

The Welfare State In Europe

Modular value: 20 credits

Duration: Term 1

Teaching: 2 hours per week

Lecturer: Isabelle Hertner

The provision of welfare is one of the core points of intersection between the state and the market. Particularly post World War II, Europe hailed the welfare state as a cornerstone of the European social and economic model which offered protection against social risks such as old age, unemployment and illness and at the same time facilitated economic growth. More recently, traditional systems of welfare have come under pressure as a result of demographic changes, globalisation and modernisation processes. Some have argued that these social processes have rendered the welfare state at a competitive disadvantage and made it unsustainable in the longer term.

The module focuses on the changing fortunes of the welfare state by concentrating on three main areas/themes. The first set of lectures look at macro-economic conditions and different national variants of welfare state development in Europe. The second block of lectures deal with the crisis of the welfare state resulting from globalisation processes and the rising dominance of neoliberal policies. Pressures for retrenchment and recalibration are investigated, based on different theoretical approaches to crisis analysis. The third group of lectures uses the new social risks approach which stresses challenges such as the reconciliation of work and family life and the 'problem' of low skills in a knowledge-based economy. While traditional welfare systems are mainly shaped by national policy action, the new risks agenda is heavily influenced by the EU. Thus, the module analyses both nation states' and the EU's involvement in welfare provisioning, using political economy approaches

By the end of the module the student should be able to:

- demonstrate a theoretically informed and comprehensive understanding of concepts relating to the welfare state and welfare provisioning in Europe
- evaluate critically different approaches to the analysis of the welfare state and apply them properly to given research questions
- engage in discussions concerning theoretical debates and political issues in European welfare discourse.

Assessment

- Term one: 1 x 4500 word essay 90%
- Term one: 1 x oral presentation 10%