



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

SLUkurs

Syllabus

PVSo140 Food ethics, 4.5 credits

Syllabus approved

2016-11-25

Subjects

Food Science

Education cycle

Third cycle

Grading scale

Pass / Failed

The requirements for attaining different grades are described in the course assessment criteria which are contained in a supplement to the course syllabus. Current information on assessment criteria shall be made available at the start of the course.

Language

English

Prior knowledge

Admitted to a postgraduate program in natural or social science or humanities, or arts, or to a residence program in e.g. veterinary medicine.

Objective, including learning outcomes

After completing the course the students will be able to:

-Identify ethical issues in the food chain, including those related to e.g. food security,

food safety, feed efficiency, genetic modification, sustainable development, water supply, and food from animal origin.

-Explain and reflect on the interaction between ethics and science in relation to food issues.

-Describe and use a number of normative ethical theories (e.g. utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, and contractarianism) on issues within food production, distribution and consumption (e.g. such as those mentioned above, point one)

-Reflect on a nuanced level on the role of social context, culture, religion and ethical norms in decisions regarding food.

-Reflect on a nuanced level on the own role in the food chain as a ‘responsible scientist’

-Chose an ethically relevant issue in the food chain, formulate an ethical standpoint how to handle the issue, followed by a discussion of pro and contra arguments for this position.

-If applicable, elaborate on ethical aspects in her/his own doctoral project.

Content

The course is divided into three parts, where part one and two are the same as the entire Food ethics course on 3 ects.

The first part contains an overview of ethical theory and an introduction to food ethics issues and literature. The second part of the course is structured in along the four steps of the food chain - production, distribution, consumption, and waste – which is the structural backbone of the course. Different parts of the chain are approached through themes, for instance, food security, food safety, sustainable development, water supply, meat eating and genetic modification. They all offer different insights and challenges to the four steps of food chain. In order to handle such challenges, a range of perspectives are helpful, for instance normative ethical standpoints, culture and religion offer different models of handling ethical issues within the food chain including those related to the role of researchers and scientists. The third part is an individual essay, if applicable on a topic related to the own doctoral project.

During part one and two lectures and seminars will be hold. In order to ‘learn’ ethics practice in listening to other’s opinions, formulating relevant questions and exercise in ethical discernment is necessary. Hence the course offers mandatory seminars for discussion of different themes where active participation is required to create a learning community over the course period. Further there will be a web-based task for discussion and interaction on a topical food ethics issue, and guest lecturers will be invited.

Requirements for examination

During part one and two students are expected to attend and actively participate at least 80% of lectures and mandatory seminars, and to write two individual assignments during the course period. For part three fulfilling a writing task is requested, preferably on an ethical issue in the participant's own project. If applicable, it might be structured to fit into the doctoral thesis (either in the introduction of the book, or in one of the scientific papers). This part starts with a seminar discussing possible topics, and continues with individual work while supervision is available from one of the course teacher, and ends with presentations of the individual ethical elaborations during a seminar open to all course participants.

Additional information

Course leader is Helena Röcklinsberg, dept. of Animal environment and health, but the course will be performed in close collaboration with Per Sandin, dept. of Crop Production Ecology, sharing lectures and seminars equally. In addition, we plan to invite two guest lecturers.

Possibility to participate through video link or the like for participants from other SLU campuses

There will be one lecture and one seminar (à 2 hrs) each week over a period of seven weeks. In addition a seminar on how to write an essay is offered, and students give their presentations at a final seminar attended also by students taking the 3 ECTS-course in Food ethics. If students agree, this seminar can be offered openly at SLU.

Responsible department

Department of Animal Environment and Health