

University of Florida  
Food and Resource Economics Department

## AEB 4325 Contemporary Issues in Agribusiness Management Fall 2018

Monday, Wednesday  
Periods 9-10 (4:05 – 6:00PM)  
Classroom: McCarty B G108

### Instructors and Contact Information

<b>Instructor for course module 1:</b>	Dr. Conner Mullally Email: <a href="mailto:connerm@ufl.edu">connerm@ufl.edu</a> Phone: (352) 294 – 7680 Office: 1107 McCarty Hall B Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 3:00-3:50 pm
<b>Instructor for course module 2:</b>	Dr. Spiro Stefanou Email: <a href="mailto:sstefanou@ufl.edu">sstefanou@ufl.edu</a> Phone: (352) 294 7625 Office: 1081 McCarty Hall B Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 10:00-11:00 am
<b>Instructor for course module 3:</b>	Dr. Rodney Clouser Email: <a href="mailto:rclouser@ufl.edu">rclouser@ufl.edu</a> Phone: (352) 294-7623 Office: 1161 McCarty Hall A Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:30-3:30 pm
<b>Teaching assistant:</b>	Ms. Fei He Email: <a href="mailto:he.fe@ufl.edu">he.fe@ufl.edu</a> Office: 1094F McCarty Hall B Office hours: Monday and Tuesday 12:30 – 1:30 pm
<b>Undergraduate Academic Advisor:</b>	Mr. Jermaine Dunn Email: <a href="mailto:j.dunn@ufl.edu">j.dunn@ufl.edu</a> Office: 1170 McCarty Hall A
<b>Undergraduate Program Coordinator:</b>	Dr. Jaclyn Kropp Email: <a href="mailto:jkropp@ufl.edu">jkropp@ufl.edu</a> Office: 1157 McCarty Hall A

**E-Learning:** There is a Canvas webpage for this course. To access Canvas you need your Gatorlink username and password. The site can be accessed [here](#). If you have difficulty accessing the page, contact UF computing Help Desk at (352) 392-HELP. Grades will be posted under the ‘Grades’ tab and assignments will be posted under ‘Assignments’ on the home screen. **ALL COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE COMMUNICATED THROUGH CANVAS. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO READ COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS. IF YOU LOSE ACCESS TO CANVAS, YOU MUST TELL THE CONSTRUCTOR OF YOUR CURRENT MODULE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

**Course Description:** A capstone course using economic concepts to address the interaction between the political process that legislates domestic agricultural, environmental and international trade policy, micro

and macroeconomic principles, private business decisions taken by firms in response to public policies, and ethical considerations in developing and implementing public policy.

### Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you should:

- have a strong understanding of factors constraining international agribusiness development;
- understand the basics of tools used by economists to assess solutions to policy and market failures;
- explain what strategic management is and why it is important to the long-term success of agribusiness;
- analyze and evaluate whether an agribusiness firm has a sustainable competitive advantage;
- fill the gaps between undergraduate education of the “firm” and the “real world”;
- understand how public policies, laws, and regulatory decisions are made;
- improve critical thinking and analytical skills.

### Course materials

This course is divided into three modules:

1. International agribusiness development
  2. Strategic agribusiness management and corporate social responsibility
  3. State and local agribusiness issues
- Readings for module 1 will be drawn from the following book (referred to from this point onwards as “Taylor and Lybbert”):

*Essentials of Economic Development*, by J. Edward Taylor and Travis J. Lybbert. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015.

You can find Taylor and Lybbert [at this link](#) or by searching for “Taylor, Lybbert” on the [Smathers Library website](#). You are allowed to download and print a limited quantity of pages from the book. Any remaining pages beyond the print limit must be read online. Any other required reading material for module 1 will be posted on Canvas.

- Readings for Module 2 will be drawn from the business press and industry research. These will be available via the Canvas site.
- Materials for Module 3 will be from the press, accessible web material and may include scientific and academic articles. All materials for Module 3 will be posted to Canvas.

### Prerequisites

AEB 4138 or AEB 4342.

### Course Structure

The list of topics to be covered as well as a preliminary course calendar is given below. Immediately below each topic you will see one or more readings that you should complete **before class** and be **ready to discuss that day**.

**The instructors reserve the right to change any course dates as needed.**

## Course calendar

The calendar below will be adjusted as needed and updates will be posted to the course web site.

