

Agriculture and Natural Resource Ethics AEB 4126

Class Number: 21373 – Fall 2020 M, W, F (1:55pm – 2:45pm)

ONLINE

Instructor: Dr. Caleb Stair

Office: 2111 McCarty B Wing

Office Hours: MWF 11:00am-1:00pm via Zoom (*Also, by appointment*)

Phone: 352-294-7687

Email: cstair@ufl.edu

Communications:

DO NOT COMMUNICATE VIA CANVAS MESSAGES!!

I will communicate with you about news, assignments, emergencies, cancellations etc., through the announcements in Canvas. **PLEASE CHECK OUR CANVAS PAGE FREQUENTLY.** If you are struggling in the class, please let me know. My office hours are listed above. Those are times that you can definitely reach me. This does not mean that those are the only times you can meet with me. If those times do not work for you, we will schedule a separate time.

Course Description:

This is a course about social, political, economic, and ethical issues that arise in connection with the "food and fiber system" -- agriculture, food production/distribution, natural resource use/management, etc. --and public policy responses to those issues. This course satisfies the 6000-word "Gordon Rule" writing requirement based on the exams and the debate paper.

Course Goals:

- 1) Understand the "big picture" regarding the food and fiber system: How do the individual "pieces" like traditional family farms, environmental activists, global corporations, public policy decision-makers, consumers, etc., fit together in the larger scheme of things?
- 2) Learn philosophical / ethical concepts and positions that can be useful in thinking about actions, practices, and policies, for example, the difference between thinking of ethical obligations in terms of "protecting rights" vs. "securing the greater social good."
- 3) Develop/improve your ability to think, talk, and most importantly write intelligently and reflectively (critically) about issues and positions and arguments as exemplified in (1) and (2) above.

I hope that you will use this course to inform yourself in greater depth about the food system and about ethics, and also use this course to help you clarify your own beliefs and values regarding these and other ethical issues, as well sharpen your analytical and argument skills.

Required Texts:

There is no textbook required for this class. Instead I will pull notes from several different sources and occasionally assign readings for class. All readings are located in the CANVAS class files for the course. Even lacking a “book” or set of books, however, THERE IS A LOT OF REQUIRED READING FOR THIS COURSE. The readings are starting points for our discussions. Your take home essays will be based on both the assigned readings and what we discuss in class.

Grades:

1. *Four Discussion Questions* – (40%).

- Throughout the semester there will be four discussion questions based off the notes and topics we cover. For each question you will be graded for an initial post (60%) of approximately 200 words and a response to a fellow classmate (40%) of at least 100 words. **The response must be to a viewpoint that you disagree with or a least find a portion of their response disagreeable to receive full credit.** Posts should be relevant to the topic being discussed but should also attempt to introduce a new point of view or piece of information or otherwise further the discussion. Posts should use correct grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary appropriate for a university level course. Misuse of the discussion boards will not be tolerated.

2. *Two Ethics Question Submissions* - (10%)

- During the semester you will be asked to create your own ethics questions for a theme. For example, if the theme is animal agriculture a question submitted could be “*What is a defensible argument for the moral “good” of eating meat?*” Each assignment will require you to submit three questions. **More complex questions will be awarded a better score.**

3. *Logic Quiz* - (10%)

- After the logic section of the course concludes there will be a short (20 questions @ 5pts per questions) logic quiz on canvas. This is untimed and asks you to find logical fallacies in statements and arguments.

4. *Article Review* – (5%)

- During the semester four articles will be opened up for you to read and then you will write a 250 – 300 word opinion of the article. This is **NOT** an article summary. I want to read about your thoughts on the topic discussed.

5. *Debate* - (15%)

- The class will be randomly divided into small (~4-person) teams’ mid-semester. These teams will research the background on specific pre-determined topics in preparation for a series of debates at the end of the semester. You will be given ample time to meet with your team to prepare your position statements/arguments. **Grades will be based on your team’s overall performance (as judged by the instructor), as well as your teammates’ confidential evaluation of your partners’ contribution to the project.**

6. *Final Paper* - (15%)

- This will consist of seven short essay questions (approximately 200-250-word answers for each) on topics we covered during the course. The

assignment will be posted on the last day of class you will have one week to finish the assignment and **submit it via canvas on the date of our final exam (December 16th)**.

7. *Participation* – (5%)

- Finally, throughout the semester students will be given ample opportunities to engage with the rest of the class. How often and how relevant these interactions are will go into your participation grade.

Course grades:

A = 93 – 100 points
A- = 90 – 92.9 points
B + = 87 – 89.9 points
B = 83 – 86.9 points
B- = 80 – 82.9 points
C+ = 77– 79.9 points
C = 73 – 76.9 points
C- = 70 – 72.9 points
D+ = 67 – 69.9 points
D = 63 – 66.9 points
D- = 60 – 62.9 points
F = below 59.9 points

Course Policies:

- We will have weekly review session every Wednesday from 1:55 – 2:45pm (class time). These will be used to have discussion, go over course material, and clarify any instructions. They are completely optional and will not be recorded. If you miss a review session and would like to know what was discussed, please contact me.
- I expect you to abide by standards of civility and professionalism in this course. It has a large discussion-based component and several of the topics may elicit passionate debate about the subject at hand. Debates can be passionate; however, a lack of civility or professionalism is unacceptable.
- Late writing assignments will only be accepted up to two days after the due date. If an assignment is issued on Thursday and is due in a week it must be submitted by 11:59pm the following Thursday. Assignments submitted at 12:00am Friday are considered one day late. Late writing assignments will receive only half credit and writing assignments that are not submitted or that are submitted more than two days after the deadline will receive a 0.
- Plagiarism is unacceptable in this class. I will use the plagiarism database Turnitin.com to check submitted work. While I will cover some aspects of plagiarism and how to avoid it in class UF also has resources that can provide assistance in avoiding plagiarism in your writing and citing styles at <http://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/c.php?g=147797&p=967443>
- While attendance is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged that you attend all weekly review sessions for the full time. Discussion questions and your final paper will reflect discussions had in the review sessions.

