I. POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

AGEC 4613
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UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND AGribUSINESS

Course Outline – Fall 2015

II. Catalog Description
4613 Political Economy of Agriculture and Food (I) Agricultural and food policies are studied from domestic and international perspectives. Laws, regulations, decisions and actions by governments and other institutions are examined in terms of rationale, content, and consequences. Economic and political frameworks are used to assess policies in terms of competitive structure, operation, and performance of farming and food systems. Current real-world controversies and debates will focus the course discussions on economic principles, policy analysis and contemporary data.
Prerequisites: AGEC 1103, and AGEC 2103 or equivalent, and PSYC 2003 or SOCI 2013 or RSOC 2603.

This course syllabus/outline is subject to change throughout the semester. An up-to-date course syllabus will be maintained at the class website on Blackboard. Access to the class website is achieved by accessing learn.uark.edu on the web which gets you to the Blackboard website portal. The class website will include hyperlinks to reading assignments, lecture notes, videos, audios, exercises, examination reviews, course summary and other useful information. Please make a habit of using this course website daily.

III. Course Outline
This course is ultimately about getting you to think critically about the rationale, content and consequences of domestic and international food and agricultural controversies and policies.

In the U.S. this is a particularly interesting time for farm and food policy. National policy-making has become polarized and culturally divisive. Traditional power clusters have become fragmented as a result of an increase in the number of complex and cross-cutting issues about agriculture and food. The economic structure of agricultural production, food processing, distribution and household consumption of food continues to change. Information technologies and particularly social media play a larger role in speeding up public dialogue and interests in agricultural and food controversies. Over the past couple of years, the American public, the U.S. Congress, the President and his staff, the courts, and the news and social media have questioned how U.S. government intervention in agriculture and food including public expenditures can be cut in a significant way. Even though food and agriculture account for less than 2% of the federal budget, no one questioned that public spending on this sector would remain immune from the chop of the deficit reduction axe. What less funding will mean for the changes agricultural and food legislation and policy has many in the food and agricultural sector concerned. Arkansas is a significantly large agriculture and food producing state, as one of the top producers of rice, soybeans, cotton and poultry. At the same time Arkansas has a relatively high poverty rate, associated paradoxically with both food insecurity/hunger and obesity among individuals and households. Therefore Arkansas benefits heavily from government food and agriculture programs that significantly subsidize crop
producers and that provide significant food assistance to eligible households, individuals and in particular school age children.

Domestic markets are important destinations for Arkansas food production. However, Arkansas agriculture is also very dependent on international agricultural export markets. This makes what happens to policies that affect our international competitiveness through research and promotion and agricultural trade policy and food assistance programs of critical importance.

In seeking energy independence, the U.S. set out a bio-energy program that has created a new market for grains and oilseed to produce ethanol and biodiesel. This has inextricably linked food and agriculture markets with energy/oil markets with both positive and negative impacts on the agricultural sector. As a leading poultry producer and an increasingly important corn producer, Arkansas agriculture is in the cross-hairs of how the U.S. government moves forward on bioenergy policy.

The agricultural sector is resource intensive, using more than 80% of the nation’s water supply, much of the arable land and consequently is a significant emitter of greenhouse gases. Sustainability initiatives as well as climate change policy has become increasingly important not only for national and international policy but also for major food firms such as Walmart, (the world’s largest retailer headquartered in Arkansas) which has sought to limit its carbon footprint.

One in six jobs in this state are tied to the activities of the food and agriculture sector. Food and agriculture accounts for over $17 billion in value added to the state economy or nearly 20% of the State’s GDP. So while the focus of this course is on food and agricultural policy at the national and international levels, keep in mind that at our own doorstep what, why and how the U.S. and other country governments intervene in food and agriculture has great significance for Arkansas.

Some of the questions that we will explore this semester include:
- What is a nature of public policy making? What are the general reasons for government intervention? What and who are the basic government institutions and actors? What are the alternative theories, processes, and instruments of public policy?
- Why do governments become so heavily involved in protecting, regulating, promoting, subsidizing—in general, intervening—in the food and agricultural sector?
  - What are the fundamental characteristics and problems that make the sector unique—economically, environmentally, socially, politically, and technologically?
- What is the food and fiber production landscape and how and why is it changing?
- What is the domestic and foreign market landscape of food and fiber consumption and how and why is it changing?
  - What is the public’s interest in nutrition, diet, and food assistance?
  - How are diet’s changing and how is this related to the changes in the food supply chains? How does the control of food markets affect choices for consumers?

