


Course Syllabus: AEB 4325  
**Contemporary Issues in Agribusiness Management**

Period 6, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 1:55 pm – 2:45 pm	Classroom: <a href="#">MCCA 2196</a>
Make an appointment: 	Dr. Misti Sharp, Senior Lecturer and Undergraduate Coordinator, Food and Resource Economics.  Office: McCarty Hall A, room 1189  Sharp Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday from 3 – 4 and Friday from 8:30 – 10:30; <a href="#">Book an appointment with me</a>  Email: <a href="mailto:mistisharp@ufl.edu">mistisharp@ufl.edu</a>  Phone: 352-294-7632

**Course Description (from Catalog):** A capstone course utilizing economic concepts to address the interaction between the political process that legislates domestic agricultural, environmental and international trade policy, micro and macro economic principles, private business decisions taken by firms in response to public policies, and ethical considerations in developing and implementing public policy.

**Co-Requisites:** AEB 4138: Advanced Agribusiness Management or AEB 4342: Agribusiness and Food Marketing Management.

**Communication:** E-mail (either to my email address or via canvas messaging) is the best way to reach Dr. Sharp. Any issues that require action **MUST** be handled by email so that there is a written record of need. I will not jump into my zoom meeting room if I see you there without advance notice of a proposed meeting; it is best to schedule a meeting with my bookings site (see QR code above).

Make sure to [enable emails for course announcements](#) and read this syllabus thoroughly! I post important announcements sparingly (no more than 1 per day and usually much less) and will not answer questions by email that are already answered via canvas announcements or the course syllabus.

**Undergraduate Advisor:** Ms. Danielle Shu; 1170B McCarty Hall A; (352) 294-7640;  
E-mail: [dshu@ufl.edu](mailto:dshu@ufl.edu)  
Office Hours: <https://calendly.com/dshu-fre>

**FRE Technology Assistance:** Dave Depatie; 1197 McCarty Hall A; (352) 394-7641;  
E-mail: [ddepatic@ufl.edu](mailto:ddepatic@ufl.edu)

**Course Description:** The idea surrounding this class is that issues that are current change from semester to semester. As such, there is fluidity built into this course as we emphasize a thinking framework which provides a lens to understand and provide solutions to modern (contemporary) issues. It is assumed that you have a firm understanding of problems facing the modern food system and agribusinesses. It is further assumed that you can apply economic models to contemporary issues facing society. The emphasis in this class will be to focus not on specific economic and business theories, but rather to focus on how to **think** and **provide solutions** using systems thinking while leveraging your foundational knowledge within FRE. As such, there are many potential

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right answers to the problems facing society. The only wrong answers are those that are NOT supported by data and theory. Previous teachings of this course have used systems thinking to contextualize topics such as identifying and combatting racism, business adaptations to COVID-19, and rapid changes in our financial, economic, and natural systems, and imperfect competition in the meat market. Each student will come at these issues from different perspectives and each of these perspectives is valued in this classroom. It is expected that you will treat all peers, instructors, and teaching assistants with respect and civility as we grapple with some of societies more voracious problems.

### Course Objectives:

After successful completion of this course, each student should be able to:

- 1) Apply systems thinking, economic criteria and business strategy in agribusiness decision making.
- 2) Assess how policies and current events impact industries, businesses, and brands.
- 3) Incorporate diverse perspectives in the discussion of an economic, natural resource, or business problem.
- 4) Evaluate a *wicked* problem and consider possible avenues of progress in a visual medium.
- 5) Understand one's role in the workplace as an economist, leader, manager and/or analyst.
- 6) Efficiently and effectively present arguments in both oral and written formats.

