

# **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD**

**AGEC 46103**

**FALL 2024**

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## **Meeting Times and location**

Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 PM – Poultry Science Classroom 0133

## **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 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: Prerequisite: (AGEC 11003 or ECON 22003) and (AGEC 21003 or ECON 21003) and (PSYC 20003 or SOCI 10103 or HDFS 26003).

**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, nature, and consequences of domestic and international food and agricultural 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,
- 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:

1. **Class periods.** The class will be delivered face to face. ***Attendance will be recorded during class.*** Attendance and participation matters. Students that attend class and participate consistently outperform those that do not. To highlight its importance, attendance accounts for 10% of your final grade. Students are allowed to have 3 absences without consequences for attendance points.
2. **Quizzes.** Quizzes are one way to give you feedback about whether you understand the material covered in that lecture, and they account for 20% of your final grade. Quizzes will be administered in-class throughout the semester.
3. **Formal exams.** There are four exams: three midterm exams, and a **comprehensive** final exam. Each midterm exams accounts for 20%, while the final exam accounts for 30% of your final grade.

Make-up exams will be given only under special circumstances and provided the student presents appropriate supporting documentation (e.g., 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.

4. **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.

#### **VI. Textbooks and Supplemental Materials**

**Computer and internet access:** since some activities in this course (e.g., exams, quizzes) will be delivered via Blackboard, it is essential that you have access to a computer, and decent internet during the length of the course.

If you do not have access to any of these, please contact me immediately. Also, you can contact [uofacares@uark.edu](mailto:uofacares@uark.edu) they will help you get ready for your classes with whatever you need.

**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*. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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>

**VII. Student evaluation**

*Table 1. Estimation of final grade for the class*

| <b>Class Component</b> | <b>Contribution to Final Grade</b> |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Midterm exam 1         | 17.5%                              |
| Midterm exam 2         | 17.5%                              |
| Midterm exam 3         | 17.5%                              |
| Final exam             | 22.5%                              |
| Class participation    | 10.0%                              |
| Quizzes                | 15.0%                              |

*Table 2. Grading system*

| <b>Points</b> | <b>Final Grade</b> |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 90-100        | A                  |
| 80-89         | B                  |
| 70-79         | C                  |
| 60-70         | D                  |
| <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 and class exercises also will be given at the class period throughout the term. Class participation is one component of your final grade.

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.

**Academic Honesty/Integrity.** As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is only possible when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail. Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University's 'Academic Integrity Policy' which may be found at <http://provost.uark.edu/>. Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.

**Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).** The use of generative artificial intelligence tools in any capacity while completing academic work that is submitted for credit, independently or collaboratively, **will be considered academic dishonesty in this course** and reported to the Office of Academic Initiatives and Integrity.

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

Table 3. Class schedule for 2024 (subject to change).

| Lecture | Date  | Content   |
|---------|-------|---|
| 1       | 8/20  | Course introduction, organization and overview                          |
| 2       | 8/22  | Partial eq. framework for policy analysis                               |
| 3       | 8/27  | Partial eq. framework for policy analysis                               |
| 4       | 8/29  | Partial eq. framework for policy analysis                               |
| 5       | 9/3   | Partial eq. framework for policy analysis                               |
| 6       | 9/5   | Partial eq. framework for policy analysis                               |
| 7       | 9/10  | Review of global agricultural policies                                  |
| 8       | 9/12  | Review of global agricultural policies                                  |
| 9       | 9/17  | Midterm 1   |
| 10      | 9/19  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – INTRODUCTION TO FARM BILL |
| 11      | 9/24  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – COMMODITY TITLE           |
| 12      | 9/26  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – COMMODITY TITLE           |
| 13      | 10/1  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – CROP INSURANCE            |
| 14      | 10/3  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – CROP INSURANCE            |
| 15      | 10/8  | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – SNAP                      |
| 16      | 10/10 | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – SNAP                      |
|         | 10/15 | Fall Break  |
| 17      | 10/17 | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – CONSERVATION PROGRAMS     |
| 18      | 10/22 | Review of agricultural policies in the U.S. – CONSERVATION PROGRAMS     |
| 19      | 10/24 | Midterm 2   |
| 20      | 10/29 | The basics of public policymaking                                       |
| 21      | 10/31 | The basics of public policymaking                                       |
| 22      | 11/5  | Understanding public policies   |
| 23      | 11/7  | Understanding public policies   |
| 24      | 11/12 | Policy analysis   |
| 25      | 11/14 | Policy analysis   |
| 26      | 11/19 | Policy analysis   |
| 27      | 11/21 | Political coalitions in agricultural and food policies                  |
| 28      | 11/26 | Political coalitions in agricultural and food policies                  |
|         | 11/28 | Thanksgiving Holiday  |
| 29      | 12/3  | Final discussion  |
| 30      | 12/5  | Midterm 3   |
|         | 12/10 | <b>Final Exam (from 12:45 PM to 2:45 PM)</b>                            |