A. Course Objectives

The objectives of the course are to develop the student's understanding of the political, economic, social and cultural approach to domestic and international food and agricultural policy regarding:

1) **Why do we have public policies for food and agriculture?** - What are the conditions of the food and agricultural sector that give rise to public concern and government intervention? How do economic conditions and issues in food and agriculture evolve as a country develops over time? What is the role of food and agriculture to the economic development of a country? How do the
political economy, the political institutions, participants, and legal environment affect the nature of government intervention?

2) **What are some of the key issues, their policies and programs that affect food and agriculture?**

What is the nature of government intervention, what issues are and should be addressed by public policies in food and agriculture? Here we will examine six key policy issues using a case study approach. What are the policies, programs and policy instruments used in addressing these issues of food and agriculture? How do these programs work? How well are they working?

3) **What are the impacts and consequences?**

– What are the benefits and costs of government intervention? What are the intended and unintended effects of government intervention? How do these consequences lead to or constrain the ability of governments to change or reform policies as issues change? How do these consequences enhance or constrain the private sector from achieving efficiency and growth to meet competitive demands?

Students should gain knowledge of the theoretical and empirical analysis public policy for the food and agricultural sector. Fundamental to this framework is the notion that domestic and international food and agricultural policies are intertwined and subject to a broader set of economic, social, political, and technological factors. An understanding of how nations intervene in agriculture and food through domestic and international policies will be investigated. The impact of globalization, multilateral, regional, and national policy approaches, the role of agricultural trade and international resource externalities has resulted in a growing emphasis on decoupled policies, green ‘environmental’ payments, and regulatory approaches to food safety and biotechnology through approval, traceability and labeling. These and the more traditional “closed economy” approaches to public intervention in food and agriculture will be explored.

Students will develop skills in:

- Understanding the processes of public policy making in agriculture and food,
- Estimating and discovering estimates of costs and benefits of public policies,
- Evaluating the economic and political feasibility of policy change,
- Preparation of policy case studies within a group setting, and
- Critical thinking about the need for policies and policy reforms.

U.S. agricultural and food policy will receive paramount consideration given its importance not only for domestic U.S. producers and consumers but also for global agricultural trade because the U.S. is the largest food and agricultural exporter and one of the largest importers. Much of domestic U.S. agricultural and food policy is framed in the so-called ‘Farm Bill’ that provide authorization for a period of five years. Current legislation was enacted in 2014 when the U.S. Congress passed a new farm bill known as The Agricultural Ace of 2014. This legislation is authorized for the years 2014 through 2018. It covers everything from price supports, to nutrition, agricultural trade, bio-energy, conservation and research funding and beyond. We will review some the content and development of this legislation.

European Union policy will also be considered where a comparison is relevant. Reforms initiated in 2008 known as the ‘Health Check’ have moved their policies toward greater market orientation and increased attention to food quality, the environment and rural development. In June 2013, the EU adopted a reform package for food and agriculture CAP 2014-2020. The U.S. and EU has initiated free trade agreement negotiations (TTIP) this year as well and agriculture will be a prime area. Another key regional trade agreement being negotiated with Pacific Rim nations (TTP) will also have key impacts on agriculture and food. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Development Round negotiations on agriculture and its multiple collapses over the past decade will also be examined. Policies of other countries, notably, the developing
countries or regions will be noted when relevant to understanding the policy environment of global food and agriculture, trade liberalization, food security and sustainability.

IV. Conduct of the course
The objectives of this course will be achieved through a combination of:

- **Class discussions/Lectures.** Power-point notes will be posted on the class website for class periods. I expect you to download the notes, review them before class and if you have questions or need additional explanations regarding the notes, come to the class period and ask questions and be prepared to discuss. You must be informed that the exams will be drawn from these notes, particularly the preliminary exam. My presentations at the class period will then be based on these notes and responses to your questions and discussions about the lecture notes, the posted videos, audios, assigned readings, etc.

- **In-class quizzes.** Quizzes (unannounced) will be given to provide you with feedback from me about what concepts, information, etc that I think you should be learning in this class. These quizzes will count towards you’re your participation score for the final grade and it will be in your interest to come to class and learn from the quiz.

