



CIEE Global Institute – Yucatan

Course name:	Agricultural Ethics and the Developing World
Course number:	(GI) AGRI 2004 MEME
Programs offering course:	Yucatan Summer STEM and Society
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Summer 2019

Course Description

There are few topics as transcendental but also polarizing to the human condition as the ethics of agricultural practices. Our societies and systems of values co-evolved over millennia with our methods of producing and procuring food and fiber, essential for our survival. How we steer our agricultural practices into the future will greatly impact the quality of life, both human and nonhuman, on Earth. This course examines issues such as whether there are universal rights to food, food security, food sovereignty, and freedom from hunger; what is the role of society in protecting such rights; and, what production and trade systems are best in terms of upholding such rights. The course will consider the ethics of widespread production, trade, and consumption practices around the industrialized world, but also will also emphasize ethical issues that arise for societies in the developing world of the global south.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Know basic concepts in ethics and ethical decision-making in relation to agricultural systems
- Be able to use concepts from ethics to analyze, evaluate, and discuss contemporary issues in agriculture production, trade, and consumption
- Possess an understanding of the interconnectedness of global trends and processes in agricultural systems (including production, trade, and consumption)
- Be competent at describing and critically assessing how global trends and process in agricultural systems impact the developing world
- Apply ethics and ethical decision-making in proposals that address dilemmas in global agricultural systems, particularly in relation to the developing world
- Become an enlightened and engaged stakeholder when making personal decisions related to agricultural production, consumption, and trade

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction



This course is taught through the use of lectures, readings, discussions, writing assignments, and supervised research. Students will that impart information, enhance understanding, and develop critical thinking skills as well develop an ethical foundation for understanding and evaluating agricultural production, trade, and consumption.

Assessment and Final Grade

- Attendance 10%
- Discussions 10%
- Written critiques 30%
- Supervised Study and Project Presentation 25%
- Final exam 25%

Course Requirements

Attendance

Attendance is noted for each Lecture, Discussion Session, and Supervised Study Period.

Discussions

Following each Lecture, there will be a Discussion Session, for which the students have prepared by reading assigned text. The professor will offer a topic for discussion and a prompt, which students will critically discuss. The prompts may be taken from the Reading Review Questions in Vaughn (2014), the Essay Questions in Sandler (2014), or elsewhere. Students earn points for thoughtful commentary, questions, and engagement.

Written critiques

Following each Discussion Session (17 total), students will write a 300-word essay/analysis of a topic that was discussed. The essay will provide a critical analysis of ethical premises, arguments, and fallacies of one central issue treated during the Discussion Session.

Supervised Study and Project Presentation

In Week 3, students will select an article from a contemporary journal that treats topics related to agriculture in Latin America. Each student will critically examine the ethical dimensions of the article. He/she will prepare and present to the class a summary of the article's main points and conclusions, and explain its relevance to Latin Ameirca. He/she will critique its ethical premises, arguments, possible fallacies. The student will offer a prompt for a discussion topic, and lead the class in an analysis of the article. The selection of the article and the discussion prompt will be made with input from the instructor.

Final exam

Students will take a take-home final exam that consists of four essay questions, due on the Final Exam date.

Weekly Schedule



Week 1

Class 1: Introduction to Ethics: ethics and the moral life; the elements of ethics; religion and morality; relativism and emotivism; moral arguments, claims, statements, premises; theories of right and wrong; ethical egoism; utilitarianism; Kantian ethics; natural law; social contract theory

Class 2: Ethics and Critical Thinking: Moral arguments; claims and arguments; implied premises; moral statements and arguments; testing and assessing premises; arguments (good and bad); avoiding bad arguments

Class 3: The Role of Ethics in Food and Agriculture: An overview of the moral choices that food and agriculture present, and how different moral theories might answer them. The principal questions (and relevant moral theories), in a nutshell: What should the purpose of agriculture be? Should we eat animals? Are locally produced foods superior to globally-sourced foods? What are the rights and responsibilities of people from industrialized nations, and do these differ from those of people in developing countries? What should the role of government be in food safety and public health?

Class 4: Introduction to the Global Food System: What is the global food system? Ethical dimensions of the global food system; alternatives to the global food systems and their ethical dimensions; moral theories that seem to guide industrialized and developing nations' food system choices.

Class 5: Food Security and the Ethics of Food Aid, I. Food security, defined; proximate and ultimate causes/sources of food insecurity; production mechanisms used to address food insecurity at national and international levels; ethical considerations of the mechanisms employed; ethical obligations of nations and individuals, and whether these change depending on nationality; moral theories that underlie food aid.

Class 6: Food Security and the Ethics of Food Aid, II. Policy and trade mechanisms to address food insecurity and hunger at national and international scales; effectiveness, ethical considerations; rights and obligations of the individual and nations in a global society; elements of a moral theory for food security in the 21st century.

Discussions:

Discussion Session (Lectures 1-6)

Assignments:

Written Critique of Discussion Sessions 1-6

Readings:

Sandler (2014) Chapters 1-2
Vaughn (2014) Chapters 1-9.



Online resources:

FAO. <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>

World Food Programme. <http://www1.wfp.org/>

Week 2

Class 7: Human Health Impacts of Food and Agriculture in Modern Society: Ethical Aspects. Impacts of agrochemicals, physical labor, and other physical factors on human health; bacterial resistance and spread; foodborne risks related to food and fiber production, distribution, preparation. Relative impacts on industrialized versus developing nations (examples from Latin America); obligations of the individual and nation-state. Do obligations differ depending on the nationality? Moral theories that inform our perception of human health impacts.

