

EA 678
Agricultural Policy

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Course Description and Objectives

The major goal of this course is to *provide you with the skills necessary to apply your economic and quantitative skills to address a policy problem*. Most of what you learn is just a matter of learning how to apply skills or knowledge you already have, but you need to learn how to do so in a policy context. I have developed a process for achieving this goal that I call the Policy Recipe. We will use this “recipe” as the basis for addressing policies in a generic sense, whether you are interested in resources, trade, worker rights, or food policies. The process involves using standard micro theory and welfare analysis to evaluate and compare policies and a political economy component to help you understand the economics of rent seeking, which can undermine this model. This part of the class applies generically to most policy problems. But since each of you has your own interests, I have provided opportunities to include applications. Each of you will prepare a presentation, which gives you the opportunity to explore something you are interested in and exposes you to seven other topics. We will also go through a new book together with the rather heady title: *Mobilizing to Save Civilization*. The purpose is to discuss cutting edge and controversial views about what is “wrong” with the world, and that needs policy solutions.

If I accomplish my goals, by the end of the semester you should know three things:

- 1) A process for analyzing policy
- 2) Tools and techniques to analyze policy
- 3) Some applied examples.

Web - RAMCT

The entire content of this course, except exams and lectures, will be placed on RAMCT. You will find readings, assignments, handouts and everything else you need on a weekly basis. You are responsible for checking the website regularly.

Texts and Readings:

We will be using many different readings. They will all be posted on RAMCT.

Class Attendance: This class relies heavily on attendance. I will not have an attendance requirement, but not attending class could lead to a lower participation grade.

Grading:	Two exams	30% each
	Presentation	10%
	Paper	25%
	Book Chapter/participation	5%

Course Paper and Presentation

Since the policy we are learning applies to a lot of areas, you will each write a paper and do a presentation the last two weeks of class. Your presentation will be structured as if you are doing a presentation at a professional meeting, like the Western Agricultural Economics Association. I will provide guidelines in a separate document. Basically, you have 20 minutes to present a powerpoint and 10 minutes to take questions. You will write an accompanying paper that will be 12 pages long, double spaced. The paper is due 5 days after your presentation. I will also provide guidelines for the paper. The topic will be how to address a policy problem, OR a analysis of a policy problem, OR, a technique to analyze policy. Masters students will find a published paper and present it as if it was their original work. Ph.D. students must present their own ideas (which may be original or a compilation of existing ideas).

I must approve your topic ahead of time. Look to professional journals or websites for professional societies for ideas. Websites for agencies that do economic policy are also a good source. This includes the US Department of Agriculture (especially the Economic Research Service), the World Bank, Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Agriculture Organization, and Animal, Plant, Health, Inspection Service. You can also check private organizations like Resources for the Future or the CATO Institute.

Book Review

We will be reading a book over the course of the semester and each of you will present one chapter. The book is Brown, Lester. 2009. Plan B: 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization. Earth Policy Institute, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY.

I have provided you a free copy on RAMCT. We will cover chapters 1 and 10 together. You will draw for spots to present chapters 2-9. The purpose is to promote class discussion about contemporary issues. This book should stimulate great discussion. You have 15 minutes (FIRM) to present the contents of your chapter. You can use the board or handouts but not powerpoint. Each of your chapters is in the section of the book called Challenges. Your job is to cover the major points of the chapter, to give a brief statement about the pro's and cons of the author's arguments, and to lead the class in discussion for 5 minutes. Time goes quickly, so prepare well and STAY ON TIME.

Notes

- Your readings can be found on RAMCT
- You are expected to read assignments ahead of time
- Tests or other assignments may not be made up without written permission from the instructor. If you miss an exam or assignment, you will be given a grade equal to 50% of the points.
- Assignments are considered on time if they are in my office by 8 a.m. the morning after the assignment is due.
- Assignments that are handed in late receive a 10 percent reduction per day, including weekends
- Students with disabilities are encouraged to inform me immediately if it affects your participation in the course.

Deadlines

January 28	Guest speaker
Feb 23/25	Guest speaker
March 4	First Exam
Spring Break	March 15-21
April 22	Second Exam
April 27	Student presentations 1 & 2 (paper due 5 days later)
April 29	Student presentations 3 & 4 (paper due 5 days later)
May 4	Student presentations 5 & 6 (paper due 5 days later)
May 6	Student presentations 7 & 8 (paper due 5 days later)