

## Agricultural Studies

**Also relevant for Natural Ressource Management, Ecology, Food Studies, Development Studies, Environmental and Sustainability Studies**

Course: Agricultural Studies, Rural Development, Rural Economy

Group of courses: Agricultural, Forestry and Nutritional Studies

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## Course objectives:

Students acquire theoretical and practical competences in the analysis of gender relations in agricultural contexts, understanding gender as intersectional and in context with local and global circumstances. Questions of a sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture, especially in the production of food, are discussed from a gender perspective. Students become familiar with the history of the discipline and the development of the subject area from research on women in rural development and the research topic of gender and environment to feminist agro-food studies. From an agricultural economic perspective, the integration of gender into agrarian value chains is examined. Students are provided with an overview of basic theories and approaches of gender studies and their operationalisation in agricultural sciences. Acquiring methodological competence is another important element of the study programme.

## Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

The core concern of gender studies in agricultural science is:

- pointing out the construction of gender in agricultural practice (in academic as well as in production and consumption practices),
- the visualisation and exploration of gender relations and practical and strategic gender needs (cf. Carolin Moser) in various political, social, cultural and geographical contexts of agriculture.

In order to achieve this, we suggest to include the following issues into the curricula:

### **The history of the discipline and professional practice areas of agricultural sciences and gender studies**

While the focus of agricultural research was initially on the living and working conditions of women in rural areas, from the 1990s onwards gender became a key category of research. Thus, on the one hand other categories of inequality such as class, ethnicity or age have become subjects of analysis, on the other hand attention has been drawn to the international relevance of agricultural practice and gender relations. Thus, not only the practice in the Global South should be given attention, but a geographical enlargement should take place. There are parallels to the paradigm shifts in development research, where there has been a shift from "women in development" (WID) to "gender and development" (GAD) to gender mainstreaming. These developmental steps are still an important part of the feminist discussion in agricultural and development research, as they highlight the historical genuineness of scientific concepts as well as the important role of gender studies in a more differentiated analysis. In a global context, the gender perspective is well recognized in resource management and agriculture. In Germany, however, an institutionalisation of the gender perspective is still far from being established.

Another important topic is the relevance of gender in professional practice. Are there gender-specific requirements for certain professions and to what extent is professional practice gendered? Here, different labour market conditions in various areas (study courses, research institutions, agricultural enterprises) must be considered and their effects on individual employment processes analysed.

### **New perspectives: feminist agro-food studies**

Agriculture and food are interdisciplinary subject areas that interrelate with social, cultural, natural and environmental sciences and are jointly referred to as "agro-food studies". Feminist agro-food studies

offer both theoretical as well as methodological approaches that can be used for combining agricultural sciences and gender studies.

With the newly emerging field of feminist agro-food studies the research focus in agricultural studies has been extended. This is highly significant from a gender perspective and has been promoted by gender researchers. However, these developments are still in the initial stage and yet to be established.

1. One extension of scope reflects the trend to consider consumers' practices and preferences, as reflected in the integration of agricultural and food studies as agro-food studies. In emerging alternative food networks (AFNs), for example, in which producers can be consumers likewise, the term "prosumers" has been conceptualised. Thus, a strict distinction between production and consumption is slowly fading and non-economic, reproductive activities are made visible. This is particularly important from the perspective of gender as the interweaving of productive and reproductive work has a long tradition in feminist economic criticism and has been and still is of importance for care practices.
2. The increasing urbanisation and the growing practice of urban agriculture reveals a second expanded scope of research and analysis. Agriculture is not only seen as a rural phenomenon, but is equally present in urban contexts. The potential of urban agriculture and, more generally, of urban alternative food networks aiming at food sovereignty, social-ecological sustainability and social cohesion, is relevant from both a gender and intersectional perspective. A gender-based analysis can uncover unequal access to such networks and unequal control and use of natural resources as well as processes and rationalities of inclusion and exclusion.
3. A third extension of scope refers to the debate on agency. A classic starting point of analyses of gender and agriculture is the idea that women are perceived as being oppressed and marginalised in the gender hierarchy. Here, a much needed reinterpretation takes place (in parts), which can be subsumed under the term "agency". The term describes that there are options for action and room to manoeuvre, that people are creative and can actively shape their lives instead of just being passive. Parto Teherani-Krönner calls these scopes of action "free spaces in the realm of necessities" (translation by authors). With this empowering point of view, a positive connotation of the (care) work of women is put into focus understanding producers and consumers as subjects capable of action. This also shifts their position towards a more influencing role in the food system. A conceptual approach that connects here is the discussion on food sovereignty, which calls for a democratic and solidary social participation in the food system and thus a repoliticisation of production and consumption.

To summarise, on the one hand there is a trend towards a more diverse concept of agricultural practice, which includes gender aspects; on the other hand, there is a persistence of traditional gender responsibilities, norms and stereotypes in agriculture, which requires a continuous and critical debate on gender inequalities.

#### **Scientific criticism and methodology in agricultural sciences**

Well-founded knowledge of methods is mandatory for understanding agricultural living and working conditions as well as the embeddedness of food in environmental, socio-cultural and political contexts. Here, gender research positions itself as a critical discipline, which sheds light on current methods and asks to what extent scientific research practices are embedded in power relations and dominant discourses. Feminist research has been addressing this issue since the 1980s by focusing on the construction and generation of knowledge.

