expanded their awareness of issues pertaining to communication through digital technologies within socio-constructivist worldviews</li> <li>- have deepened their grasp of issues relating to communication skills in a range of social work domains</li> <li>- have deepened their grasp of issues relating to the widespread use of digital technologies in social work domains, as well as of the communication challenges and affordances that this entails</li> </ul> <p>In relation to <b>applying knowledge and understanding</b>, on completing the course students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply their knowledge of communication skills in social work domains through anticipating issues potentially arising from specific online practice settings</li> <li>- apply their knowledge of communication skills in social work domains through practice and/or authentic online synchronous meetings / interviews with appropriate participants</li> </ul> <p>In relation to <b>making judgements</b>, on completing the course students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to critically assess theoretical and ethical aspects of digital environment communication skills in a range of social work domains</li> <li>- be able to critically assess their own developing digital communication competences</li> <li>- be able to critically assess the suitability of communicative skills and strategies in a range of contexts</li> </ul> <p>In relation to <b>digital environment communication skills</b>, on completing the course students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- show a developing ability to implement widely-recommended communication strategies</li> <li>- show a developing ability to demonstrate sensitive listening</li> <li>- show a developing ability to attend to non-verbal aspects of communication</li> <li>- show a developing ability to attend to <i>self</i> aspects of communication in social work domains</li> <li>- show a developing ability to communicate sensitively and appropriately in a range of interactive practice <i>and</i> academic contexts</li> </ul>

	<p>In relation to <b>learning skills</b>, on completing the course students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have expanded their understanding of their own preferred professional development pathways in relation to the course focus</li> <li>- have engaged in personal / shared reflection on/in their own developing digital communication skills in sustainable ways</li> <li>- have expanded their ability to transcribe and analyse <i>brief</i> excerpts from online practice and/or authentic meetings / interviews in social work domains, to include non-verbal aspects of communication whenever appropriate, according to conversation analysis (CA) conventions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment:</b></p>	<p><b>Oral examination</b></p> <p>The individual oral examination focuses on coursework / projects and tasks undertaken by students, and decided on by each student with the lecturer as appropriate during lectures and tutorials.</p> <p>The examination further entails a discussion of course-related themes, of the student's developing awareness and understanding of communication skills in a range of social work settings, and of each student's reflections on and awareness of their communication skills / professional development strategies for social work.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks:</b></p>	<p><b>Assessment Criteria – Continuous Assessment:</b></p> <p>Students are assessed on the basis of their active ongoing engagement in course activities, individual and/or group projects and tasks.</p> <p><b>Assessment Criteria – Oral Examination:</b></p> <p>Students are assessed on the basis of their critical understanding of course-related issues, on their developing professional communication skills, and on their related critical reflections.</p> <p><b>Assessment Weighting:</b></p> <p>Active engagement in course / tutorial activities as appropriate: 35%  Project work informed by lecturer feedback: 35%  Oral examination: 30%</p>
<p><b>Required readings:</b></p>	<p>Woodcock Ross, J. (2016). <i>Specialist Communication Skills for Social Workers: Developing professional capability</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: Palgrave.</p> <p><u>All course readings / materials / links / sources are made available in Teams / OLE prior to / during the course.</u></p>
<p><b>Supplementary readings:</b></p>	<p><u>Chapter 14:</u> Adams, R., Dominelli, L., and Payne, M. (Eds.) (2009). <i>Social Work: Themes, Issues and Critical Debates</i> (Third Edition). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.</p> <p>Clarke, J., Lovelock, R., and McNay, M. (2016). <i>Liberal Arts and the Development of Emotional Intelligence in Social Work Education</i>. The British Journal of Social Work. 46: 3, pp. 635–651. <a href="https://doi-org.libproxy.unibz.it/10.1093/bjsw/bcu139">https://doi-org.libproxy.unibz.it/10.1093/bjsw/bcu139</a></p> <p>Goldkind, L., Wolf, L., and Freddolino, P. P. (Eds.) (2019). <i>Digital Social Work: Tools for Practice with Individuals, Organizations, and Communities</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Lynch, A, Newlands, F, Forrester, D. (2019). <i>What does empathy sound like in social work communication? A mixed-methods study of empathy in child protection social work practice</i>. Child &amp; Family Social Work. 24: 139– 147. <a href="https://doi-org.libproxy.unibz.it/10.1111/cfs.12591">https://doi-org.libproxy.unibz.it/10.1111/cfs.12591</a></p>