

B.A. Social Sciences, University of Augsburg

Research Seminar I

'Social Downturn' or Social Security for All? Expansion and Crisis of the European Welfare State

Wednesday, 10h15-13h45

Summer term 2021

Dr. Mechthild Roos

I. Course contents & desired learning outcomes

This research seminar is dedicated to a classic subject in comparative politics: the welfare state. In the course of the first semester of this two-semester course, we will approach the large area of welfare-state studies from the perspective of far-reaching – and often enough simultaneous – developments shaping welfare states across Europe in the recent past and present. Among these processes are those of 'social downturn', that is, of the gradual dismantling of welfare-state services. Such processes stand in stark contrast to political efforts of ascertaining and expanding the provision of social security for all (or select, based on certain conditions/notions) residents of a certain area. In this research seminar, we try to understand and explain what factors and actors influence these opposing developments, and what political outcomes they produce.

To this end, we first develop a fundamental understanding of the research area, its main themes, terminology, definitions, and research approaches. We then turn to various typologies of welfare-state regimes, as well as important actors, regulatory systems and the distribution of competences in the area of the welfare state and of social policy in the European multi-level governance system. Building on this basis of expertise, the course participants eventually design their own research projects on specific issues relating to the development of welfare states and the associated policies and politics in the European context.

II. Reading guidance

The reading material for the preparation of each unit is accessible via Digicampus. The contents of each unit build on the knowledge provided by the respective reading material. It is therefore expected that every student reads the respective texts for each unit and actively engages with them, as we will also do during the course sessions. Students may also use the reading material as basis for the unit tasks, as well as the final assessment.

III. Requirements for successful completion of the course

Within the scope of this seminar, the following is asked of the participating students:

- a) Active course participation in both synchronous and asynchronous elements of the course,
- b) Active engagement with the reading material,

- c) Individual tasks within each unit,
- d) Written final assessment: detailed research outline of for an individual (ca. 25 pages) or small-group (length depending on group size) research project, to be conducted during the second part of the research seminar (winter term 2021/22).

IV. Access to the virtual sessions via Zoom

You can access the virtual seminar sessions via the following Zoom link:

[Link deleted]

V. Class Policies

Please make sure to actively participate in all units, including both the respective synchronous and asynchronous elements. This is a precondition for passing the course, since you need to complete every unit in order not only to reach all learning goals, but to complete all required tasks. In case of questions or concerns, or if you are in need of any information not included in this syllabus, please contact the teacher directly before or after the course sessions, via e-mail or via Digicampus. Due to the pandemic, office hours take place virtually (Zoom) or by phone, either directly before or after the sessions, or on individually agreed dates.

VI. Syllabus

Unit 0 (virtual session on 14 April): Introduction

Unit 1 (virtual session on 21 April): Terms, concepts, typologisation approaches and a view into current welfare-state research

*Recommended text: Christoph Butterwegge (2018): Krise und Zukunft des Sozialstaates. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. **Assigned reading: Preface & Chapter 1 'Grundlagen und Organisationsstrukturen des Sozialstaates', pp. 9-36.***

Assignment for unit 1:

Instead of a course-internal virtual session on 28 April, all participants are invited to participate in (at least) one panel/keynote lecture of the virtual conference 'Europäische Sozialmodelle im Krisenmodus?!' (29-30 April 2021, please register [here](#) [for free, of course] by 27 April), organised by the Hans Böckler Foundation and the working group on welfare state research within the German Political Science Association (DVPW).

The assignment for unit 1 is aligned to your participation in (a part of) this conference: Please write a comment in which you summarise and discuss for your fellow course participants the main subjects, findings and arguments covered in a select conference session. This comment may either have the form of

- a) a live comment (similar to a Twitter feed), to be posted as thread of forum entries on Digicampus; or
- b) as a concise text of ca. 400-500 words, to be uploaded on Digicampus by 5 May.

Please provide as part of your comment a reading recommendation for your fellow course participants allowing them to deepen their knowledge on the subject(s) of your selected panel/keynote (scientific article or book chapter).

Unit 2 (virtual session on 12 May): Give and take I – Governance of the welfare state

Assigned reading: Tanja Klenk (2019): 'Akteure der Sozialpolitik', in Herbert Obinger & Manfred G. Schmidt (eds.): Handbuch Sozialpolitik, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 77-95.

Assignment for unit 2:

Create a GIF/podcast/caricature/poem/short story/[whatever other creative format suits you] on a specific socio-political challenge of our time. Please upload your creation on Digicampus by 18 May.

Unit 3 (virtual session on 26 May.): Give and take II – Participation in the welfare state

Recommended texts: Berthold Dietz, Bernhard Frevel & Katrin Toens (2015): Sozialpolitik kompakt, Wiesbaden: Springer VS. Assigned reading: Chapter 4 'Soziale Probleme und Zielgruppen der Sozialpolitik', pp. 113-138.

Femke Roosma, Wim van Oorschot & John Gelissen (2016): 'The Achilles' heel of welfare state legitimacy: perceptions of overuse and underuse of social benefits in Europe', Journal of European Public Policy, 23:2, pp. 177-196.

Assignment for unit 3:

Write a short policy brief on a current socio-political/welfare-state issue of your choice. You may write the policy brief on your own (ca. 2-3 pages) or in a team of two (ca. 4-5 pages). Please upload your policy brief on Digicampus by 1 June.

Unit 4 (virtual session on 9 June): Data, methods, theories – Approaches for your own research project

Recommended texts: Ursula Dallinger (2016): Sozialpolitik im internationalen Vergleich, Konstanz & München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft. Assigned reading: Chapter 2 'Theorien des Sozialstaats', pp. 25-44.

Agnes Orban & Christine Trampusch (2019): 'Fallstudien und Methoden', in Herbert Obinger & Manfred G. Schmidt (eds.): Handbuch Sozialpolitik, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 361-381.

Assignment for unit 4:

Draft a cheatsheet on essential elements, helpful strategies, and dos&don'ts in conducting and writing up a research project. Incorporate in your drafting process your personal experiences in the preparation of small-scale research projects and written assessments, but also of essays, presentations, and any other format that has provided you with relevant insights. Reflect furthermore what some scientific publications may have taught you, directly or indirectly: what did they convincingly implement and communicate, what less so? What inspiration might they offer for your own research process?

Please upload your cheatsheet on Digicampus by 15 June.

Unit 5 (virtual session on 23 June): Project development phase

Recommended text: Josef Schmid (2010): Wohlfahrtsstaaten im Vergleich. Soziale Sicherung in Europa: Organisation, Finanzierung, Leistungen und Probleme, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Assigned reading: Chapter 3 'Wege und Stand der Forschung zum Wohlfahrtsstaatsvergleich', pp. 86-126.

Assignment for unit 5:

Develop a concrete *case* for a political science study falling within the thematic scope of our course, based on the knowledge you have developed throughout the previous units regarding governance, actors and participation structures within European welfare states. Outline this case, its inherent elements, framing and delimitation, i.a. as regards the examined subject, the local and temporal framing. Please bring this outline with you to our virtual session on 23 June.

Unit 6 (virtual session on 7 July): Presentation of the research projects & concluding discussion