

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS 346
WORLD FOOD ECONOMICS
Course Syllabus: Spring 2009

I. Basic Information: Classes meet Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45, in Room 210 Filley.
Instructor: Wes Peterson, 314 Filley (0922), 472-7871, epeterson1@unl.edu

II. Course Structure: The purpose of this course is to describe the world food system and assess its performance in terms of satisfying world food needs. The course is based on a systems approach to the study of production, processing, marketing, and consumption. The importance of technology and economic relationships is emphasized. There are five parts:

- A. Introduction and overview of world food and agriculture.
- B. World food systems.
- C. The main components of world food systems.
- D. National food systems.
- E. International dimensions of food system performance.

III. Organization, Requirements and Grading Procedures.

A. Class Attendance:

Although attendance will not be taken, students are expected to be on time and to attend all class sessions which will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. Because most of the course content will be presented during the scheduled classes and there is no textbook, class attendance will be necessary for successful completion of the course. Students will need to pay attention and take accurate notes. Students who miss a class are responsible for finding out what was discussed, whether any material was handed out or if there were any announcements of schedule changes.

B. Course Requirements:

This course qualifies as an integrative-studies (IS) course and can be counted toward the CASNR and agricultural economics department international requirements. Examinations will be based on essay questions and problems. There are three problem sets that involve written commentary on problems and statistical information and a written report on one of the four E. N. Thompson lectures that will be given during Spring semester. Students are expected to participate in class discussions although such participation will not be graded.

1. Exams: Two in-class examinations and a final will be administered on the dates indicated in the course outline. No make-up exams will be given. Students who miss an exam and are unable to provide a valid written excuse will receive a grade of zero on the missed exam. Special arrangements will be made for students who miss an exam and can provide a valid written excuse prior to the exam.

2. Problem Sets: Three problem sets will be due in class on the dates indicated in the course outline. Those that are turned in late will not be accepted unless the student can provide a valid written excuse. These assignments are to be submitted electronically.

3. Written Report on one of the four E. N. Thompson Lectures scheduled for Spring Semester:
February 10: "Bridging the Gap: Globalization without Isolation by F. W. de Klerk.

March 4: “Notes from Afghanistan” by Sarah Chayes.

March 25: Illegal Immigrants: Path to Citizenship?” debate between M. Olivas and V. Briggs.

April 14: “Citizenship in a Global Age” by Colin Campbell.

Reports may be submitted at any time during the semester up until April 16 which is the last date the reports will be accepted. They should be submitted as electronic files attached to an email message. Note that it is inappropriate to refer to the speaker by his or her first name. Refer to speakers by their last names with or without a title (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.).

Writing and Plagiarism: The Thompson report and homework assignments are to be submitted in electronic files so that they can be checked for plagiarism. The instructor will check all written work for plagiarism using the Safe Assign program or other plagiarism-detection systems and evidence of plagiarism will mean a grade of zero on the exercise in which the plagiarism is detected. The way to avoid plagiarism is to understand that using words or ideas from some other source requires that the source be clearly indicated and appropriate use of quotation marks be made. The most common error students make is to copy words from someone else’s work without enclosing the copied passages in quotation marks and providing the source. A common criticism of university education from employers is that students have poor writing skills. On the problem sets and Thompson report, both the writing and the content of the assignments will be evaluated and points will be deducted for writing errors.

3. *Readings:* A set of readings about world food economics has been selected. These readings are all available through the internet. Links to the readings are posted on Blackboard and listed in the course outline. Other reading material may be distributed in class. Anything handed out in class is considered to be part of the required reading and may be used to construct exam questions. The readings are complements to the class discussions. They develop some of the themes addressed in class and often bring in additional information that can be helpful in understanding the issues. They are good sources of exam questions but they are not a substitute for classroom attendance. The lecture notes developed several years ago are also posted on Blackboard for your use. The file containing these notes has not been up-dated so the notes cannot replace notes taken in class.

C. Grading Procedures:

The dates for exams and homework assignments are listed in the course outline. They will not be altered unless there is an exceptionally good reason for doing so. There will be severe grade penalties, including possible failure of the course, for any evidence of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism). The final exam is comprehensive and a score of at least 50 percent is required on the final for a passing grade in the course. For students scoring 50 percent or better on the final, course grades will be based on the exams and homework assignments according to the weights shown below. Students scoring less than 50 percent on the final will fail the course regardless of their scores on the other exercises. There will be severe penalties for plagiarism and other types of academic dishonesty.

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| In-class examinations (2 at 15% each): | 30% |
| Problem Sets (3 at 10% each): | 30% |
| E.N. Thompson report: | 10% |
| Final examination: | <u>30%</u> |
| | 100 % |

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introduction and Overview of World Food and Agriculture.