- **Reading assignments, videos, and audios.** Assignments will be listed along with the lecture notes and will address the topic of the lecture, hopefully providing you access to the people who are involved in the policy area being discussed, whether it be the Chair of the House or Senate Agriculture committees, commodity group leaders, foreign agricultural policy makers or farmers and consumers who are addressing their concerns about the issue.

- **Formal exams,** one preliminary exam and a final exam will be given, comprehensive on material covered to date. Make-up exams will be given if the student is engaged in a university-sponsored event and provides the instructor with advance notice of one week. If the student misses the exam because of illness, a letter from a doctor will be required. All make-up exams will be taken within one week. (Exams will include short and long answer essays and concept definitions.)

- **Written assignments – the Case Study.** The case study will be a central part of this course. You will be assigned to a group, to develop and present one policy case study over three class periods. The case study will be a group effort and includes three elements:
  1. **A Backgrounder,** not more than 10 pages in length to be prepared by the assigned group. The content will address the following descriptive questions: What is the issue? Who are the major actors, their positions and institutions involved? What are the causes and consequences of the issue? What is current policy? This backgrounder will be the basis for a power point presentation by the group during the first class period.
  2. **Interview of key stakeholder(s).** For the second class period, the group will help arrange for a leading policy actor involved with the issue to attend the class or through skype, to interact with the class with regard to the issues, current policy and challenges.
  3. **Policy Analysis and Evaluation.** For the third class period, the group will present their key analytical findings, summarizing the issue, causes and consequences, the group’s policy analysis and evaluation. This analysis and evaluation will be submitted as a paper, not more than 10 pages, due one week after the third class period.

- **The case study critique.** You will also be required to choose one of the other five case studies and write a one page critique of the content, organization, and presentation of the case study. This critique will be due the first class period following the presentation of the policy analysis and evaluation of the case study you have chosen to critique.

- Written assignments must be submitted no later than midnight 12 a.m. on the due date and must be submitted on Blackboard.
Exercises. For graduate students and undergraduates who want to be a bit more challenged, I will hold a separate 1 hour period each week to review material covered in the course and to meet with case study groups.

The case studies will be conducted for the following six general issues: The case study will address a very specific topic within each of these policy arenas. As a group you will narrow down to a topic which is relatively narrow, currently controversial and of importance for agriculture and/or food.

1. Farm level policy: this could include more specifically issues of price and income supports for U.S. agricultural producers, crop insurance policy, beginning farmers policy, animal welfare, conservation policy, specific commodity policy, e.g. rice, sugar, dairy, etc.

2. Nutrition and dietary assistance policy for U.S. and/or foreign consumers: this could include issues such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC (women-infants-children), food labeling, GM labeling, organic labeling, country of origin labeling, biofortification, food safety and inspection, power and concentration of food retailers, food manufacturers, obesity policy and food debate.

3. Bioeconomy policy: crops for biofuels, livestock in the food debate, Bioenergy policy and its impact on food prices, role of

4. Sustainability policy for food and agriculture: this could include policies responding to climate change, sustainable technologies and conservation, organics or biotechnology, impact of social media and NGOs.

5. Nature vs. Agriculture policy: This could include water for irrigation, ground/surface water policy, private vs. public takings of land, regulatory policy (WOTUS),

6. International Agricultural Trade and Foreign Food and Agriculture: This could include free trade (regional/multilateral/bilateral) trade agreements such as TPP, TTIP, WTO, food as a political weapon—U.S. Cuba trade potential, trade with Iran; food security and international development assistance (ODA—official development assistance), role of international institutions such as FAO, World Bank, CGIAR.

Purpose of case studies. The goal of these case studies is to demonstrate not only your knowledge of subject matter but also to demonstrate your ability to communicate concisely, clearly and in depth on leading public policy issues in agriculture and food. Generalized backgrounder and analysis paper outlines will be made available on the class website for each of the six case policy studies. Papers should be typed, properly cited, and should be the work of each group and/or individual student.

Academic Honesty. Material included in the paper that is explicitly quoted from a source should be identified as such, providing author, publication title, page number and other relevant citation information. A paper that is mostly a set of quotations will be evaluated unfavorably. A common type of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Papers will be checked using online tools for plagiarism and if found will be given a grade of zero. If this occurs a second time for the same student, a course grade of “F” will be given and the student will be referred to the university judicial process for further sanctions. No personal calculators, smart phones, etc will be allowed during the class period or exams unless being used to make presentations. Students will have access to departmental supplied calculators during exams if the instructor finds it necessary to answer exam questions.