### Required Course Materials:

- **E-learning:** can be accessed via <http://elearning.ufl.edu> using your Gatorlink username and password. If you are having difficulties accessing E-learning, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk by calling (352)-392-HELP or email [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu). This will be where you submit some of your work and where I will post grades on a regular basis.
- **Plectica Account:** The Cabrera Research Lab at Cornell University provides Plectica as a free, online mind mapping app. Students will be expected to sign up for a Plectica Account to access the software app via the internet. This will be used for memos and projects. Sign up for Plectica:
  - Open an internet browser and navigate to <https://www.plectica.com/>.
  - Click on the Sign up for free and get started icon in the center of the page.
  - Sign in with Google or enter your email and create a password.
  - Click Agree and create my Account
- There are [two textbooks](#) that will be used heavily in this class and each costs \$30.
  - **Required Text:** [Systems Thinking Made Simple \(STMS\): New Hope for Solving Wicked Problems](#) (2018) Cabrera and Cabrera; this book emphasizes the method of DSRP for breaking down complex adaptive systems. This will be used throughout the semester but will really be important for the second half of the course.
  - **Recommended Text:** [Flock not Clock \(FNC\): Design, Align, and Lead to Achieve your Vision](#) (2018) Cabrera and Cabrera; this book emphasizes systems thinking within businesses and organizations to bring about change and growth by harnessing culture. This will be used for the first half of the course but there are two chapters in STMS that form the basis of this textbook so you don't necessarily have to buy FNC if you get STMS.

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**Class Structure:** This is a face-to-face class meaning that you are expected to be in class each day to ensure you have accurate notes, to work on active learning assignments, and to take assessments. Classes will involve a mixture of lecturing, discussion, and various active learning activities all designed to help increase your understanding of the course topics. Lectures may be recorded and provided to students to ensure that students who feel sick do not come to class. Nevertheless, the only way to ensure that you have all information and earn all points for attendance is to attend class in person (this is not an online class). If you do get sick or have an absence that qualifies as an “excused” absence, please contact Dr. Sharp prior to class to ensure you are not penalized for missing class.

### Course modules:

#### Part 1: Systems thinking for organizations

Module 1: Systems Thinking in a Business World

Module 2: Business Culture and Organizational Learning

#### Part 2: Systems thinking in economics

Module 3: Food Market Polarization

Module 4: Systems Thinking for Wicked Problems

### Your grade is composed of the following:

*Business Strategy Project:* Throughout the semester we will discuss businesses in terms of vision, mission, capacity, and learning (VMCL) as well as business strategy and corporate social responsibility. This project has you look at a business that you choose<sup>1</sup> to assess company culture, business strategy, and how this company creates a competitive advantage in a world where businesses must take a stance on social issues. There are various components to this project with different due dates throughout the semester:

Part	Points	Due Date
Business Overview: Assess vision, mission, capacity, and learning of company. Conduct a SWOT analysis to get a snapshot of the business.	40	Feb 4, 2022
Corporate Social Responsibility: Compare and contrast how the company you have identified is dealing with social issues compared to their competitors.	40	March 4, 2022
Policy and Strategy: Explore how current events or policies are impacting the business and identify potential biases that may impact competitiveness.	40	April 1, 2022
Looking Forward: How could this business address some of the most wicked problems that we face and turn it into an area of competitive advantage?	40	April 20, 2022

*Perusal (best 4 of 5):* Each module in this course has some readings that are somewhat “summative” of the concepts covered. As such, I am assigning a “close reading” of these summative papers in lieu of a course

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<sup>1</sup> Everyone must have a unique business and business sign-ups are here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fhjTIXmPa4-1FHUm9os5vcp-cTIpy8NXiGe4HQ7Pu2M/edit?usp=sharing>

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lecture. For these assignments, you will need to login to eLearning and go to the Perusal tool. Here are the [help pages](#) in case you need them and a [getting started guide](#).

*Participation:* This class emphasizes learning how to think and to do this, you will need some background information on both the method itself (systems thinking) and on the topics we will be discussing in class. To encourage reading and full participation in discussion, in-class reading quizzes and/or activities will be graded on lecture days. This serves as an attendance, participation, and readiness metric for the class. Great responses/participation earns full credit (1 point). Poor responses and/or inattentive participation will earn partial credit (0.5 points). Failure to be present physically and/or mentally will result in no credit (0).

*Task Force Meetings:* Businesses are constantly confronting “culture wars” due to a rapidly changing world. How companies adapt to these challenges either ends up giving them a comparative advantage or digs them a trench from which they must climb. You will be assigned a “role” on a taskforce within a given business facing a “crisis” that the company has to meaningfully manage. You must represent your assigned role and the team needs to come up with a proposed solution to the problem collectively within one class period. You will be graded based on properly representing your role, contributing to the conversation and solution, and reflecting on the task force meeting. A grading rubric will be provided.

