

ACE 456: Agricultural and Food Policies

Spring 2021

Class Meets: T/R 12:30 - 1:50pm

Instructor: Professor Hutchins

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Office: 431 Mumford

Office Hours: T/R 10-11am
or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an overview of agricultural policy in the United States to teach analysis of agricultural and food policies and programs and their effects on producers and consumers of agricultural products. The course covers the major areas of agricultural policy with an emphasis on the institutions and actors governing them, their historical context, and the economic theory and concepts relevant to analyzing their effects.

United States agriculture has gone from being one of the largest economic sectors in the country to being a much smaller, but more productive part of the economy. Decades of structural transformation has brought us the economic landscape we see now, as well as a number of philosophies, policies, and institutions. To understand where we have arrived, we first have to understand how we got here. What major policies have been enacted in US agriculture? What institutions have determined its evolution? How have different ideas shaped how we now frame certain issues in agriculture? Answering these questions about our past is key to confronting our future. After analyzing the main historical context of the major policy areas, we will analyze current issues affecting farming communities, consumers, and the rural economy using economic analysis. We will learn how to synthesize original analysis of economic policies in US agriculture, and how to discuss and make arguments about their impacts.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Describe the main areas of agricultural policy and the actors they involve.
- Explain the relevant historical context of agricultural policies as well as the philosophies or assumptions underlying their implementation.
- Evaluate the effects of an agricultural policy using economic theory and analysis.

- Communicate and articulate the costs and benefits of a policy and who the winners and losers are.

Course Delivery

Lectures

This semester the course will be delivered both **asynchronously** and **synchronously**. Each week consists of:

- **Tuesday Lecture:** This is delivered asynchronously, and is a recorded lecture on the week's topic. It will be uploaded before our scheduled time on Tuesday (12:30pm) and should be watched before our synchronous session on Thursday. The lecture will be on the topics explored in the readings, and it is recommended that students first do the readings, then watch the lecture, and then skim the readings again. The human brain needs time to rest, so I also recommend you pause the lecture at different intervals to give your brain a break or take notes.
- **Thursday Discussion:** This is delivered synchronously, and will be a discussion that everyone is required to attend at Thursday 12:30-1:50pm. A reading quiz must be completed before this session, and students are expected to be ready to discuss the material. In contrast to the Tuesday lecture, this is a time to interact with your classmates and discuss the material. You will get the most out of this if you show up to class prepared!

Office Hours

Office hours will happen on Zoom. To sign up for a 15 minute slot (or multiple 15 minute slots) use [this Google sheet](#).

Slack

Since we have comparatively less face time doing this course, we have a Slack channel that can be used for questions and comments on the assignments. Use it to connect and discuss with each other!

Compass

On Compass I will be posting the readings and the recorded lectures. The quizzes will also be available to do on Compass and (tentatively) the Midterm.

Recommended Textbook

Agricultural Policy in the United States: Evolution and Economics. by James L. Novak, James W. Pease, and Larry D. Sanders. 1st Edition, 2015. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1138809239

on [Amazon](#)

- This book will be used to roughly guide our discussion, as it presents agricultural policy chronologically rather than thematically.
- Additional **required** readings will be made available on Compass.

Grading and Assignments

Grading is made up of the following assignments/exams:

- Reading quizzes (20 points)
 - For assigned readings, students will be required to complete a short quiz before our discussion class on Thursday.
- Four short writing assignments (10 points each, 40 points total) due throughout the semester.
 - Each assignment will have a prompt based on one of the modules (land, labor, trade, etc.) which will ask you to summarize or analyze a current issue in US agriculture.
 - Papers must be more than 1 page but less than 3 pages single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins.
 - **All papers must have at least three citations, or five if you are a graduate student.** Accepted sources are noted below.
 - Group discussion of prompts is encouraged, but the **write up and argument must be your own.**
 - **One rewrite will be allowed** per student. The grade from the rewrite will replace the grade on the original assignment.
- One midterm exam (20 points).
 - This exam will be done at home, and students are expected to not discuss or collaborate with each other. Any material for the exam is allowed (notes, internet, readings, etc.).
- One final paper (20 points).
 - This is an analysis of a topic *chosen by each student* and cleared with me by **March 25**. Separate guidelines for the requirements of the assignment will be given later in the semester.
 - **For graduate students:** the final paper is expected to be an empirical analysis of a current issue in U.S. agriculture.

Accepted Citations

One of our learning goals this semester is understanding how to do research and synthesize primary source materials. For this reason, each of the writing assignments have the following guidelines for citations:

For Undergraduates, at least three citations from one of the following sources:

- Government reports (CRS, ERS, USDA, Department of Labor, Choices etc.).
- International organizations (UN, FAO, IMF, World Bank).
- Scholarly journal articles.
- Extension publications (e.g. FarmDoc).

News articles can be used in addition to these, but **do not count as one of your three**.

For Graduate Students, at least five citations from the above sources, but **three of them must be from scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles**.