Graduate Student Requirements. In addition to the above assignments, graduate students enrolled in this course will answer additional questions on the exams and provide leadership for the case study groups.
B. Teaching Units

**Unit 1. Course overview, content, scope, and method of agricultural and food policy and policy analysis tools. Lectures 1-4.** The objective of this unit is to provide an overview of the course objectives and approach. Students will learn what is, who makes, and how are food and agricultural policies determined. Evaluation of this section will be based on mid-term and final exams and class discussion and participation on homework assignments.

**Unit 2. Economic and political foundations of public policy analysis for agricultural and food policy. Lectures 5-8.** This section will focus on understanding U.S., EU and other country domestic agricultural policy. Objectives will be to use supply and demand frameworks to examine the U.S. situation for food and agricultural policy.

**Unit 3. Policy Case Studies. Lecture 9 and Six Case Studies.** This section will focus on the case study method and the specific six case studies selected for in-depth description and analysis.

**Textbooks and Tools:** Readings are available on the University library ebrary hyperlinks given below. Other readings will be made available Blackboard.

**Texts:**

A set of blogs that you will find interesting and useful include:

http://blogs.usda.gov/ Gateway to official blogs by the US Department of Agriculture

http://www.foodpolitics.com/ by Marion Nestle at NYU

http://usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com/ by Parke Wilde at Tufts University

http://www.foodintegrity.org/ Center for Food Integrity is led by Charlie Arnot. Its members include a wide array of US agricultural producer groups.

http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/ The Genetic Literacy Project is led by Jon Entine, Senior Fellow at the Center for Health and Risk at George Mason University.

http://farmpolicy.com/ a daily newsletter and blog by Keith Good, with daily updates and links to reports and news on agricultural policy, farm bill, bio-energy, immigration, food safety, and food policy. This blog is discontinued but older posts are still available at this site, particularly good on U.S. farm policy.

http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/ alliance of various groups, environmental, organic, sustainable, etc.

http://www.iatp.org/blog Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy focus on a wide variety of agricultural and food policy issues
http://www.agandfoodlaw.com/ Ag & Food Law Blog provided by a partnership of the National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas and the American Agricultural Law Association.

http://irjci.blogspot.com/ The Rural Blog, focuses on news, policies and events that affect rural America out of University of Kentucky.


http://blog.farmaid.org/ Family farm support group opposed to multinationals and large corporate agribusinesses.

http://about.extension.org/blog/ US Cooperative Extension Service blog on food and agriculture

http://www.beginningfarmers.org/ Blog on policy affecting beginning farmers


http://food-ethics.com/category/public-policy/ A food ethics from farm to table blog by Chris MacDonald


http://www.consumerfreedom.com/ Anti-food police blog to support consumer’s choice and oppose regulation of nutrition and diet.

http://www.worldwatch.org/ A sustainability NGO and website.

http://www.biofortified.org/blog/ Independent blog to provide factual information on biology and particularly plant genetics and genetic engineering.

http://www.fooddemocracynow.org/blog A food justice blog site


Additional blog sites will be added through the term.

A set of additional books that address aspects of this course include the following:


a. **Student evaluation**

The course grade will be based on exams, case study components, and class participation as noted below. Students enrolled in the graduate section will be required to do additional work such as answer additional exam questions and take leadership/organizational roles in the case studies:

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<tr>
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<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Backgrounder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Interview with key actor</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Analysis and Evaluation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Critique</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
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The final grade will be assigned approximately as follows:

- 93-100 = A
- 88-92 = A-
- 84-87 = B+
- 79-83 = B
- 75-78 = B-
- 71-74 = C+
- 67-70 = C
- 62-66 = C-
- 57-61 = D+
- 53-56 = D
- 50-52 = D-
- < 50 = F

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b. Class Attendance, Office Hours, Disabilities, and Course revisions

Attendance is expected. If you come to class be prepared by having reviewed the lecture notes ahead of class and ask questions or make comments about the notes or topic in general. If you expect to miss a class please inform the instructor beforehand. Policies for excused absences will follow the university attendance policy as posted in the catalog of studies. **Why is attendance important?** Exams are based heavily upon the lecture notes and case studies and therefore on the discussions that we will have during the class periods. Specific assignments regarding readings, the case studies and class exercises also will be given at the class period throughout the term. Class participation is one component of your final grade.