*Wicked Problem Roundtable:* Similar to businesses, our world is constantly facing threats such as climate change, racism, and pandemics which tear at the social fabric of society as they seem to have no meaningful solution that does not cause more problems than it fixes. Nevertheless, we must grapple with these problems if we are to progress as a society. You will be assigned a “perspective” on a roundtable addressing a wicked problem facing society. You must represent your perspective fully and the team needs to come up with a proposed solution to the problem collectively within one class period. You will be graded based on properly representing your perspective, contributing to the conversation and solution, and reflecting on the roundtable meeting. A grading rubric will be provided.

*Final Exam:* On Wednesday, December 14th at 10 am – 12 pm, a cumulative final exam featuring open-response questions will be given. It may not be dropped and accounts for 20% of your course grade.

*Bonus:* Almost everyday at the start of class, I will open up the floor to discuss any current issues that students want to discuss. Each student who brings up a current topic and relates it to agriculture or business will get 1 bonus point. You can only earn 4 bonus points this way during this semester.

### Course Grade Composition:

Category	Total Points	% of Total Grade
Business strategy memos (4)	160 points (40 points each)	40%
Perusal (best 4 of 5)	40 points (10 points each)	10%
Participation	40 points	10%
Task Force Meetings	40 points	10%
Wicked Problem Roundtable	40 points	10%
Final Exam	80 points	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400 points</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\*There may be additional opportunities to earn bonus points in this class. These opportunities will be announced on eLearning and/or in class.\*\*

**Grades and Grade Points:** Grades will be assigned as follows

**Student Evaluation:** Grades will be assigned as follows

Grade	Percentage	Total points	Grade Points
A	93% or more	$\geq 372$	4.00
A-	90.0 – 92.9%	360 - 371	3.67
B+	86.0 – 89.9%	344 - 359	3.33
B	83.0 – 85.9%	332 - 343	3.00
B-	80.0 – 82.9%	320 - 331	2.67
C+	76.0 – 79.9%	304 - 319	2.33
C	73.0 – 75.9%	292 - 303	2.00
C-	70.0 – 72.9%	280 - 291	1.67
D+	66.0 – 69.9%	264 - 279	1.33
D	63.0 – 65.9%	252 - 263	1.00
D-	60.0 – 62.9%	240 - 251	0.67
E	59.9% or less	$\leq 239$	0.00

**\*\*Please note that grades are not ‘rounded’ or ‘adjusted’ at the end of the term. The professor has the right to change this point structure at any point so long as it improves the student’s final score.**

**Grades and Grade Points:** For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

**Academic Honesty:** As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following 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.*” You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.*” It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

**Examples of cheating:** copying the homework of a peer, copying and pasting from a source without quotations and source attribution, paying someone else to do your homework/project/exam, dividing work amongst you and your peers and then all submitting the same document, giving or receiving material from peers...

**Attendance and Make-Up Work:** Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic->

[regulations/attendance-policies/](#) In general, you are expected to be in class each day and submit all work on time on e-Learning.

**Academic Performance:** Your grade on e-learning throughout the semester may not reflect your true performance in the course. You will have regular assignments that may require quick turnaround in this class, and it is crucial that you do not “check-out” at any point in the semester. If you fall behind, you **MUST** communicate with me when you realize this is happening. Don’t wait until the end of the semester as there is nothing I can do to help at that point. It is my goal to teach students and not to “give grades” as I believe grades are earned. As such, consider the following guidelines when you have questions about your grade or class performance:

- If you have any questions about your score at any point, you may come to the professor during office hours or schedule an appointment with Dr. Sharp to clarify the number of points you have and what points will be required to achieve your desired grade. Please note that I cannot communicate grade information over email. All grades are posted in e-learning in a timely fashion; please let the instructor know if this is not the case.
- You have seven days to dispute a grade after it has been posted. I will not change your score on a given assignment unless an egregious error has been made in entering your grade into canvas (i.e. you failed to get credit for a completed assignment or an exam grade was entered incorrectly).
- It may be the case that bonus opportunities to gain additional points will be available; however, this is determined solely by the professor based on an assessment of the relevance of additional activities to course materials and learning objectives.