Research-based learning and application-oriented studies, which take different methodological approaches into account, are at the centre of gender studies. Agriculture, the environment and food are very useful areas of practice for gender research. The demand for an agricultural turnaround towards sustainability can be very well combined with elements of feminist critique since an agricultural change also requires new methods of research. Here, gender-sensitive methods of development research (participatory methods/"Participatory Rural Appraisal" (PRA), action research) and approaches (e.g. feminist criticism, post-colonial theories) can be fruitful. Although Carolin Moser's approach is criticised for its developmental orientation and lack of structural change, her concept of practical and strategic gender needs provides a useful empirical framework for exploring gender relations in agricultural practice.

## **Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:**

Gender-related research is relevant in all areas of agricultural studies and should be integrated at all levels of the courses. We recommend the introduction of the analysis framework at an early stage of studies, e.g. in introductory modules. In order to raise students' awareness and interest for gender issues at an early stage, it is recommendable to spend one or two sessions on "Agriculture and Gender" into the introductory modules. Since subject-specific teaching staff and subject areas with an explicit gender focus are still rare, we recommend cooperation with other departments and to encourage students to visit gender-specific courses, e.g. in the cultural and social sciences. Cooperative methodology modules also allow the introduction of the category of gender at an early stage.

It is advisable to offer specific (sub)modules on gender issues in agricultural sciences, either at the beginning of the study courses or at an advanced degree stage, e.g. in preparation for the Bachelor's or Master's thesis.

At the beginning of the study courses:

### **Lecture or seminar: "Introduction to Agricultural Sciences and Gender"**

- theoretical approaches and feminist theories
- Why is a gender perspective relevant to agricultural sciences?
- introduction of research fields

At an advanced degree stage:

### **Seminar: "Methods of Gender Analysis in Agricultural Sciences"**

- female research pioneers of the subject
- feminist science theories and criticism
- qualitative and participatory methodology
- testing methodologies and steps of data analysis

### **Specialisation modules on different topics**

Examples:

- food sovereignty and gender

- natural resources, biodiversity and gender
- agriculture and food politics from a gender perspective
- political economy and gender
- environment, sustainability and gender

## Degree Stage:

Introductory modules should be offered at the beginning of both Bachelor's and Master's degree courses, taking the level of knowledge of the students into account. The methodology seminar and the specialisation module should be offered at Master's level.

## Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

- Allen, P. & Sachs, C. (2007). Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food, *International Journal of Sociology of Food and Agriculture*, 15/1: 1–23.
- Avakian, A. V. & Haber, B. (2005). Feminist food studies: A brief history. From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food, 1–26.
- Barndt, D. (2002). Fruits of Injustice. Women in the Post-NAFTA Food System. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 82–88.
- Bauhardt C. (2017). Feministische Ökonomiekritik: Arbeit, Zeit und Geld aus einer materialistischen Geschlechterperspektive. In: Kortendiek B., Riegraf B., Sabisch K. (eds). [Handbuch - Interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung](#). Geschlecht und Gesellschaft, Vol 65. Springer VS, Wiesbaden.
- Brückner, M. & Brettin, S. (2017). Meal Sovereignty: Empirical Insights on an Innovative Perspective. *International Colloquium: The Future of Food and Challenges for Agriculture in the 21st Century: Debates about who, how and with what social, economic and ecological implications we will feed the world*. Vitoria Gasteiz, Spain (Conference Paper).
- Cairns, K. & Johnston, J. (2015). *Food and Femininity*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ehlert, J., & Voßemer, C. (2015). Food sovereignty and conceptualization of agency: A methodological discussion. *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8:1, 7–26.
- Moser, C. (1989). Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and strategic gender needs, *World Development*, 17:11, 1799–1825.
- Ngcoya, M. & Kumarakulasingam, N. (2016). The Lived Experience of Food Sovereignty: Gender, Indigenous Crops and Small-Scale Farming in Mtubatuba, South Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1–17.
- Quisumbing, A. R.; Meinzen-Dick, R. S.; Raney, T. L.; Croppenstedt, A.; Behrman, J. A.; and Peterman, A. (2014). *Gender in agriculture: Closing the knowledge gap*. Netherlands: Springer.
- Razavi, S. (2009). Engendering the Political Economy of Agrarian Change, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36:1, 197–226.
- Segebart, D. & Schurr, C. (2010). Was kommt nach Gendermainstreaming? Neue Impulse für die Geographische Entwicklungsforschung aus der Geschlechterforschung. *Geographische Rundschau*, 62: 10, 58-63. Braunschweig: Westermann.
- Shiva, V. (2009). Women and the Gendered Politics of Food, *Philosophical Topics*, 37, 17–32.
- Teherani-Krönner, P. (1997). Veränderung von Handlungsspielräumen von Frauen in Agrarkulturen. In: Steiner, D. (Hg). *Mensch und Lebensraum. Fragen zu Identitäten und Wissen*. Westdeutscher Verlag GmbH, Opladen, 267–290.
- Teherani-Krönner, P. (2000). Agrarwissenschaften. In: Braun, C. von & Stephan, I. (2000).

Gender Studies. Eine Einführung. Stuttgart, 217–230.

- Teherani-Krönner, P. (2014): Mahlzeitenpolitik, Mahlzeitsicherheit und Mahlzeitenkultur. Ein neues Konzept in der Ernährungsdebatte. In: Teherani-Krönner, P. & Hamburger, B. (2014). Mahlzeitenpolitik: Zur Kulturökologie von Ernährung und Gender, oekom verlag, 17–50.

## Journals:

- Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security (Agri-Gender) | [Webseite](#)
- International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food | [Webseite](#)
- Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal | [Webseite](#)
- Food and Foodways | [Webseite](#)
- The Journal of Peasant Studies | [Webseite](#)
- Agriculture and Human Values | [Webseite](#)