

Agricultural Economics 345

Policy Issues in Agriculture and Natural Resources

Department of Agricultural Economics
College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Fall 2016

Course Details

AECN 345
Credit Hours: 3
Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.
Filley Hall 210
Prerequisite: AECN 141 or ECON 212 or equivalent

Contact Information

Instructor
Dr. Bradley D. Lubben
207A Filley Hall
Phone: 402.472.2235
E-mail: blubben2@unl.edu

Secretary
M. Jane Witte
207 Filley Hall
Phone: 402.472.1913
E-mail: janewitte@unl.edu

Course Description

History, development, programs, and analysis of public policy issues in agriculture and natural resources. Analysis of science, economic, and political factors involved in policy development. Emphasis on farm policy and farm structure; food and nutrition; trade and development; and natural resources, the environment, and bioenergy, with special attention to issues and policies impacting Nebraska.

Course Objectives

- Understand the history and process of developing public policy in agriculture and natural resources.
- Analyze the development and mechanics of federal farm programs and integrate the economic impacts of farm programs into risk management decision-making.
- Explore the economic and policy issues relating to the structure of farms and the food marketing system, including the regulation of farm structure in Nebraska.
- Understand the economics and politics of food assistance programs and food safety and nutrition policies.
- Understand the economics and politics of trade and development and the role and impact of international trade agreements and negotiations on policy alternatives.
- Analyze the programs, mechanics, economics, and politics of conservation programs and environmental regulations, including the regulation of water in Nebraska.
- Understand the science, economics, and politics of bioenergy, including the development of the bioenergy industry in Nebraska.

Course Materials

There is no official textbook for the course. The following textbook was originally used to develop the framework and structure of the course, but is out of print and awaiting a new revised edition. It is available in the library for those interested in a topical overview of many of the issues addressed in this course. Each chapter provides an overview of the issue at hand without becoming bogged down in economic and scientific jargon.

Agricultural and Food Policy, Sixth Edition. 2007. Ronald D. Knutson, J.B. Penn, Barry L. Flinchbaugh, and Joe L. Outlaw. Pearson Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-171873-8.

Instead of a textbook, the class will be structured on the lectures and assigned readings. The readings are selected to provide additional insight or illustration to issues discussed in class. These readings will be drawn from government agency publications, university publications, journal articles, popular press articles, and other resources, including the web. The readings, or links to the readings, will be available on Blackboard at *my.unl.edu*.

Additional resources that provide timely information on policy issues and development are available on the web or by e-mail and are recommended reading.

agri-pulse.com - This website provides daily releases of significant agricultural policy news and interviews. It is also the source of the weekly subscription policy newsletter that will be regularly distributed to the class for review.

politico.com/morningagriculture - This website (or daily e-mail) provides a mid-morning review of agricultural policy developments in the news with substantial reference and links to other news stories, reports, and analysis.

thefern.org/fern-ag-insider - The Food & Environment Reporting Network, a non-profit news organization, provides a complimentary "Ag Insider" morning briefing of agricultural policy news and developments via e-mail. The web address takes you to a sign-up page for the e-mail newsletter.

ers.usda.gov - This website is the home of the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service and is a gateway to several webpages that provide background, data, and analysis on numerous agricultural issues, including many of the issues discussed in class.

Course Evaluation

Grades will be assigned based on a weighted average of each student's performance in the following areas:

Discussion and class participation	20%
Quizzes and written assignments	20%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	20%

Letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following schedule:

<u>Weighted Average Score</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Weighted Average Score</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
97-100	A+	77-79	C+
93-96	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
		0-59	F

Discussion and Class Participation. A key part of the course will focus on participation in class discussions of the various agricultural and natural resource policy issues. The discussions may take place both in the classroom and on Blackboard. Students' grades for discussion and class participation will reflect their regular attendance, their effort to be involved in the discussions, and their contributions to those discussions in both forums.

Quizzes and Written Assignments. Regular quizzes or written assignments will be used to track the performance of students, the comprehension of each key policy issue, and the application of class concepts and methods to policy issues and programs. The written assignments may include problem-solving tasks or may be focused on writing in the style of a policy brief, generally not more than one or two pages, that addresses the basic understanding of an issue, the potential impact of an issue, the stakeholders involved in an issue, and the policy positions surrounding an issue.