Class 8: Environmental Impacts of Agriculture: Ethical Aspects. Introduction to agricultural impacts on the environment; relative impacts on the environments of industrialized versus developing nations; theory and Latin American examples of Unequal Ecological Exchange; obligations of the individual and nation-state. Do obligations differ depending on the nationality? Moral theories that inform our perception of agro-environmental impacts and environmental justice.

Class 9: Diet Choices: Should We Eat Animals? Arguments, and their counter-arguments, from animal welfare, ecological impacts, principles of distributive justice, and public health. The moral theories that inform our perception of ethical consumption of animals and plants.

Class 10: Diet Choices: Should We Eat Local? Arguments, and their counter-arguments, based on ecological impacts, social impacts, and principles of distributive justice, plus their counter-arguments. The moral theories that inform our perception of ethical consumption of food; obligations of the individual and nation-state. Do obligations differ depending on the nationality?

Class 11: Production Choices, I: Ethics of the Green Revolution and its Legacy. History and legacy of the green revolution in terms of hunger, food security, and agricultural practices worldwide, and especially in developing nations; the rise and exportation of the agri-business model; ethical dimensions and the moral theories that inform our perceptions of the Green Revolution and its legacy; obligations of the individual and nation-state. Do obligations differ depending on the nationality?

Class 12: Production Choices, II: Should we Bioengineer our Crops? Genetic engineering: background and context; genetically modified crops and animals; impacts on the environment, trade, and nutrition; food patents and the commodification of food; ethical dimensions surrounding GMO's and the moral theories that inform our perceptions of GMO's; obligations of the individual and nation-state; do obligations differ depending on the nationality?



Class 13: Production Choices, III: Is Alternative Agriculture “Better”? Introduction to alternative agriculture; permaculture, agroforestry, traditional, high-technology food and livestock methods; arguments in their favor and the counter-arguments; a review of the purpose of agricultural production; the essential elements of a moral theory for agricultural production; obligations of the individual and nation-state; Do obligations differ depending on the nationality?

Class 14: Migrant Farm Laborers. Introduction to the history of migrant workers; contemporary trends and processes that drive migrant farming practices; social and economic issues that arise with migrant farm labor; ethical dimensions and the moral theories that inform our perceptions of migrant laborers; obligations of the individual and nation-state; Do obligations differ depending on the nationality?

Discussions:

Discussion Session (Lectures 7-14)

Assignments:

Written Critique of Discussions Sessions 7-14

Readings:

Norwood *et al.* (2014) Chapters 1 - 4, and 7-8.
Sandler (2014) Chapters 3 - 5.

Online resources:

ILO. <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

Week 3

Class 15: Agricultural Trade Policies: Introduction to international trade policies; unequal trade and trade imbalances; relation to distributive justice; obligations of industrialized and developing nations; obligations of the individual and nation-state. Do obligations differ depending on the nationality?

Class 16: Ethics of Food Culture: Respecting culture; problematic cultural practices; ethical relativism; foodie culture; ethical aspects of food culture in Latin America versus North America.

Class 17: Food Sovereignty: Introduction to the concept; how it differs from food security; what a food sovereign food system looks like, compared to the contemporary global food system; should there be a right to sovereignty in agricultural production methods? Should there be rights to sovereignty in food culture? How this issue impacts Latin American agriculture. What are the obligations of the individual and nation-state to ensure food sovereignty? Do obligations differ depending on nationality?



Class 18: Toward a moral theory for food and agriculture; ethical elements of morality revisited; a review of the critical issues in contemporary food production, trade, and consumption; prescriptions for the role of the individual and nations, in the context of domestic and international interactions.

Discussions:

Discussion Session (Lectures 15-18)
Discussion of Market Activity

Assignments and activities:

Visit a local market and identify examples of “problematic” cultural practices in food consumption or trade.
Written Critique of Discussions 14-17, and Written Critique of Discussion of Market Activity
Supervised Study Assignment
Watch video: *La Via Campesina: Food Sovereignty Now*

Readings

Norwood *et al.* (2014) Chapter 9.
Sandler (2014) Chapter 6.

Online resources

Agriculture and Human Values: Journal of the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society. <https://link.springer.com/journal/10460>
The Journal of Peasant Studies. <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjps20>
International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tsdw20>

Media

La Via Campesina Movement: Food Sovereignty Now. <https://vimeo.com/27473286>

Week 4

Assignments

Supervised Study Assignment
Supervised Study Presentations
Final Exam Essay Questions handed out
Final Exam Essay Questions due

Readings:

Norwood, F. B., Calvo-Lorenzo, M. S., Lancaster, S., & Oltenacu, P. A. (2014). *Agricultural and food controversies: What everyone needs to know*. What Everyone Needs to Know.
Sandler, R. L. (2014). *Food ethics: the basics*. Routledge.



Vaughn, L. (2014). *Beginning Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*. Westford: Peter Simon Publishing House.

Online resources:

Agriculture and Human Values: Journal of the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society. <https://link.springer.com/journal/10460>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>

International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tsdw20>

International Labour Organization of the United Nations. [http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm)

The Journal of Peasant Studies. <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjps20>

World Food Programme. <http://www1.wfp.org/>

Media

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