The instructor will provide office hours by appointment on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 8-10 a.m.

**Disabilities.** If you need to request accommodations for this class due to a disability, you must first register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) and hand-deliver an official Accommodation Letter from the CSD to me during my office hours or after class.

**Inclement Weather Policy.** This course will follow University policy regarding class cancelation if the University is closed. Class periods will be rescheduled to avoid you missing course material or an exam. If an exam if being given, a student who is unable to get to class because of inclement weather will be given the opportunity to make up the exam or take the score received for the final exam as a proxy for the missed exam.

**Syllabus Updates.** The instructor reserves the right to revise this syllabus/outline during the course of the semester with adequate notice to the students.

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD**  
**AGEC 4613**

**Fall 2015 Class Schedule**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 25</td>
<td>Period 1: Course Organization and Overview – Student and Instructor introductions, Review of lectures and Issue Case Studies</td>
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| August 27  | Period 2: Agriculture and Food Public policy – political, economic, social, cultural, moral/ethical contexts and rationales, key concepts and tools for analysis  
Reading: Herring, Chapter 1  
Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 1  
Reading: Paarlberg, Chapter 1 |
| September 1| Period 3: History lesson on evolution of public policy for the U.S. agricultural sector  
Reading: Paarlberg, Chapter 8 |
| September 3| Period 4: Government institutions and policy actors  
Reading: Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 2 |
| September 8| Period 5: Policy process, mechanisms and policymaking  
Reading: Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 3 |
| September 10| Period 6: Policy analysis, understanding the cause and consequences of policy issues, and evaluation of alternative public policy responses. Agricultural and Food Sector; the political and economic environment and policy challenges.  
Reading: Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 4 |
| September 15| Period 7: Policy analysis, understanding the cause and consequences of policy issues, and evaluation of alternative public policy responses. Agricultural and Food Sector; the political and economic environment and policy challenges.  
Reading: Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 5 |
| September 17| Period 8: Policy analysis, understanding the cause and consequences of policy issues, and evaluation of alternative public policy responses. Agricultural and Food Sector; the political and economic environment and policy challenges.  
Reading: Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 6 |
| September 22| Period 9: Preliminary Exam |
| September 24| Period 10: Policy case study approach. Class notes and selected readings. |
| September 29| Period 11: **Case 1 Farm level policy.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy? |
October 1  Period 12: **Case 2 Nutrition and dietary assistance policy for U.S. and/or foreign consumers.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy?

October 6  Period 13: **Case 3 Bioeconomy policy.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy?

October 8  Period 14: Case 4 **Sustainability policy for food and agriculture, organics and biotechnology.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy?

October 13  Period 15: Dr. Stephanie Mercier, Senior Policy and Advocacy Adviser at Farm Journal Foundation Agricultural Policy Consultant at Agricultural Perspectives, previously Agricultural Economist at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Chief Economist at Senate Agriculture Committee

October 15  Period 16: Case 5 **Nature vs. Agriculture.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy?

October 20  Fall Break

October 22  Period 17: Case 6 **International Agricultural Trade and Foreign Food and Agricultural Assistance.** Backgrounder: What is the issue? Understanding the cause and consequences of the issue. What is current policy?

October 27  Period 18: Case 1 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?

October 29  Period 19: Case 2 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?

November 3  Period 20: Case 3 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?

November 5  Period 21: Case 4 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?

November 10  Period 22: Case 5 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?

November 12  Period 23: Case 6 Interaction with a key actor(s) on the policy issue. What is their position? Who do they represent? How do they impact on the policy process? Who is in opposition? What are the counter arguments?
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>Period 24</td>
<td>Case 1 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>Period 25</td>
<td>Case 2 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 24</td>
<td>Period 26</td>
<td>Case 3 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<td>November 26</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Period 27</td>
<td>Case 4 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<td>December 3</td>
<td>Period 28</td>
<td>Case 5 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>Period 29</td>
<td>Case 6 Policy analysis and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>Period 30</td>
<td>Case study summaries and Final Review</td>
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<td>December 15</td>
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<td>Final Examination, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.</td>
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