

# **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 2019

### **Course Details**

AECN 345  
Credit Hours: 3  
Mondays, 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.  
and  
Wednesdays, 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. (August 26 - September 11 and on test days as announced)  
Filley Hall 210  
Prerequisite: AECN 141 or ECON 212 or equivalent

### **Contact Information**

Instructor  
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Contact instructor directly for office hours and availability.

### **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. It should be 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 Canvas at [my.unl.edu](http://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.

*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 in-class activities	20%
Quizzes (online and in-class)	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. Students' grades for discussion and class participation will reflect their regular attendance, their effort to be involved in the discussions, their contributions to those discussions, and their work on in-class exercises.

Quizzes and Written Assignments. Regular quizzes and 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 quizzes may include in-class quizzes as well as online quizzes in follow-up to online lectures. The written assignments will be brief policy reports or reactions to policy issues and discussions raised in the lectures and in the classroom.

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 Canvas. Any student who cannot attend a class meeting is expected to obtain all of the class materials, readings, and assignments from Canvas and obtain any notes from fellow classmates.

## Course Schedule

The course begins in a regular lecture format from 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. each Monday and Wednesday afternoon from August 26 to September 11. Beginning with Week #4 on September 16, the format flips with two lectures for each week posted online for viewing while the class meets only on Monday afternoons from 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. for discussion, review, and guest speakers as appropriate, except for any scheduled exam sessions on Wednesdays. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. There will be no class on Monday, September 2 for Labor Day; Monday, October 21 for Fall Semester Break; and Wednesday, November 27 for Thanksgiving Break.

There may be other times during the semester when the class may not meet according to the schedule due to the instructor's travel schedule. The exact schedule of days in the classroom will be determined according to the balance of in-class lectures and in-class discussion sessions to review online lectures.

## 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 old 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

## Tentative Course Schedule

The tentative course schedule is listed for reference and planning, but is subject to change based upon topic sequence, guest speakers, etc.

Week 1	August 26	Lecture 1 (in class) - Introduction to Ag Policy Quiz 1 - In Class
	August 28	Lecture 2 (in class) - Drivers of Ag Policy Changes
Week 2	September 2	Labor Day - No Class
	September 4	Lecture 3 (in class) - Ag Policy History, Rationale, and Constraints
	September 6	Quiz 2 Due Online
Week 3	September 9	Lecture 4 (in class) - Ag Policy Development and Influence in the Legislative Branch
	September 11	Lecture 5 (in class) - Ag Policy Development Beyond the Legislative Branch
	September 13	Assignment 1 Due Online
Week 4	September 16	Class Session  Lecture 6 (online) - Farm Program History, Development, and Impacts Lecture 7 (online) - Farm Programs and Producer Decisions
	September 20	Quiz 3 Due Online
	September 23	Guest Lecture 1- Ag Policy Issues, Organizations, and Development - Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau (confirmed)  Lecture 8 (online) - Structure of Agriculture Lecture 9 (online) - Farm Bill Development and Details
Week 5	September 27	Assignment 2 Due Online
Week 6	September 30	Class Session
	October 2	Exam 1 - Lectures 1-9, Guest Lectures, and Accompanying Material
Week 7	October 7	Class Session  Lecture 10 (online) - Trade Economics and Politics Lecture 11 (online) - Trade Negotiations and Agreements
	October 11	Quiz 4 Due Online
	October 14	Guest Lecture 2 - Trade Diplomacy and Global Engagement - Stan Garbacz, IANR Interim Director of the Office of Global Engagement (invited)

Week 8	(continued)	Lecture 12 (online) - Trade Disputes and Development Lecture 13 (online) - Food and Nutrition Assistance
	October 18	Assignment 3 Due Online
Week 9	October 21	Fall Break - No Class
Week 10	October 28	Guest Lecture 3 - Food Assistance Issues and Education - Jean Ann Fischer, Nebraska Extension (invited)
		Lecture 14 (online) - Food Safety Lecture 15 (online) - Food Technology and Consumer Preferences
	November 1	Quiz 5 Due Online
Week 11	November 4	Class Session
		Lecture 16 (online) - Food Production Standards, Preferences, and Labeling Lecture 17 (online) - Environmental Policy and Conservation Programs
	November 8	Assignment 4 Due Online
Week 12	November 11	Guest Lecture 4 - Agricultural Policy Issues, Deliberations, and Communications - Ginger Langemeier, Legislative Director for Senator Sasse (invited) and Cicely Batie, Former Legislative Aide for Senator Fischer (invited)
		Lecture 18 (online) - Environmental Policy and Regulations Lecture 29 (online) - Water Policy and Regulations
	November 15	Quiz 6 Due Online
Week 13	November 18	Class Session
		Lecture 20 (online) - Bioenergy Policy Lecture 21 (online) - Climate Policy
	November 22	Assignment 5 Due Online
Week 14	November 25	Exam 2 - Lectures 10-21, Guest Lectures, and Accompanying Material
Week 15	December 2	Guest Lecture 5 - Property Taxes Issues and Policies - Dave Aiken, UNL Ag Law Specialist
		Lecture 22 (online) - To be Determined Lecture 23 (online) - Ag Policy Update
Week 16	December 9	Lecture 24 - Fundamental Challenges for Agriculture Quiz 7 (In Class)
Finals Week	December 18	Final Exam, 1:00-3:00 p.m. - Comprehensive Exam

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct (<https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct>) addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

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.

## **Writing Center**

The Writing Center, located in 102 Andrews Hall and satellite locations from 5-7 pm in Adele Hall , is a free service for all UNL students, faculty, and staff. You can work with an individual writing consultant on any type of writing at any stage in your writing process. For an appointment, call 472-8803 or schedule online (<https://www.unl.edu/writing/home>).

## **Services for Students with Disabilities**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787.

## **Academic Support Services**

You can schedule free appointments for individual academic coaching with First-Year Experience and Transition Program staff through MyPLAN. You can also take advantage of study stops--which provide individual and group study with learning consultants in a variety of disciplines--and free group workshops on topics such as time management, goal setting, test preparation, and reading strategies. See the website (<http://success.unl.edu/>) for schedules and more information.

## **Health and Well-Being**

The University offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS) (<https://caps.unl.edu/>) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Big Red Resilience & Well-Being (<https://resilience.unl.edu/big-red-resilience-well-being>) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770."

## Classroom Emergency Preparedness and 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.

Intruder Threat/Other Dangerous Situations - For other emergency situations, consider the following:

- If immediate evacuation seems to be the best option, direct students to the closest exits away from the source of the emergency. Students should hold hands in the air when exiting the building.
- If immediate evacuation does not appear to be safe or feasible consider one of these options.
  - If your room has a solid door with a lock, lock the door. If there is a second door in the room, also lock that door.
  - If the room is unable to be locked, consider whether a door that opens inward can be blocked.
  - If the room is unable to be locked or the door blocked, consider having personnel hide in locations where appropriate.
- If staying in the room:
  - Turn off the light.
  - Have students get low and away from the door.
  - Have everyone silence their cell phones and stay quiet
- When the emergency is over and the group is exiting, remind everyone to move slowly and hold their hands in the air.

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 Canvas on the home (syllabus) page for AECN 345 as well as at [http://emergency.unl.edu/doc/Emergency\\_Procedures\\_Quicklist.pdf](http://emergency.unl.edu/doc/Emergency_Procedures_Quicklist.pdf).