

AREC 460: Economics of World Agriculture
Colorado State University
Spring Semester 2008
12:30-1:45 TR
100 Eddy Building

Dr. Andy Seidl, professor

Instructor:

Andrew Seidl, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist—Public Policy

Contacts:

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Office hours:

2-3:30 pm Tuesday and Thursday and by appointment.

Description:

Economic approaches to understanding the challenges facing developing nations and regions. Topics include: Income distribution, poverty, population growth, food and natural resource scarcity and abundance, institutions and technical innovation.

Format:

The course will consist of twice weekly lectures of 75 minutes. Student interaction and discussion are built into the lecture format. The course is 3 credits and is currently offered in the Spring semester.

Objectives:

Students will become 1) aware, 2) knowledgeable, 3) conversant, and 4) analytical in the issues and concepts of economic issues facing developing countries and regions. They will be able to understand, potentially assess, economic issues in developing nations through the lens of economic theory and the weight of case history available and appropriate to their level of education and interest.

Text/materials:

Principal text: Norton, G.W., Alwang, J., and W.A. Masters. 2006. The economics of agricultural development: World food systems and resource use. Routledge Publishers. 448 pages.

Supplemental readings: World Bank, UNDP, CGIAR centers, The Economist, etc.

- Use of external sources of insight is expected for ALL written out of class assignments except public addresses and movies. Appropriate citation of external sources of inspiration, fact and theory is an ethical requirement.
- You should expect to read 30-50 pages of material for each class. It is recommended that you cover the material on your own prior to class.

Evaluation:

Book review: 20%; Public address write-ups/movie reviews: 10%; Newspaper/magazine write-ups: 10%; Homework: 20%; Midterm examination: 20%; Final examination: 20%.

- Students will review either Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, Easterly's *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, or Perkins' *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*. The book review will be approximately 2,000 words, spending at least ½ of the review providing an economic critique of the work.
- Students will review the movies "An inconvenient truth" and "A day without a Mexican" or a suitable substitute for one of these films to be cleared with me prior to your review. Each review will be approximately 750 words, spending at least ½ of the review providing an economic critique of the work. Each review is worth 2.5% of the course grade.
- CSU and the broader Fort Collins community provide regular and frequent opportunities to hear world authorities speak on aspects of development. Although students will be encouraged to attend as many of these events as possible, for class evaluation students will provide a one page write up of two such events, each worth 2.5% of the course grade.
- Newspapers and news magazines commonly carry news related to international development involved agriculture, trade, food supply, and/or natural resource use. Students will provide a one page analytical write up of two such articles, including an appropriate graphical or mathematical application, discussing the arguments on either side of the problem and positing potential solutions to the problem based upon your knowledge of economics. Simply reporting what is contained in the article will garner ½ credit, or an F according to traditional American grading traditions. Each critique is worth 5% of the class grade.
- Students will complete approximately 4 brief homework assignments designed to illustrate some of the more challenging or important concepts from class. Each homework is worth 2.5-5% of the course grade.
- Examinations will be in class and will be short answer and essay format, typically consisting of 4-6 multipart questions.
- This course repeatedly touches on the themes of poverty and hunger that plague some 75% of the Earth's population. Since CSU students generally have chosen their parents well and have little experience with either abject poverty or long term hunger, a student who wishes to substitute a 750 word essay reflecting on their experience resulting from a 24 hr fast for one of the movie reviews or public speeches will be provided this opportunity. Let us be clear that this is not a requirement of the course, rather a choice freely entered into by the student having taken due care and consideration for his or her own health.

The class will be graded in the following manner:

- 1) According to American grading traditions, if you achieve the following standards, you will be guaranteed the following minimum grade: >90.00%=A; 80.00-89.99=B; 70.00-79.99=C; 60.00-69.99=D. +s and -s will be at my discretion.
- 2) In addition, this is a capstone undergraduate class. As such, the mean grade for the course should probably be a "B." Therefore, notwithstanding the above criterion, if you are within one half of one standard deviation of the mean, you will earn a "B+, B, or B-." If you are more than one half of one standard deviation above the mean, you will earn an "A or A-," 0.5 to 1.0 standard deviations below the mean earns a "C+, C or C-," etc.
- 3) All work, except for the midterm examination, turned before Spring Break will earn a 5% bonus.

Expected Course Outline (subject to change according to the interests and needs of the class):

Weeks 1 & 2: Dimensions of world food and development problems

- Hunger, malnutrition, economics of food demand, population, and demography.

- Readings: Chapters 1-4.
- Weeks 3 & 4: the Millennium Development Goals and Millennium Declaration.
 - UN Millennium Development Goals. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>;
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/default.aspx>.
- Weeks 5 & 6: Development theories and the role of agriculture.
 - Economic transformation, growth, development theory, path dependence.
 - Readings: Chapters 5-6.
- Week 7: Review of first 6 weeks and midterm exam
- Weeks 8 & 9: Agricultural systems and resource use
 - Agriculture in traditional societies, subsistence, determinants of agricultural systems, resource use and sustainability, human resources, gender roles, formal and informal institutions.
 - Readings: Chapters 7-10.
- Weeks 10, 11 and 12: Getting agriculture moving
 - Theories and strategies for agricultural development, research, extension, education, land and labor markets, input and credit markets, pricing policies and marketing systems.
 - Readings: Chapters 11-15.
- Weeks 13 & 14: Agricultural development in an interdependent world
 - Agriculture and international trade, trade policies, negotiations, and agreements, macroeconomic policies and agricultural development, capital flows and foreign assistance.
 - Readings: Chapters 16-19.
- Week 15: Lessons, trends, themes and perspectives
 - Readings: Chapter 20.

Final Exam. Wed May 14, 3:40-5:40 pm.

Prerequisites: AREC/ECON 306 or 304.