### Module 1: International agribusiness development

Course introduction	August 22
Discussion: What makes agriculture different? <i>Readings: Taylor and Lybbert, chapter 9 (Agriculture)</i>	August 27
Activity: A farming game	August 29
Discussion: How do we know what “works” in agricultural Development policy? <i>Readings for September 5: Taylor and Lybbert, chapter 2 (What Works and What Doesn't?), through page 52. The remainder of the chapter is optional.</i>	September 5
Activity: Designing your own policy experiments	September 10
Discussion: Information and markets <i>Readings: Taylor and Lybbert, chapter 11 (Information and Markets)</i>	September 12
Activity: A lemons game	September 17
Discussion: Credit and insurance <i>Readings: Taylor and Lybbert, chapter 12 (Credit and Insurance)</i>	September 19
Activity: A farming game with credit and insurance	September 24
Discussion of microfinance project	September 26

### Module 2: Strategic agribusiness management and corporate social responsibility

<b>Overview of National Agribusiness Issues</b>	October 1
<b>Theme #1: Emergence of E-commerce Platforms in the Food System</b> Reading:	October 3
Activity assigned	
Activity exploration and discussion	October 8
<b>Theme #2: Plant-based Food Products or CSR</b> Reading:	October 10
Activity assigned	

Activity exploration and discussion	October 15
<b>Theme #3: Blue Ocean Strategies</b>	October 17
Reading:	
Activity assigned	
Activity exploration and discussion	October 22
<b>Theme #4:</b>	October 24
Activity exploration and discussion	October 29

### **Module 3: State and local agribusiness issues**

Challenging/ Wicked Societal Issues at the Individual and Firm Level	October 31
Policies, Laws, Regulation: How Does That Work?	November 5
Leadership, Management and Human Resources.	November 7
Teamwork. Does It Really Matter – Human Synergistics Exercise	November 14
The Firm and Social Corporate Responsibility	November 19
Land, Water and Environmental Issues: Current topic and discussion.	November 26
Current topic and discussion	November 28
Land, Water and Environmental Issues: Current Topic	December 3
When Crisis Hits and activity	December 5

### **Assignments**

A key component of the course is class participation. You will therefore be graded on attendance. Everyone will start out with 3 attendance points. Then, beginning with the second class meeting on August 27, each of our 27 sessions counting for a single point. Therefore the maximum number of attendance points is 30 and the minimum is 3. Note that you risk losing attendance points if you are not a regular contributor to class discussions.

Each module includes its own assignments.

**Module 1** will include the following:

1. Four short-answer problem sets (5 points each)
2. Microfinance pitch (20 points)

Short answer problem sets will consist of one or two questions related to the reading assignment and activity for a given week. You will type your answers to the questions using no more than 150 words per response and submit them through Canvas. Each problem set will be due on Thursday at 5pm. In other words, you will complete readings by Monday, participate in an activity Wednesday, and then turn in your answers to that week's questions by Thursday at 5 pm.

The microfinance (or "small loans") pitch may be completed in groups of no more than four, or individually. You may choose your groups, or if you prefer, I will assign you to a group randomly. Each group (or individual) will visit [Kiva](#), a website that lists entrepreneurs seeking small loans to fund their projects. Your goal will be to select a borrower working in the agricultural sector of a low-income country and write a short document in which you try to convince Dr. Mullally to make a loan to your chosen entrepreneur. The entrepreneur who is the subject of the top pitch will be selected for \$100 loan, while the runner up will receive a loan of \$50.

You must select your project to be funded before the start of class on September 10 by sending a link to the project to Dr. Mullally through Canvas, who will then let you know whether your project is approved. Additional details for the microfinance pitch are available on Canvas.

The table below summarizes due dates for module 1:

Assignment	Due Date
Module 1 problem set 1	August 30 at 5:00 PM
Deadline for selecting microfinance loan recipient	September 10 at 4:05 PM
Module 1 problem set 2	September 11 at 5:00 PM
Module 1 problem set 3	September 18 at 5:00 PM
Module 1 problem set 4	September 25 at 5:00 PM
Module 1 microfinance pitch document	September 24 at 4:05 PM

**Module 2** will include a set of exploration and discussion activities for each of the four themes. These activities will be submitted by **noon of the due date** and serve as the basis for that session's discussion.

**Module 3** will be posted prior to the start of the module.

**The instructors reserve the right to change assignment due dates as appropriate. Any changes will be communicated via Canvas.**

**IMPORTANT:** After any grade is posted, should you believe that your exam/assignment is incorrectly graded or that your grade was posted incorrectly, please contact the instructor of the current module as soon as possible. After seven days have passed, your posted grade will be assumed to be correct and accurate.

