

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

AGEC 4613 001/5233 001

FALL 2019

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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: AGECE 1103, and AGECE 2103 or equivalent, and PSYC 2003 or SOC 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 food consumption 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.

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 of food and agriculture policies?** – 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 briefs, 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 comprehensive exam. Make-up exams will be given if the student is engaged in a university-sponsored event and provides the instructor with advance notice. 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 Briefs.** Each student will prepare a policy brief on a food or agriculture policy subject of his or her choice. The policy brief is a central part of this course. Its intended goal is to expose you to working in the development of a sound policy brief, and to help you develop your ability to communicate concisely, clearly and in depth on leading public policy issues in agriculture and food. Each student will make a 10-minute presentation of his or her brief to the class.

- **Extra readings for graduate students.** 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.

V. Teaching Units

Course Introduction. Course overview, content, scope. Lecture 1. The objective of this unit is to provide an overview of the course objectives and approach.

Unit 1. Introduction U.S. and international agricultural policies. Lectures 2-9. This section will focus on understanding U.S., EU and other countries’ domestic agricultural policies. The main objective of this unit is to introduce students to the current state of agricultural policies and the forces shaping the differences in the policy landscape.

Unit 2. Developing a policy brief. Lectures 10-11. Policy briefs are a prime way to communicate policy ideas to policymakers and other stakeholders. This unit will introduce students to the art of writing agricultural policy briefs.

Unit 3. Method of agricultural and food policy and policy analysis tools. Lectures 13-24. 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.

Unit 4. Policy brief presentations. Lectures 25-30. In this unit, students will present their policy briefs to the class. The objective of this unit is to expose students to policy brief presentations, and to inform the class about the specific policy issue developed in the brief.

VI. Textbooks and Tools

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

Recommended 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

Swinnen, Johan. 2018. The Political Economy of Agricultural and Food Policies. Palgrave MacMillan. Nature America, part of Springer Nature. New York, NY.

<https://library.uark.edu/record=b4404637~S1>

Other Relevant Texts:

Novak, James L., Pease, James W., Sanders, Larry D. 2015. *Agricultural Policy in the United States: Evolution and Economics*. Routledge. <http://O-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://O-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=10740038>

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

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://O-site.ebrary.com.library.uark.edu/lib/uark/detail.action?docID=10676501>

A set of online resources 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://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/> alliance of various groups, environmental, organic, sustainable, etc.

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

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

<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.

VII. Student evaluation

Class Component	Contribution to Final Grade
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	30%
Policy brief	30%
Class participation	20%

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

Points	Final Grade	Points	Final Grade
95-100	A+	73-76	C
90-94	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	<60	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 Monday and Wednesday from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.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 is 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.

Lecture	Date	Content
1	8/27	Course introduction, organization and overview
2	8/29	Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. (Novak, Pease, and Sanders, Ch. 4)
3	9/3	Review of global agricultural policies
4	9/5	Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. - Commodity Title (Smith et al., Vol. 1 Ch. 4)
5	9/10	Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. - Crop insurance (Smith et al., Vol. 1 Ch. 3)
6	9/12	Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. - Nutrition and conservation (Smith et al., Vol. 1 Ch. 3; Vol. 2 Sec. III)
7	9/17	Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. - Trade and food aid (Smith et al., Vol. 1 Ch. 5; Vol. 2 Ch. 3)
8	9/19	Partial equilibrium framework for policy analysis (Swinnen, Ch. 2; Houck Ch. 4 and 5)
9	9/24	Partial equilibrium framework for policy analysis (Swinnen, Ch. 2; Houck Ch. 4 and 5)
10	9/26	Developing a good policy brief
11	10/1	Developing a good policy brief
12	10/3	Midterm exam
13	10/8	Public policy and politics (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 1)
14	10/10	Government institutions and policy actors (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 2)
15	10/15	Political coalitions in agricultural and food policies (Swinnen Ch. 2)
16	10/17	Policy process, mechanisms and policymaking (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 3)
	10/22	Fall break
17	10/24	Introduction to policy analysis (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 4; Bardach Part 1)
18	10/29	Public problems and policy alternatives (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 5; Bardach, Part 1)
19	10/31	Assessing policy alternatives (Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 6; Bardach, Part 1)
20	11/5	Assessing policy alternatives (Swinnen, Ch. 3)
21	11/7	Revisiting U.S. agricultural policies with a political economy view
22	11/12	Revisiting U.S. agricultural policies with a political economy view
23	11/14	Revisiting U.S. agricultural policies with a political economy view
24	11/19	Revisiting U.S. agricultural policies with a political economy view
25	11/21	Policy brief presentations
26	11/26	Policy brief presentations
	11/28	Thanksgiving
27	12/3	Policy brief presentations
28	12/5	Policy brief presentations
29	12/10	Policy brief presentations
30	12/12	Policy brief presentations
	12/17	Final exam