ABUS 451: Agricultural Policy, Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. Eric Houk
Office Hours: M, F 9:00-10:00 AM; T, Th 9:20-10:50 AM, and by appointment.
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Textbook


In addition to the textbook, you will be assigned other required readings. Additional reading materials will typically be available on the “Vista” site for this course, but they may also be handed out in class, made available electronically, or you will be responsible for locating and printing them yourself.

Students are responsible for the material covered in class and the material in any assigned readings. Students will receive the greatest benefit if they read the assigned readings before class.

Course Description

Domestic and international issues in U.S. agricultural food policy. A study of the major problems confronting agriculture, the process by which government formulates agricultural policy, and the socio-economic impact of current government programs. Prerequisites: Senior standing, ABUS 301, ECON 102

Course Objectives/Learning Goals

Students will understand the fundamental economic relationships and principles that affect agricultural markets; understand the justification for agricultural policy and the process of policy formulation; and understand the economic implications of these policies agricultural consumers and producers.

Course Policies

Students are expected to read & adhere to the policies identified for all courses within the College of Agriculture (www.csuchico.edu/ag/assets/documents/syllabi/COACustomSyllabusPolicies.pdf) as well as all other University policies (www.csuchico.edu/catalog/cat09/08EndMaterials/02UniversityPolicies.html). Some additional policies for this course are as follows:

Behavior: Respect your classmates. Do not distract others by talking, coming into class late or leaving early, all cell phones must be turned off or silenced before coming to class.

Diversity: I want everyone to feel welcome; no disparaging remarks will be tolerated in regards to ethnicity, sex, age, religion, disability, socioeconomic background, etc.

Academic dishonesty: This is dealt with at the instructor’s discretion, with the likely penalty being an “F” for the course. All cases of Academic Dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. The University Catalog has more information regarding the Standards for Student Conduct.

Please ask for help if you need it. I am available outside of class.
Grades

Final grades will be based upon three exams, homework, and a paper/presentation as follows:

1. Exam 1  100
2. Exam 2  100
3. Final Exam  100
4. Paper/Presentation  100
5. Homework  50

Total:  400 Points

Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94% - 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% - 92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% - 89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83% - 86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% - 82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>77% - 79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73% - 76%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70% - 72%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67% - 69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60% - 66%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60%</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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Exams/Final Exam: Exams may involve essays, short essays, short problems, and multiple choice questions. You may use a simple calculator during exams, but no programmable calculators, laptops, or cell phones. The final exam will resemble the other exams, but it might include some cumulative material. Make-up exams will only be allowed with written verification of an unavoidable circumstance and must be approved. Make-up exams are strongly discouraged.

Paper/Presentation: You will need to demonstrate your understanding of economic principles as they relate to a current agricultural policy, problem, or issue. More information will be given at a later time.

Homework: Homework will be given throughout the semester (approx. 2-5 times), these assignments are intended to help you learn, feel free to refer to your text or ask questions as needed.

Late Policy

Students are responsible for handing in assignments when they are due. Homework will be accepted late for partial credit (grade reduced by 50%) up to the date of the next exam. Late papers will automatically be reduced by 20%, with an additional reduction of 5% for every additional school day past the due date.

Attendance

Class attendance is expected. However, as an additional incentive I have decided to award bonus points on certain days. Each bonus point will increase your final grade by .5%, for a maximum of 5%. At the professor’s discretion, bonus points can be awarded or taken away depending upon classroom behavior. For example, bonus points will be taken away if your cell phone rings during class.

Computer Use

This course will require you to access and use the learning management system “Vista”. Vista will be used in a variety of ways, including: course announcements, course assignments, etc.
Course Outline  *Course outline is subject to change.

Section I: Introduction, Policy Process, Role of Economics, Agrarian Values, Average Farm.
  Ch. 1 (Knutson, et al.): Forces of Policy Change (What is policy and why does it change)
  Ch. 2 (Knutson, et al.): Rationale for Govt. Involvement in Ag and Food
  Ch. 3 (Knutson, et al.): U.S. Policy Decision Process
  Ch. 2 (Browne, et al.): Never assume that Agrarian Values are Simple
  Ch. 3 (Browne, et al.): Never Confuse Farming with Rural America
  Ch. 4 (Browne, et al.): Never Base Decisions on the Average Family Farm
  Video: Valley at the Crossroads (Overview Central Valley Agriculture)
  Article: The Twelve Best Reasons for Commodity Programs: Why None Stands Scrutiny.

*Exam #1: September 25, 2009 (Additional readings and topics will be covered)

Section II: U.S. Farm Program Details, Economic Consequences, Prices, Productivity, Farm Bill.
  Ch. 7 (Knutson, et al.): U.S. Farm Policies
  Ch. 5 (Browne, et al.): Never Confuse Production with Productivity
  Ch. 6 (Browne, et al.): Never Confuse Farm Prices with Farmers' Income
  Overview of the 2007 Farm Bill (Highlights, Factsheets, and Video)
  Video: "How To Get Fat Without Really Trying" ABC News Special

*Exam #2: October 30, 2009 (Additional readings and topics will be covered)

Section III: Limited Resources, Environment, International Trade, Food Safety, Nutrition
  Ch. 8 (Knutson, et al.): Living with Limited Resources (Land, Water, Biological Diversity)
  Ch. 9 (Knutson, et al.): Environmental Policy
  Ch. 8 (Browne, et al.): Never Equate Good Farming with a Healthy Environment
  Ch. 10 (Knutson, et al.): Food Safety and Security Policy
  Ch. 4 (Knutson, et al.): Geopolitical Centers of Influence
  Ch. 5 (Knutson, et al.): World Trade Organization
  Ch. 6 (Knutson, et al.): U.S. Trade and Development Policy
  Ch. 7 (Browne, et al.): Never Forget That U.S. Ag Depends on the World Economy
  Ch. 11 (Knutson, et al.): Food Assistance and Nutrition Policy
  Ch. 9 (Browne, et al.): Never Assume Farm Programs are Food Programs
  Ch. 10 (Browne, et al.): Never Assume That a Government Program will do what it Says
  Ch. 12 (Knutson, et al.): Future of Agriculture and Food Policy

*Final Exam: See final exam schedule (Additional readings and topics will be covered)

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The CSU is suffering the most severe budget cuts in the history of the University. The legislature and administration are attempting to manage these cuts by increasing student fees and requiring faculty to take unpaid furlough days. As such, classes have been cancelled on 9/8, 10/15, & 11/2. However, additional days of this class are likely to be cancelled. These days will be announced in class or on vista.

If you need any additional help throughout this semester, please come by and see me or make an appointment. I have an open door policy and I am around much more than my office hours indicate. Although I am often busy working on different projects, committee’s, etc. I consider teaching to be my primary responsibility and I will try to be available as much as possible throughout the semester.

Welcome to ABUS 451. I hope you have a great semester, good luck.