- For the most part, notes will be provided via Canvas along with short videos concerning the subjects. I will post these to our CANVAS website as the semester progresses. If you read the Canvas notes and are still confused please contact me and we can discuss any issues.
- If for some reason you need to submit an assignment via email, make sure that in the subject line please you state the course number and assignment title. Also, please save your documents as *AEB4126_AssignmentTitle_YourNameHere*

Academic Honesty and the UF Honor Code

The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards, and we encourage students to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040-1), so they are aware of our standards. Any violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action. The two greatest threats to the academic integrity of the University of Florida are cheating and plagiarism. Students should be aware of their faculty's policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium. The honor code can be found at <http://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/4.040-1.pdf>

Software Use:

All faculty, staff and students of the university 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.

Students with Disabilities:

Resources for Disabled Students: If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible to set up the appropriate arrangements. Please do not wait until an assignment is due to request accommodations. Further information can be found at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

Student Counseling and Support:

Several resources are available on campus for students. <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>

- Honors Advising
 - <http://www.honors.ufl.edu/current/advising/>
 - 343 Infirmary Building
 - (352) 392-1519
- Dean of Students
 - <http://www.dso.ufl.edu>
 - P202 Peabody Hall
 - (352) 392-1261
- Counseling and Wellness Center
 - <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>
 - 2190 Radio Road

- (352) 392-1575
- Student Health Care Center
 - <http://shcc.ufl.edu>
 - Infirmary Building
 - (352) 392-1161
- Career Resource Center
 - <http://www.crc.ufl.edu>
 - 1st Floor, Reitz Union
 - (352) 392-1601
- International Center
 - <http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/>
 - Suite 170, Hub Building
 - (352) 392-5323

TENTATIVE DISCUSSION TOPICS AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

| Date | Subject | Activity |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 31-Aug | Syllabus | Module 0 Opens |
| 1-Sep | | Module 1 Opens |
| 2-Sep | Debates and Logic | Weekly Review |
| 3-Sep | | |
| 4-Sep | Debates and Logic | |
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| 7-Sep | Holiday | |
| 8-Sep | | |
| 9-Sep | Ethics | Weekly Review |
| 10-Sep | | |
| 11-Sep | Ethics | |
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| 14-Sep | Fisheries | |
| 15-Sep | | |
| 16-Sep | Fisheries | Weekly Review / Logic Quiz |
| 17-Sep | | |
| 18-Sep | Fisheries | Discussion Post #1 due |
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| 21-Sep | Wildlife Management | Module 2 Opens |
| 22-Sep | | |
| 23-Sep | Wildlife Management | Weekly Review |
| 24-Sep | | |
| 25-Sep | Wildlife Management | |
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| 28-Sep | Trade | |
| 29-Sep | | |
| 30-Sep | Trade | Weekly Review |
| 1-Oct | | |
| 2-Oct | Holiday | |
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| 5-Oct | Automation | |
| 6-Oct | | |
| 7-Oct | Automation | Weekly Review / Ethics Questions #1 due |
| 8-Oct | | |
| 9-Oct | Automation | Discussion Post #2 due |
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| 12-Oct | Resource Extraction | Module 3 Opens |
| 13-Oct | | |
| 14-Oct | Resource Extraction | Weekly Review |
| 15-Oct | | |
| 16-Oct | Resource Extraction | |
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| 19-Oct | Alternative Energy | |
| 20-Oct | | |
| 21-Oct | Alternative Energy | Weekly Review / Article Review due |
| 22-Oct | | |
| 23-Oct | Alternative Energy | |
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| 26-Oct | GMOs | |
| 27-Oct | | |
| 28-Oct | GMOs | Weekly Review |
| 29-Oct | | |
| 30-Oct | GMOs | Discussion Post #3 due |
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| 2-Nov | Organic Agriculture | Module #4 Opens |
| 3-Nov | | |
| 4-Nov | Organic Agriculture | Weekly Review |
| 5-Nov | | |
| 6-Nov | Organic Agriculture | |
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| 9-Nov | Water Rights | |
| 10-Nov | | |
| 11-Nov | Holiday | |
| 12-Nov | | |
| 13-Nov | Water Rights | |
| | | |
| 16-Nov | Animal Agriculture | |
| 17-Nov | | |
| 18-Nov | Animal Agriculture | Weekly Review / Ethics Questions #2 due |
| 19-Nov | | |
| 20-Nov | Animal Agriculture | Discussion Post #4 due |
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| 23-Nov | Space Exploration | Module #5 Opens |
| 24-Nov | | |

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| 25-Nov | Holiday | |
| 26-Nov | Holiday | |
| 27-Nov | Holiday | |
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| 30-Nov | Debates | |
| 1-Dec | | |
| 2-Dec | Debates | Weekly Review |
| 3-Dec | | |
| 4-Dec | Debates | |
| | | |
| 7-Dec | Debates | |
| 8-Dec | | |
| 9-Dec | Debates | |
| | | |
| 16-Dec | Final Exam | Final Paper Due |