**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD**

**AGEC 4613**

**FALL 2018**

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**Meeting Times**: Tuesday and Thursday 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM

**Meeting** **Location**: AGRI 301A

**I. Catalog Description**

**4613 Political Economy of Agriculture and Food.** 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 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.** Materials for this course can be found on Blackboard. You can access Blackboard at <http://learn.uark.edu>.

**II. Course Rationale**

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.

Negotiations on the 2018 farm bill have yielded heated debates over a number of issues, from nutritional to conservation programs. The House and Senate have developed their versions of the farm bill and negotiations on a compromised version will take place sometime soon. Leaders from both chambers of Congress are optimistic that they can deliver a new farm bill on time before the 2014 Farm Bill expires on September 30, 2018.

Arkansas is a significantly large agriculture and food producing state, and consistently ranks in the top one-third of the nation for agricultural cash receipts. It is the largest producer of rice, second largest in broilers, and fourth largest in cotton. Agriculture contributes with around 17% of the value-added and 1 in every 6 jobs in the state.

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.

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.

**III. Course Objectives**

The overall objective of the course is to develop the student's understanding of the political, economic, social and cultural approach to domestic and international food and agricultural policy and encourage critical thinking about the food and agricultural policy process. Examples of the questions we intend to address are:

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/or should be addressed by public policies in food and agriculture? 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 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, and
* Critical thinking about the need for policies and policy reforms.

**IV. Conduct of the course**

The objectives of this course will be achieved through a combination of activities, including:

* **Class discussions/Periods.** PowerPoint notes will be posted on the class website for each class period. I expect you to download the notes and review them before class. In this way, you will be in a good position to ask questions and engage in meaningful discussions in class.
* **In-class quizzes.** Quizzes (unannounced) will be given to provide you with my feedback about the concepts and information I think you should be learning in this class. These quizzes will count towards your participation score for the final grade; hence, it will be in your interest to come to class and learn from the quiz.
* **Reading assignments, videos, and audios.** Complementary study material, including required assignments, will be posted in Blackboard for your access. Thus, make a habit of checking Blackboard often for newly posted class material.
* **Formal exams.** One midterm 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)
* **Policy Case Study.** The case study is a central part of this course. Its intended goal is to expose you to work collectively in the development of a full policy analysis, and to help you develop your ability to communicate concisely, clearly and in depth on leading public policy issues in agriculture and food. Papers should be properly typed and cited, and should reflect the coordinated work of the group rather than the collection of individual efforts.

You will be assigned to a case study group based on your stated preference/choice among the following selected topics:

1. **Environmental policy:** e.g.,Waters of the U.S. (WATUS)
2. **Trade policy:** e.g., NAFTA renegotiation; tariff retaliation
3. **Farm policy:** commodity programs
4. **Farm policy:** dairy programs
5. **International food assistance:** USAID programs
6. **Food and nutrition policy:** e.g., Schools’ Food Nutritional standards; SNAP
7. **Energy policy:** e.g.,Biofuels
8. **Farm labor and immigration policy:** e.g., Guess Worker Program

The groups will meet mandatorily with the instructor during office hours every two weeks to show their progress and seek advice. Furthermore, each group will report its progress to the entire class over three class periods, in which they will present:

1. *Background Report*: a Word document not more than 10 pages in length, and a PowerPoint presentation, addressing the following descriptive questions:
	1. What is the issue?
	2. Who are the major actors, their positions and institutions involved?
	3. What are the causes and consequences of the issue?
	4. What is the current policy?

The Word and PowerPoint documents are due via email a week before the group’s assigned presentation date.

1. *Policy Analysis Report*: a Word document not more than 10 pages in length, and a PowerPoint presentation, presenting the policy analysis (problem definition, policy alternatives, evaluative criteria, selected alternative/s, and conclusions).

The Word and PowerPoint documents are due via email a week before the group’s assigned presentation date.

The final policy case study report (encompassing the background and policy analysis reports) is due December 7.

* **Policy case study critique.** You will also be assigned a policy case study to evaluate. The evaluation consists of a one-page critique of the content, organization, and presentation of the entire case study assigned to you (just one critique after the policy analysis report, but including a review of the performance of the group throughout the semester). This critique is due via email the first class period following the completion of the case study presentation.
* **Exercises.** For graduate students and undergraduates who want to be more challenged, additional readings and assignments will be given throughout the semester.

**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.

**Devices Policy:** Please turn off or silence phones, handhelds, tablets, laptops, etc., during class. Let us do our best to avoid distractions in class by not using these devices.

**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.

**V. Teaching Units**

**Unit 1. Course overview, content, scope. Lectures 1 and 2.** The objective of this unit is to provide an overview of the course objectives and approach.

**Unit 2. Comparative analysis of agricultural and food policy.** **Lectures 3-5.** This section will focus on understanding U.S., EU and other countries’ domestic agricultural policies. The main objective of this unit is to inform students of the current status of agricultural policies in selected developed and developing countries and the forces shaping the differences in the policy landscape. Evaluation of this section will be based on mid-term and final exams and class discussions.

**Unit 3. Method of agricultural and food policy and policy analysis tools. Periods 6-13.** The objective of this unit is to provide an overview of the policy process. 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 discussions.

**Unit 4. Policy Case Studies. Period 15-30.** This section will focus on the case study method and the specific case studies selected for in-depth description and analysis.

**VI. Textbooks and Tools**

Readings other than the two textbooks will be made available on Blackboard or through hyperlinks on the internet.