Exams. Two midterm exams and one final exam will be given to students. Each of the midterm exams will focus on the most recent material covered in the class. However, some of the fundamental information in the course is cumulative to the understanding of the public policy development process and may show up on each successive exam. The final exam will be a cumulative exam of the content covered throughout the course, with emphasis on the most recent class material not already covered in the midterm exams.

Attendance. Regular attendance is expected and is necessary to perform well in the discussion and participation section of the course. Students are responsible for knowing the material presented and discussed during the class meetings and on Blackboard. Any student who cannot attend a class meeting is expected to obtain all of the class materials, readings, and assignments from Blackboard and obtain any notes from fellow classmates.

Course Schedule

The course is scheduled for 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. each Monday and Wednesday from August 22 to December 7. The final exam is scheduled for Monday, December 12 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. There will be no class on Monday, September 5 for Labor Day; Monday, October 17 for Fall Semester Break; and Wednesday, November 23 for Thanksgiving Break.

There will also be other limited times during the semester when the class may not be able to meet according to the schedule due to the instructor's travel schedule. In those instances, class will be canceled or lectures will be taped and available on Blackboard for students to review.

Course Outline

The course outline is listed in topical arrangement, consistent with the course objectives. Within each topic, the course will focus on the history and development of policy; the details, science, or mechanics of the topic; the economic impacts or considerations; and the political arena in which the topic is addressed. The chapter references are from the text, which is not required for students, but is available in the library for reference.

- I. Public Policy Development in Agriculture and Natural Resources (Chapters 1-3, 12)
 - A. Drivers of policy change
 - B. Role of public policy
 - C. History of policies in the U.S.
 - D. Political economy
 - E. Policy leadership and development

- II. Agricultural Policy (Chapter 7)
 - A. Farm programs
 - B. Farm structure
 - C. Food marketing system structure

- III. Trade and Development Policy (Chapters 4-6)
 - A. Geopolitics and trade policy
 - B. International trade agreements
 - C. Trade development and assistance

- IV. Food and Nutrition Policy (Chapters 10-11)
 - A. Food assistance programs
 - B. Food safety regulations
 - C. Food production, marketing, and labeling

- V. Environmental Policy (Chapters 8-9)
 - A. Conservation programs
 - B. Resource issues and management
 - C. Environmental regulations

- VI. Energy and Climate Policy
 - A. Energy and bioenergy
 - B. Climate policy

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to guidelines concerning academic dishonesty outlined in Section 4.2 of University's Student Code of Conduct (<http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/>). Students are encouraged to contact the instructor for clarification of these guidelines if they have questions or concerns. The Department of Agricultural Economics has a written policy defining academic dishonesty, the potential sanctions for incidents of academic dishonesty, and the appeal process for students facing potential sanctions. The Department also has a policy regarding potential appeals of final course grades. These policies are available for review on the department's website: (<http://agecon.unl.edu/undergraduate>).

In this course, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and any student directly or indirectly involved in any form of academic dishonesty related to the class may receive a grade of "F" for the assignment, the quiz or exam, or the course.

Special Needs

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Emergency Response

The following is provided for student information in the event of an emergency:

Fire Alarm (or other evacuation) – In the event of a fire alarm: Gather belongings (purse, keys, cellphone, N-Card, etc.) and use the nearest exit to leave the building. Do not use the elevators. After exiting notify emergency personnel of the location of persons unable to exit the building. Do not return to building unless told to do so by emergency personnel.

Tornado Warning – When sirens sound, move to the lowest interior area of building or designated shelter. Stay away from windows and stay near an inside wall when possible.

Active Shooter

- Evacuate – If there is a safe escape path, leave belongings behind, keep hands visible and follow police officer instructions.
- Hide out – If evacuation is impossible secure yourself in your space by turning out lights, closing blinds and barricading doors if possible.
- Take action – As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.

UNL Alert – Notifications about serious incidents on campus are sent via text message, email, unl.edu website, and social media. For more information go to: <http://unlalert.unl.edu>.

Additional Emergency Procedures – Additional information is posted on Blackboard in the Information folder for AECN 345 as well as at http://emergency.unl.edu/doc/Emergency_Procedures_Quicklist.pdf.