**Grading:**

Your grade will be based on your performance on three class exams and three homework assignments. The total number of points available from each component is as follows:

Attendance and participation	30	You will be expected to attend class, have completed the required readings, and be ready to participate in class discussions.
Module 1 Problem set 1	5	Module 1 problem sets will consist of one or two questions, each answered with no more than 200 words.
Module 1 Problem set 2	5	
Module 1 Problem set 3	5	
Module 1 Problem set 4	5	
Module 1 microfinance pitch	20	Your score includes 2 points for selecting a topic by the September 10 deadline. Microfinance pitch details will be posted on Canvas.
Module 2 activity 1	10	Each theme included in Module 2 will have its own activity. Details will be posted on Canvas prior to the start of Module 2.
Module 2 activity 2	10	
Module 2 activity 3	10	
Module 2 activity 4	10	
Module 3 assignments	40	Module 3 point distribution will be posted on Canvas prior to the start of that module.
Total points possible: 150		

The grading scale is as follows:

Letter grade	Point range	Percent	Notes
A	139 to 150	93-100%	For general information about grading and grading policy at the University of Florida, please refer to: <a href="https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#grades">https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#grades</a>
A-	135 to 138	90-92%	
B+	129 to 134	86-89%	
B	124 to 128	83-85%	
B-	120 to 123	80-82%	
C+	114 to 121	76-79%	
C	109 to 113	73-75%	
C-	105 to 108	70-72%	
D+	99 to 104	66-69%	
D	94 to 98	63-65%	
D-	90 to 93	60-62%	
E	0 to 89	0-59%	

All grades will be rounded up to the nearest full point out of 150. The instructors reserve the right to revise this grading scale during the semester as necessary. Grading scale revisions will never negatively affect your grade.

#### Professional Etiquette:

- Please do not talk while someone else in class is talking.
- Please be on time.
- Please silence your phones and other devices.

- You may not use laptops, tablets, or phones for anything other than taking notes, working through in-class problems, or following the lecture notes during class.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions or come to the instructors for help. We will do our best to respond to emails the same day that you send them.
- An open office door means the instructor is available. A closed door means the instructor is unavailable.
- Please direct questions about a particular module to the instructor teaching that module, or the Teaching Assistant.

**The instructors reserve the right to penalize any student continuously violating these rules by deducting points from your final course grade at my discretion.**

### **Other Important Information**

Students are responsible for all deadlines/critical dates and policies set forth by the University of Florida. Deadlines/critical dates are published on the University of Florida Office of the University Registrar's website, <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/>. Current academic policies are presented in the University of Florida Undergraduate Catalog, <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/home.aspx>.

**Absences:** Acceptable absences include: Illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate, and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). You must provide some sort of documentation in support of an acceptable absence.

**Students Requesting Classroom Accommodation:** The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Please contact this office at 0020 Reid Hall, (352) 392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). Any student requesting accommodation will have to provide documentation from the Disability Resource Center.

**UF Counseling Services:** The life of a college student can sometimes be overwhelming. Resources are available on-campus to help students manage personal issues or gain insight into career and academic goals. Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's various counseling resources. The following resources are available for all UF students:

- For general student affairs, Dean of Students Office, 392-1261 (after hours, call 392-1111)
- For mental health consultations, Counseling & Wellness Center, 392-1575 (24/7 phone access)
- For physical health consultations, Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- For victims of sexual assault, Office of Victim Services, 392-5648 (after hours, call 392-1111)
- For career guidance, Career Resource Center, 392-1602, [www.crc.ufl.edu](http://www.crc.ufl.edu)

**Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the University of Florida are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or

criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**By enrolling in this course you are agreeing to the terms outlined in this syllabus. Good luck!**

### **Statement Regarding Academic Honesty**

**Academic Honesty:** In 1995 the UF student body enacted an honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students. In their words, **the Honor Code Preamble:** In adopting this honor code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students who enroll at the university commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the honor code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon community acceptance and enforcement of the honor code.

***The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.***

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied:

**"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."** The university requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

**Student Responsibility:** Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court.

**Faculty Responsibility:** Faculty members have a duty to promote honest behavior and to avoid practices and environments that foster cheating in their classes. Teachers should encourage students to bring negative conditions or incidents of dishonesty to their attention. In their own work, teachers should practice the same high standards they expect from their students.

**Administration Responsibility:** As highly visible members of our academic community, administrators should be ever vigilant to promote academic honesty and conduct their lives in an ethically exemplary manner (*Source: 2010-2011 UF Undergraduate Catalog*). This policy will be vigorously upheld at all times in this course.

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Any instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.