

**AEB 4325 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN AGRIBUSINESS**  
**SYLLABUS – SPRING 2020**

**Time:** Tuesday – periods 8 & 9 (3:00 – 4:55 pm)

Thursday -- period 9 (4:05 – 4:55 pm)

**Location:** 0112 Newins-Ziegler

**INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Spiro E. Stefanou, Professor of Food and Resource Economics

Office: 1081 McCarty Hall B

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This is 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.

Competition is fierce among agri-food firms because supply exceeds demand for most agricultural commodities and food products. Consumers have choices and because of the IT revolution your competitors are not just the firms around the corner, but also those around the world. To succeed in this environment an agri-food firm must have a **sustainable competitive advantage** in the market so it will be:

(1) **the first choice of its customers** when they buy,

- (2) **the first choice of its employees** when they decide where to work, and
- (3) **the first choice of its investors** when they decide to invest their capital.

This course builds on strategic management that affect a firm's competitive advantage, and demonstrates how agribusiness managers can formulate a strong position in the market by:

- (1) asking the right questions,
- (2) making the right decisions, and
- (3) efficiently and effectively implementing their strategic decisions.

Their sustainable competitive advantage allows them to maximize their long run profits. This leads to maximizing their return on invested capital (**ROIC**). Because they are maximizing their ROIC, the price of their stock should increase.

**PREREQUISITES:**

AEB 4138 or AEB 4342.

**OBJECTIVES:**

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- 1) explain what strategic management is and why it is important to the long-term success of an agribusiness.
- 2) define and explain strategic management theories and discuss them in context,
- 3) analyze and evaluate whether an agribusiness firm has a sustainable competitive advantage,
- 4) access and use the wealth of business information available on-line and in the library to develop and evaluate a firm's strategic plan
- 5) efficiently and effectively present arguments in both oral and written formats, i.e., become a solid critical thinker who can express himself/herself in a three to four-page business memo and in an oral report.

My definition of a critical thinker is one who is comfortable operating at all six levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). In short, you will become a thinker, decision maker and communicator.

**FORMAT:**

This course will offer a mixture of Lectures and emerging issues investigations that the food system and agribusiness enterprises will continue to face:

- E-Commerce Platforms
- Micro vs. Mega Brands
- Animal Welfare
- Resilience and Corporate and Social Responsibility
- The Next “Big Thing”

There will be reading assigned in advance of a Contemporary Issue presentation followed by a period of discussion. Business memorandum is assigned after each Contemporary Issue segment. The memorandum will be in the 6Cs format including company, consumers, competitors, category, customers and critical partners. The grading of all written submissions is graded on the quality of your writing (flow, spelling, grammar, etc.).

**GRADING**

Grades will be determined based on the following:

<b>Assessment</b>		<b>Points</b>
<b>Attendance</b>		29 points (1 point each class meeting)
<b>TopHat Registration</b>		10 points
<b>Participation</b>		29 points
<b>Submitted Assignments</b>	Application Assignments	30 points (3 @ 10 points each)
	Business Memoranda	50 points (5 @ 10 points each)
<b>Total</b>		148 points

*Participation* refers to the quality of your participation and engagement in the class activities.

**Grade Ranges:**

A = 93.0% and above	B+ = 86.50-89.99%	C+ = 76.50-79.99%	D+ = 66.50-69.99%
A- = 90.00-93.99%	B = 83.50-86.49%	C = 73.50-76.49%	D = 63.50-66.49%
	B- = 80.00-83.49%	C- = 70.00-73.49%	D- = 60.00-63.49%
			E = 59.99% and below

**All of the following** must be true for the student to be eligible to receive a grade of "I:"

- 1) The student has completed a major portion of the course work with a passing grade (D or better), and
- 2) the student is unable to complete course requirements because of documented circumstances beyond their control, and
- 3) the student and instructor have discussed the situation prior to the final class meeting (except under emergency conditions).

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

There is no textbook for this course. We will be drawing on materials posted to the course Canvas site. Some of these materials are chapters, but most will be materials available in white papers prepared by industry analysts. You should plan on using resources available to students from the Business Library Databases.

We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message. You are expected to purchase a subscription.

You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

An email invitation has been sent to you by email, but if don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: [app.tophat.com/820424](http://app.tophat.com/820424). Note: our Course Join Code is **820424**

Google Chrome and Firefox is the preferred platform on your computer. On your smartphone, a free app is available (Top Hat – Better Learning).

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, due to the fact that they require specific user information to troubleshoot these issues, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

### **Policy Regarding Class Attendance, Make-up Exams, Assignments:**

You are expected to attend each class meeting, read the assigned materials prior to class and be prepared to discuss. Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

There are no in-class exams for this course.

### **Policy Regarding Late Work:**

All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas by the date and time indicated on the course calendar and on Canvas. **No late work is accepted.**

### **Classroom Policies:**

- While smartphones will be used for class activities via TopHat, ancillary activities such as emailing, texting, web-surfing, social media activity, etc., is not permissible. Such use during class distracts you from learning, distracts others around you from learning, and distracts me. Students using phones or computers to engage in non-class activities once class starts will be asked to leave.
- Make sure that your phone is turned to vibrate during class.
- No headphones should be on during class. Using headphones in class is disrespectful of your colleagues, your instructor, and your own learning. Students with headphones on once class starts will be asked to leave.

- Stay on task.
- Respect your fellow classmates and instructor.
- Come to class on time.
- Do not leave class to run an errand, go to Starbucks or other clearly unprofessional activity.

### **Policy Regarding Requests for Grade Changes When Final Grades Post:**

Earn the points needed for the grade you are seeking throughout the semester. Once grades have been posted, please do not reach out for a bump up to the next grade UNLESS you see a miscalculation.

### **Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. Accommodations will be honored from the time I receive the accommodation letter to the end of the semester.

### **Academic Honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "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 Honor Code ([sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/](http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/)) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the class instructor.

### **Campus Helping Resources**

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's resources. The following resources are available at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

#### *Health and Wellness Resources*

- *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 [umatter.ufl.edu/](http://umatter.ufl.edu/) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit [counseling.ufl.edu/](http://counseling.ufl.edu/) 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 [shcc.ufl.edu/](http://shcc.ufl.edu/).
- *University Police Department*: Visit [police.ufl.edu/](http://police.ufl.edu/) 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; [ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

#### *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 [career.ufl.edu/](http://career.ufl.edu/).

*Library Support*: [cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask) 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. [teachingcenter.ufl.edu/](http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/)

*Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. [writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/)

*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-  
code/student-conduct-code/](https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code/student-conduct-code/)

*On-Line Students Complaints:* [distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/](https://distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/)

### **Online Course Evaluation Process**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.