



SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

SFGS302 Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Field Research, 7.5 credits

Etiska och metodologiska utmaningar i fältforskning, 7,5 högskolepoäng

Third-cycle level / Forskarnivå

Confirmation

This syllabus was confirmed by the Department of Global Studies on 2019-08-12, and was last revised on 2019-12-05. The revised course syllabus is valid from Autumn semester 2019.

Responsible Department

School of Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

Entry requirements

The course is open for students enrolled in a PhD program in Peace and Development Research, Environmental Social Science or other relevant fields of study, or equivalent.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- identify and discuss central methodological and ethical problems in Peace and Development Research, Environmental Social Science or related fields;

Competence and skills

- discuss and problematize the ways in which other researchers/students address methodological and ethical challenges in their research;
- independently describe the methodological and ethical challenges of their research project and argue for ways of engaging with the field to overcome these challenges;

Judgement and approach

- independently and in a reflexive manner discuss the main ethical problems attached to field research;

- independently and in a reflexive manner discuss the implications of their own methodological choices, by drawing on relevant literature.

Course content

The course addresses ethical and methodological challenges encountered by researchers doing fieldwork in various contexts in both the global South and the global North. It reflects on a range of problems a researcher encounters through the research process – from planning to data collection/production, analysis and dissemination of results. These include the challenge of navigating unequal power relations between researcher and “researched”, the role and position of research assistants, interpreters and gatekeepers, conducting research in insecure and difficult environments, approaching elite interviewees, and engaging in necessary but not excessive self-reflection. Ethical challenges are discussed in relation to concrete methods of collecting/producing data – mainly through interviews and ethnographic methods – as well as in relation to research more broadly. The students will develop and argue for the methodological design of their thesis project – focusing on data-collection and access to research contacts and interviewees – and discuss the main ethical challenges linked to their research and methodological choices.

Types of instruction

The course is taught with a mix of lectures, readings, seminars, and the writing of papers.

Language of instruction

The course is given in English.

Grades

The grade Pass (G) or Fail (U) is given in this course.

Types of assessment

To pass the course, the student must:

- actively participate in seminars, including a final seminar where they present and comment on texts (if a student misses a seminar, a written reflection should be submitted instead);
- submit papers where they use the course literature to reflect on ethical and methodological challenges in their own research project.

If a student, who has failed the same examined component twice, wishes to change examiner before the next examination, a written application shall be sent to the department responsible for the course and shall be granted unless there are special reasons to the contrary. In cases where a course has been discontinued or has undergone major changes, the student shall normally be guaranteed at least three examination occasions (including the ordinary examination) during a period of at least one year from the last time the course was given.

Course evaluation

Written and oral course evaluations are carried out after completion of the course.