Mental Health

This year more than ever, **please take care of your mental health**. Mark Layng from the Illinois Counseling Center is embedded with the College of ACES and provides mental health and wellness services for ACES students. He can be contacted at mlayng@illinois.edu.

Academic Integrity

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Student Code should also be considered as a part of this syllabus. Students should pay particular attention to Article 1, Part 4: Academic Integrity. Read the Code at the following URL: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>

Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade. Every student is expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policy: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>. Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read this policy to avoid any misunderstanding. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor(s) if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other breach of academic integrity.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor and the as soon as possible. To insure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the beginning, students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class should contact Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) and see the instructor as soon as possible. If you need accommodations for any sort of disability, please speak to me after class, or make an appointment to see me, or see me during my office hours. DRES provides students with academic accommodations, access, and support services. To contact DRES you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603 (V/TDD), or e-mail a message to disability@uiuc.edu. <http://www.disability.illinois.edu/> .

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Any student who has suppressed their directory information pursuant to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should self-identify to the instructor to ensure protection of the privacy of their attendance in this course. See <http://registrar.illinois.edu/ferpa> for more information on FERPA.

Grading Rubric

| Assignment | Points | Due Date |
|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| Writing Assignment 1 | 10 | February 16 |
| Writing Assignment 2 | 10 | March 2 |
| Midterm Exam | 20 | March 11 |
| Writing Assignment 3 | 10 | March 30 |
| Writing Assignment 4 | 10 | April 20 |
| Reading Quizzes | 20 | Throughout |
| Final Paper | 20 | May 11 |
| Total | 100 | |

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 0-59

Course Schedule

Subject to change given needs of the semester in these trying times.

When updating readings, I will update Compass instead of this syllabus, so look in your readings folder for updates.

The Modules

- Module 1: The Roots of Policy

1. Week 1: Introduction

- Main Topics: positive and normative analysis, multi-functionality.
- Book Chapters: 1
- Required Readings:
 - * The Multi-functionality of Agriculture: What Does it Mean?
 - * Charting the Essentials, February 2020

2. Week 2: Agricultural Productivity and Structural Change

- Main Topics: total factor productivity, technology treadmill, structural change, green revolution.
- Book Chapters: 2
- Required Readings:
 - * Agricultural Productivity Growth in the United States: Measurement, Trends, and Drivers
 - * Dimensions of an Agricultural Revolution

3. Weeks 3: Institutional Innovations: Public Entities in Agriculture

- Main Topics: public goods, market failure, information frictions.
- Book Chapters: 4
- Required Readings:
 - * The U.S. Land-Grant University System: An Overview
 - * ERS Report: Marketing Orders
 - * CRS Report: The Farm Credit System

4. Week 4: The Abundance of Land

- Main Topics: Land reform, Homestead Act, tenancy and sharecropping
- Required Readings:
 - * Abundance of Land by William Cochrane
 - * From Reconstruction to Deconstruction by Thomas Mitchell
 - * The Anti-Japanese Land Laws of California and Ten Other States
 - * ERS Report: Land Tenure
 - * Cochrane Article

5. Weeks 5: The Tragedy of Commons

- Main Topics: environmental externalities, collective action, conservation
- Required Readings:
 - * Soil Conservation in the 1980s: A Historical Perspective
 - * CRS Report: Conservation Programs
 - * Water Markets in the West
- 6. Weeks 6: The Farm Labor Problem
 - Main Topics: immigration policy, guest workers, minimum wage.
 - Required Readings:
 - * Chapters 6, 7 of The Farm Labor Problem
 - * Sweet Tyranny: Chapter 6
 - * ERS Report: Farm Labor and Mexico
- 7. Week 7: Midterm Exam
- Module 2: Modern Day Challenges
 1. Weeks 8-9: The Global Marketplace
 - Main Topics: tariffs, quotas, free trade agreements
 - Book Chapters: 10
 - Required Readings:
 - * A Short History of US Agricultural Trade Negotiations
 - * ERS Report: Global Landscape of Trade
 - * CRS Report: Retaliatory Tariffs
 2. Weeks 10-12: The Farm Bill Part 1 - The Producers
 - Main Topics: commodity programs, parity, target prices, crop insurance, supply control.
 - Book Chapters: 5-9
 - Required Readings:
 - * A New Deal for Agriculture, 1930-1938
 - * Surpluses and Payments: Federal Agricultural Policy, 1954–2008
 - * Effectiveness of Acreage Reduction Programs
 - * Are Farmers Made Whole by Trade Aid?
 3. Week 13: The Farm Bill Part 2 - The Consumers
 - Main Topics: food assistance, food safety, SNAP
 - Required Readings:
 - * CRS Report: USDA Food Assistance
 - * CRS Report: The Federal Food Safety System
 4. Week 14: The Future of Agriculture
 - Main Topics: automation, climate change, genetic technology, local food.

- Book Chapters: 12
 - Required Readings:
5. Week 15: Review Week/Overflow Week