Jan.13: Introduction to the course.

Reading Assignment:

1. “The World Food Situation” by Joachim von Braun (December 2007) available at:
<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/fpr/pr18.pdf>

2. “Farmer in Chief,” by Michael Pollan, NY Times Magazine (October 9, 2008) at
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html>

Jan. 15: Statistical profile of the world economy.

Jan. 20 : Population.

Reading Assignment: “Demographic Terms” and “Demographic Transition” by Keith Montgomery at: <http://www.uwmc.uwc.edu/geography/Demotrans/demodef.htm> and <http://www.uwmc.uwc.edu/geography/Demotrans/demtran.htm>

II. World Food Systems.

Reading Assignment:

1. “The Structure of the World Food System,” chapter 3 in *A Billion Dollars a Day: The Economics and Politics of Agricultural Subsidies*, by E. Wesley F. Peterson (available on Balckboard)

2. “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race” by Jared Diamond, Discover Magazine, May 1987 at: http://www.mnforsustain.org/food_ag_worst_mistake_diamond_j.htm

Jan. 22: Food systems.

Jan. 27: Early human food systems and subsistence agriculture.

Jan. 29: Semi-subsistence food systems and commercial, market-oriented food systems.
- first homework assignment due.

III. The Main Components of World Food Systems.

A. Production or Farming Systems.

Reading Assignment:

1. “Global Resources and Productivity,” chapter 3.5 in *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators* (2006), USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) at
http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/arei/eib16/eib16_3-5.pdf

2. Chapter 3 (“Agriculture’s Performance, Diversity, Uncertainties”) and Chapter 7 (“Innovation Through Science and technology”), *World Development Report 2008*, World Bank at
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2008/Resources/WDR_00_book.pdf

- Feb. 3: Overview and classification of farming systems.
- Feb. 5: Expanding output through efficient agricultural production.
- Feb. 10: Expanding output through increased use of inputs (land, labor, machinery, chemicals).
- Feb. 12: Expanding output through technical change and productivity growth. Research.
- second homework assignment due.
- Feb. 17: Sustainable development.
- Feb. 19: **First In-Class Exam**

B. Transportation, Marketing and Distribution: The Post-Harvest System.

Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 (“Bringing Agriculture to the Market” in *World Development Report 2008*, at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2008/Resources/WDR_00_book.pdf

- Feb. 24: Purposes of the post-harvest system.
- Feb. 26: Infrastructure, storage and information.
- Mar. 3: Market power.

C. Consumption and Nutrition.

Reading Assignment: “The Nutritional Transition to 2030: Why Developing Countries are Likely to Bear the Major Burden,” by J. Schmidhubert and P. Shetty, FAO (2005) at:
<http://www.fao.org/es/esd/JSPSttransition.pdf>

- Mar. 5: Determinants of household food consumption.
- Mar. 10: Changing food consumption patterns.
- Mar. 12: Nutrition and food assistance programs.
- third homework assignment due.
- Mar. 24: Coordination of the food system components.
- Mar. 26: **Second In-Class Exam**

IV. National Food Systems.

Reading Assignment:

1. “Making Strides in Achieving Food Security: The Cases of Ghana, Peru, and Vietnam, *Food Security Assessment*, 2005, ERS/USDA GFA 17 at:
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/GFA17/GFA17c.pdf>

2. Chapter 4 (“Reforming Trade, Price and Subsidy Policies”) in *World Development Report 2008*, at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2008/Resources/WDR_00_book.pdf

Mar. 31: The role of government in improving the performance of national food systems.

Apr. 2: Food and agricultural policies in high-income countries.

Apr. 7: Cheap food policies and structural adjustment programs in low-income countries.

V. International Dimensions of Food System Performance.

Reading Assignment:

1. “Globalization of Food Systems in Developing Countries: A Synthesis of Country Case Studies,” by G. Kennedy, G. Nantel and P. Shetty, in *Globalization of Food Systems in Developing Countries*, FAO (2004), at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5736e/y5736e00.pdf>

2. “Food and Globalization,” by Lynne Phillips (2006), *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 35: 37-57 at <http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123214>

Apr. 9: World food systems: food security, food self-sufficiency and the role of trade.

Apr. 14: Foreign aid, food aid and development.

Apr. 16: Global sustainability: environmental impacts of the world food system.
- last day to submit report on E. N. Thompson lecture.

Apr. 21: Food safety, genetically-modified organisms and the world food system.

Apr. 23: Hunger, conflict, government failure and international intervention.

Apr. 28: Globalization of the food system.

Apr. 30: Summary and review for final exam.

Final Exam: May 5 (Tuesday), 10:00 to 12:00 am