



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

SLUkurs

Syllabus

PNG0006 Analytical writing, 4.5 credits

Syllabus approved

2006-01-11

Subjects

Other Social 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

Registered Ph D student

Objective, including learning outcomes

Develop participant's abilities to

- think critically and to clearly express thoughts in writing
- look for alternative explanations, analyse arguments, look for and test assumptions

and consider counter examples

- organise ideas, arguments and evidence into linear progression and systematically test the structure for holes or weaknesses in the analysis or evidence
- develop the structure of an article and the style in which it is written

Content

‘For the Sake of Argument, then, one must never let a euphemism or a false consolation pass uncontested. The truth seldom lies, but when it does lie it lies somewhere in between’ (Christopher Hitchens, (1993), For the Sake of Argument, Verso, London & New York, p.3.)

The course will consist of the following components

Initial readings when participants will be required to read the course background texts. A close familiarity with these will be required for the taught part of the course which will combine lectures with seminars and small task assignments

A written assignment, which will be a critical review of a paper that will be provided. This will provide the basis of the course assessment

The course will not assume any specific content knowledge but the material will largely be drawn from the development literature. The course will however assume basic competences in quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The Lecture Programme

The Lectures and associated seminars will be structured around the five key stages of writing with a strong emphasis on the practical application and the gaining of experience.

1. Interpretation of questions to be addresses and determination of the thesis to be presented

This addresses the thinking that you need to do before you even begin the outlining the paper (or thesis). Your content may change over the course of researching, planning or writing the article. The important point is to determine before starting what the main message of conclusion of the article will be. This will help focus your efforts and make choices about what are the necessary and sufficient arguments and evidence that are needed to support your conclusion.

Key stages here include:

- Analysis
- Evaluation and criticism
- Comparison and contrasts
- Review and Summaries

- Presentation and description
- Definition of key concepts

Key Task: This will be designed to develop participant's abilities to think critically about a topic of general interest and to clearly express thoughts about it in writing. The task will be on a subject of broad interest and can be discussed from any perspective. The important point is to develop relevant reasons and examples to explain and support the participant's views.

2. Research in preparation of the article

Research in preparation for the article is a critical step. It requires critical analysis of what others have written. To analyse something is to ask what that something means. It is to ask how that something does what it does or why it is as it is. Analysis requires breaking a subject into its constituent parts but it involves more than that; analysis also involves determining the relationship between these parts between each and to the whole. Analysis is different from judgement: judgement or evaluations generally have little significance about the subject, but reveal more about you and your preferences.

Key stages involved here are:

- The reading of papers and the tools and methods of doing this (pattern and linear note taking);
- The use of notes to start writing in your own words being careful to distinguish in the notes between your ideas and the interpretations from others;
- The identification of the key questions that the paper addresses, the main conclusions etc;
- Analysis of the argumentation - what evidence supports the conclusions, what is the quality of evidence, why are the conclusions important etc.
- Key practices to be developed include looking for alternative explanations, analysing the arguments, looking for and testing assumptions and considering counterexamples.

Key Task: A task will be given which requires that the participant critically analyse a given argument by discussing how well reasoned it is found to be. The analysis will need to consider the logical soundness of the argument rather than to agree or disagree with the position it presents. The issue will be not to discuss whether the statements in the argument are true or accurate.

3. Planning of the Article

The third stage involves the organisation of ideas, arguments and evidence into linear progression and systematically testing the structure for holes or weaknesses in the analysis or evidence. The outcome of planning is a written outline.

The outline will consist of identification of the sequence of arguments (argument 1, argument 2 etc) and the supporting claims (Evidence a,b,c etc) that is used to support the claim and their contribution to each argument. Used will be made of Toulmin's format for analysing and developing arguments.

Key Task: The task here will be to work with participant's own material to develop robust outlines of proposed articles or a chapter of a thesis.

4. Writing

The fourth stage of the process is about developing the structure of the article and the style in which it is written.

This includes:

- Developing an introduction (generating interest, giving the main message, providing an outline of the article) and its basis.
- Structuring Paragraphs and their transitions
- Presenting and Using Evidence and issues of plagiarism
- Focusing on logic, interest and brevity
- Attribution and Plagiarism

Key Task: Exercises in writing introductions and paragraphs and the use of evidence will be drawn from participants' own material as well as published material.

5. Revision

The final part of writing, revision, can be broken down into:

- the first revision for reassurance that you have a story to tell: does it sound okay, does it reflect the ideas and conclusions that the article started with, are the main points clear?
- the second revision to make sure that the larger questions are clearly addressed (logic, structure, evidence etc)
- the third revision for checking the details
- the fourth revision for style
- the fifth revision to check the flow

Key Task: Exercises in revision will be drawn from participants' own material as well as other sources.

Requirements for examination

A written assignment, which will be a critical review of a paper that will be provided

Additional information

This course is organized within the research school Society, Landscape and Land Use at the Department of Urban and Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Responsible department

Department of Urban and Rural Development