Aristoteles Workshop
Nancy 23 & 24 May 2002

Practice related teaching in ethics in an agricultural university

Pernille Kaltoft
National Environmental Research Institute, Department of Policy Analysis, Denmark, pka@dmu.dk

Peter Sandøe
Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark, pes@kvl.dk
Purpose

to make our experiences from teaching ethics in an agricultural university available for others
Background: Societal needs for courses on ethics in agricultural universities

Public critique of modern, intensive and effective agriculture

Value gap between lay people and experts

Low trust in scientists and experts

Professional training of academics in the future must include the ability to acknowledge the existence of different discourses (on risks, environment, safety etc.), to identify the discourses and to recognise values behind.
The course in question

... has run as a proper course on ethics for five years

... is a non-compulsory course

... gives 6 ECTS

... has app. 50 students each year

... participants are studying Agricultural Science, Agricultural Economics, Forestry and Landscape Architecture (no veterinarians)
Main course objectives

to provide the students with an ability to analyse ethical and other value related controversies regarding agriculture

to combine knowledge about ethics (historical and combating theories), knowledge about agro-scientific subjects and knowledge about public debates (different stakeholders, different perceptions of risks etc.)
### Course Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. week</td>
<td>Introduction to ethics</td>
<td>Animal welfare &amp; ethics</td>
<td>Conventional vs organic farming</td>
<td>Environmental ethics</td>
<td>Plant Biotechnology &amp; ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. week</td>
<td>Economy &amp; ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examination Seminar</td>
<td>Project Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Programme for Wednesday:
Measuring of animal welfare, methods and examples
Hen welfare
TV program followed by a plenary discussion
Animal ethics
## Course Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mon</th>
<th>tue</th>
<th>wed</th>
<th>thu</th>
<th>fri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. week</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>Conventional vs organic farming</td>
<td>Plant Biotechnology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. week</td>
<td>Economy &amp; ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Themes for project work, examples:**

- Is organic farming a good strategy in a world with food scarcity?
- Leg problems in laying hens
- Castration and tail docking of piglets
- Housing of (pregnant) sows
- Sustainable use of pesticides?
- The use of economic incentives to reduce use of pesticides or artificial fertilisers
# Course Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. week</td>
<td>Introduction to ethics</td>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>Conventional vs organic farming</td>
<td>Plant Biotechnology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. week</td>
<td>Economy &amp; ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical content of a report on an animal welfare subject:

- Description of the natural behavior of the animal in case (ethology).
- Description of the operation (e.g. debeaking or tail docking) or different production systems (e.g. free range versus battery hens) and the consequences for the animals (ethology).
- Presentation of different ethical schools
- Ethical analysis of the problem
- Use of economic incentives to reduce use of pesticides or artificial fertilisers
Pedagogical feature of the course

project work

ethical supervisor + agro-scientific supervisor

mixed group of students
Prerequisite for such a course

interdisciplinary research

university curriculum in process

extra resources

acknowledgement by top of university
Conclusion: criteria for success

to connect ethical theory intimately with real agricultural problems and actual issues within agricultural science

co-operation between the (natural) scientific teachers and people with philosophical and social scientific competencies

project work in order to integrate ethical theory with real agricultural problems

special support: acknowledgement and resources
The future

“introductory philosophy course” in all Danish university curricula

courses directed towards the specific educations

KVL: compulsory course on 2. semester from spring 2003