### **Students Requiring Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students are notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled.

The only allowable purposes are: (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any

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instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### **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. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

### **Student Privacy**

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the [Notification to Students of FERPA Rights](#).

### **Campus Resources:**

#### **Health and Wellness**

*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

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University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

### Academic Resources

*E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

*Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

*Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

*Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

*On-Line Students Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

### **Lauren's Promise: I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you.**

Lauren McCluskey, a 21-year old honors student athlete, was murdered on October 22, 2018, by a man she briefly dated on the University of Utah Campus. We must all take actions to ensure this never happens again. Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be excused or tolerated at the University of Florida.

If you are experiencing sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking, you can take the following actions:

- If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
- Report it to me, and I will connect you to resources.
- Seek confidential sources of support and help:
  - [UFPD Office of Victim Services](#): 51 Museum Road, 352-392-5648
  - [Sexual Assault Recovery Services \(SARS\)](#): Infirmary Building, 352-392-1161
  - Alachua County Rape Crisis Center (confidential): 352-264-6760

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** The University of Florida's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) supports the University of Florida's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. By fostering a sense of belonging for students, staff, and faculty, while leveraging the uniqueness of the people who study and work at the university, we believe our campus community is enriched and enhanced by diversity, including but not limited to, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion. This course



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will support an understanding of the diversity of our distance and campus communities as well as our agricultural and natural resource communities, locally and globally.

This course will strive to create a learning environment for students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences while honoring your identities. In this class we will take the following approaches to help achieve this:

- All course participants will use the names and pronouns provided by students for use in class. If these differ from those that appear in official university records, you can change your Display Name at One.UF.
- If your performance in this course is being impacted by your experiences inside and/or outside the classroom, do not hesitate to contact the instructor and/or teaching assistant (TA). Instructors in CALS are a great resource for you and you may provide feedback anonymously. Feedback may result in general announcements to the class, if necessary, or reporting to appropriate UF personnel to address your concerns.
- CALS instructors and TAs like many people, are still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that makes you feel uncomfortable, please discuss with your instructor or TA or contact the CALS Dean's Office (cals-dean@ufl.edu).

### Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Start Date	Module	Reading	Topic	Assignments
1	Aug 24	1	FNC, STMS 8	Introduction and CAS	
2	Aug 29	1	Williams 2011, FNC	Mental Models and Behavior	
3	Sept 5*	1	FNC	Vision/Mission	
4	Sept 12	1	STMS, Ch. 9 - 10	VMCL	Memo #1
5	Sept 19	2	Supplements	Culture	
6	Sept 26	2	Supplements	Corporate Social Responsibility	Task force
7	Oct 3*	2	STMS, Ch 1 - 3	Modeling with ST	
8	Oct 10	2	Bias Supplements	Perspectives and Bias	
9	Oct 17	3	Barkley and Barkley	Polarization in Ag	Memo #2
10	Oct 24		Spring Break		
11	Oct 31	3	STMS, Ch. 4 - 5	Systemic Issues	
12	Nov 7*	3	STMS, Ch. 6 - 7	Modeling with ST	Memo #3
13	Nov 14	4	Supplements	Wicked Problems and SES	
14	Nov 21*	4	Supplements	Unintended Consequences	Roundtables
15	Nov 28	4	STMS, Ch. 11 - 12	Systems thinking wrap up	Memo #4
16	Dec 5	all		Review for Final Exam	

Final Exam: 12/14/2022 @ 10 am - 12 pm

\*September 5th is Labor Day, October 7<sup>th</sup> is homecoming, November 11<sup>th</sup> is Veteran's day, and November 23-25<sup>th</sup> is Thanksgiving. There will be no class on these days.

Task force meetings and roundtables will take place during the regular class periods.

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to change the terms and dates stated in this course syllabus at any time.*

**\*\*\*By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to the terms outlined in this syllabus!\*\*\***

**I look forward to a fun and productive semester with you all!**