**Required Text:**

Kraft, Michael E. and Scott R. Furlong. 2015. Public policy: politics, analysis, and alternatives. 5th Edition. CQ Press, a division of SAGE. Thousand Oaks, CA

**Suggested Texts:**

Novak, James L., Pease, James W., Sanders, Larry D. 2015. Agricultural Policy in the United States: Evolution and Economics. Routledge. <http://0-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=11023370>

Paarlberg, Robert L. 2013. *Food politics: what everyone needs to know.* 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press*.* Oxford, United Kingdom.<http://0-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=10740038>

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.

<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://www.nal.usda.gov/> National Agricultural Library website.

<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://hls.harvard.edu/dept/clinical/clinics/food-law-and-policy-clinic-of-the-center-for-health-law-and-policy-innovation/> Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic

<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.biofortified.org/blog/> Independent blog to provide factual information on biology and particularly plant genetics and genetic engineering.

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

<http://www.voxeu.org/vox-talks/we-are-what-we-eat-how-and-why-governments-intervene-food-markets>

Rachel Griffith, why governments intervene to improve health impacts from diet

<http://www.voxeu.org/article/changing-economic-factors-and-rise-obesity>

Charles Courtemanche et al. Changing economic factors and the rise in obesity

Additional blog sites will be added through the term.

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

Herring, Ronald J (ed.). 2015. The Oxford Handbook of Food, Politics, and Society. Oxford University Press. New York. <http://0-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=10995809>

Pinstrup-Andersen, Per and Derrill D. Watson II. 2011. *Food Policy for Developing Countries: The Role of Government in Global, National and Local Food Systems*. Cornell University Press.

Nestle, Marion. 2013. *Food politics.* *How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. 10th anniversary edition. Revised. University of California Press.

Browne, William P. *et al. Sacred Cows and Hot Potatoes: Agrarian Myths in Agricultural Policy.* Westview Press (Boulder). 1992.

Lusk, Jayson. 2013. *The food police: a well-fed manifesto about the politics of your plate.* Crown Publishing Group, Random House, Inc. New York.

Wilde, Parke. 2013. *Food policy in the United States: an introduction.* Routledge. Milton Park, Oxford, United Kingdom. Available on the University Library ebrary at: <http://0-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=10676501>

Schmitz, Andrew, Charles Moss, Troy Schmitz, Harley Furtan, and Helen Schmitz. *Agricultural Policy, Agribusiness, and Rent-Seeking Behaviour.* 2nd Ed. University of Toronto Press. 2010.

**VII. Student evaluation**

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| **Class Component** | **Contribution to Final Grade** |
| **Midterm exam**  | **15%** |
| **Policy case Study** | **45%** |
| *Background Report* | *15%* |
| *Policy Analysis Report* | *15%* |
| *Final Policy Case Study Report* | *15%* |
| **Class participation** | **15%** |
| **Final exam** | **25%** |

The final grade will be assigned according to the following scale:

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

**VIII. Class Attendance, Office Hours, Disabilities, and Course revisions**

Attendance is expected and counts toward your grade. Please come prepared (by having reviewed the Period 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 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 and Thursday from 10:00-11:30 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.

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| **Class Schedule** |
| **Date / Lecture** | **Topic/Reading** |
| 8/21 | 1 | Course introduction, organization and overview. |
| 8/23 | 2 | Discussion on case study |
| 8/28 | 3 | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S.: the Farm Bill |
| 8/30 | 4 | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S.: the Farm Bill |
| 9/4 | 5 | Review of agricultural policies in other selected countries |
| 9/6 | 6 | Public policy and politics. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 1  |
| 9/11 | 7 | Evolution of U.S. agricultural policies and perceptions. Novak et al, Ch. 4  |
| 9/13 | 8 | Agriculture & food public policy and politics. Novak et al, Ch. 3, Paarlberg Ch. 1 |
| 9/18 | 9 | Government institutions and policy actors. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 2 |
| 9/20 | 10 | Policy process, mechanisms and policymaking. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 3 |
| 9/25 | 11 | Introduction to policy analysis. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 4  |
| 9/27 | 12 | Public problems and policy alternatives. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 5 |
| 10/2 | 13 | Assessing policy alternatives. Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 6 |
| 10/4 | 14 | Midterm exam |
| 10/9 | 15 | Backgrounder Case 1 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/2)  |
| 10/11 | 16 | Backgrounder Case 2 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/4)  |
| 10/16 | Fall break |
| 10/18 | 17 | Backgrounder Case 3 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/11) |
| 10/23 | 18 | Backgrounder Case 4 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/16) |
| 10/25 | 19 | Backgrounder Case 5 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/18) |
| 10/30 | 20 | Backgrounder Case 6 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/23) |
| 11/1 | 21 | Backgrounder Case 7 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/25) |
| 11/6 | 22 | Backgrounder Case 8 (Word and PowerPoint due 10/30) |
| 11/8 | 23 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 1 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/1) |
| 11/13 | 24 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 2 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/6) |
| 11/15 | 25 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 3 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/8) |
| 11/20 | 26 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 4 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/13) |
| 11/22 | Thanksgiving break |
| 11/27 | 27 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 5 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/20) |
| 11/29 | 28 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 6 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/22) |
| 12/4 | 29 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 7 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/27) |
| 12/6 | 30 | Policy analysis and evaluation Case 8 (Word and PowerPoint due 11/29) |
| 12/7 | Dead day |
| 12/12 |  | Final exam @ 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM |