

AFRE 100: Decision Making in the Agri-Food System

Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Michigan State University

1. Course Information

Class Location and Time

Location: South Kedzie S109

Zoom link: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/92658395937> (Password: AFRE100)

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:20 pm Eastern Time

Instructor

Aaron Staples (he/him/his)

Office: 202 Cook-Seevers Hall

Office hours: Thursday, 4:00 – 5:30 pm Eastern Time, or by appointment

Zoom link for office hours: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/92176325782> (Password: AFRE100)

E-mail: staple71@msu.edu

Teaching Assistant

Daniela (Daye) Kwon (she/her/hers)

Office hours: By appointment, Schedule via email

Email: kwondaye@msu.edu

Course Description

Organization and operation of the agri-food system. Economic analysis of agri-food firms, including agricultural input suppliers, producers, assemblers, processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers. Application of economic and management principles to decision making in the agri-food system.

Prerequisite(s)

None.

Textbook and course materials

No textbook requirement. All required and supplemental material will be posted on D2L. Slides used in lecture will be posted on D2L.

Course Requirements

- Internet connection
- Access to Desire2Learn (D2L)

Attendance Policy

If you feel sick, stay home. Due to the ongoing pandemic, I will not be taking individual attendance. All lectures will be livestreamed and recorded via Zoom. Recordings will also be posted on D2L within 24 hours of the lecture.

I do, however, expect you to turn in your assignments on time regardless of your in-person attendance that week. Everything will be due at midnight on Sunday night every week to make that process simple for you to remember.

Course Structure

This course content will be delivered online through the course management system, and you will need your MSU NetID to login to the course from the D2L homepage (<http://d2l.msu.edu>). In D2L, you will access online lessons, course materials, and additional resources. Activities may consist of readings, discussion forums, email, journaling, wikis, and other online activities.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem, you can:

- Visit the Distance Learning Services Support Site: <https://lib.msu.edu/covid19/OnlineDistanceLearningResources/>
- Visit the Desire2Learn Help Site: <http://help.d2l.msu.edu>
- Call Distance Learning Services: (800) 500-1554 or (517) 355-2345

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD)

If you need to make an appointment with a specialist or would like to be in touch with the center, you can:

- Contact: (517) 353-9642
- TTY: (517) 355-1293
- Visit the RCPD website: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>

Honors Option

There is an honors option available in this course for students who are in the Honors College. If this applies to you and you are interested in learning more about the honors option, please contact the instructor before the first exam for further information.

2. Course objectives and learning outcomes

The primary learning objectives for this course are:

1. To understand the U.S. agri-food system: its players, functions, and major trends.
2. To improve understanding of major economic behavior patterns of firms in the agri-food system.
3. To understand the interactions of various parts of the agri-food system and how it is coordinated.
4. To aid in developing an analytical approach and decision-making framework for some major economic decisions facing firms in the agri-food system.
5. To examine some of the key problems facing firms in the agri-food system and to use economic analysis in understanding these issues and exploring alternatives.

By successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Outline and accurately describe the main players, characteristics, functions, and trends of the agri-food system and explain why each one of these is important.
2. Understand the economic behavior of firms in the agri-food system and how this behavior affects other firms in the agri-food system and the performance of the system.
3. Describe the role and operation of prices in coordinating economic activity in the agri-food system.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the economics used in analyzing the agri-food system.
5. Successfully enter other ABM, AFRE, FIM, and EEM courses with a broader understanding of the agri-food system and the foundations of economic principles as they relate to the agri-food system.

3. Course schedule

NOTE: This schedule is TENTATIVE. It is subject to change based on the speed at which the material is covered in class. Please refer to the course calendar on D2L for specific meeting dates and times. Activity and assignment details will be explained in detail within each week's corresponding learning module. Additional information regarding assignment details are available in Section 4 of the syllabus. If you have any questions, please contact your instructor.

Week	Topic	Assignment	Assignment deadline
1	Introduction		
2	What is <i>economics</i> ?	HW1	January 23, 2022
3	What is <i>demand</i> ?	HW2	January 30, 2022
4	Brand marketing	HW3	February 6, 2022
5	Commodity marketing	Quiz 1	February 13, 2022
6	REVIEW	Exam 1	February 20, 2022
7	What is <i>supply</i> ?	HW4	February 27, 2022
8	Agricultural supply	HW5	March 6, 2022
9	SPRING BREAK		
10	Agri-food supply chain	Quiz 2	March 20, 2022
11	REVIEW	Exam 2	March 27, 2022
12	Supply and demand	HW6	April 3, 2022
13	Elasticities	HW7	April 10, 2022
14	Market <i>failures</i>	Quiz 3	April 17, 2022
15	Government intervention	HW8	April 24, 2022
16	REVIEW FOR FINAL		
17		Final	May 4, 2022

Below is a tentative schedule of each day's activities. Note that these events are not guaranteed but are more of an idea of what will happen each day. Furthermore, this list is not exhaustive but is primarily intended to give you an idea what to expect throughout the semester.

Week	Date	Topic	Material and online activities
1	January 11, 2022	Introduction	Course motivation and syllabus
	January 13, 2022	Special topics	Overview of current event response and topics in agricultural economics
2	January 18, 2022	What is <i>economics</i> ?	Role of markets, the division of labor, trade, and prices
	January 20, 2022	What is <i>economics</i> ?	Comparative advantage, rationality, marginal thinking, and utility theory
3	January 25, 2022	What is <i>demand</i> ?	Demand curves, law of demand, quantity demanded v. "demand"
	January 27, 2022	What is <i>demand</i> ?	Changes in market demand
4	February 1, 2022	Brand marketing	Marketing, value-added, and the Food Bill

	February 3, 2022	Brand marketing	Four P's of marketing (price, product, place, promotion) and creating a brand
5	February 8, 2022	Commodity marketing	Forward contracts, futures markets, and exchanges
	February 10, 2022	Commodity marketing	Checkoff boards, commodity "marketing"
6	February 15, 2022	Special topics	Consumer behavior, food labeling, etc.
	February 17, 2022	REVIEW	Review session: Opportunity to ask questions in preparation for Exam 1
7	February 22, 2022	What is <i>supply</i> ?	Supply curves, law of supply, quantity supplied v. "supply"
	February 24, 2022	What is <i>supply</i> ?	Changes in market supply
8	March 1, 2022	Agricultural supply	Uniqueness of agricultural supply chain
	March 3, 2022	Agricultural supply	Production possibilities frontier, trade policies, and farm bills
9	March 8, 2022	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
	March 10, 2022	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
10	March 15, 2022	Agri-food supply chain	Farm organization, opportunity cost, and strategic management
	March 17, 2022	Agri-food supply chain	Tools for managing risk, budgeting, and balance sheets
11	March 22, 2022	Special topics	Research and current problems in food supply chains
	March 24, 2022	REVIEW	Review session: Opportunity to ask questions in preparation for Exam 2
12	March 29, 2022	Supply and demand	Putting it all together
	March 31, 2022	Supply and demand	Cognitive biases, framing effects, etc.
13	April 5, 2022	Elasticities	Own-price elasticities and cross-price elasticities
	April 7, 2022	Elasticities	Elasticity of demand and elasticity of supply
14	April 12, 2022	Market <i>failures</i>	Issues with neoclassical economics
	April 14, 2022	Market <i>failures</i>	Externalities
15	April 19, 2022	Government intervention	Taxes, subsidies, price floors/ceilings
	April 21, 2022	Government intervention	Government v. markets
16	April 26, 2022	Special topics	Research and current issues in food systems
	April 28, 2022	REVIEW	Review session: Opportunity to ask questions in preparation for the Final Exam

4. Grading Policy

Graded Course Activities

The table below describes the graded course activities including points and activity description. The first column includes the points possible, and the second column includes a description for each activity.

Points	Category	Description
20	Exam 1	Exams may be a combination of T-F, multiple choice, short answer, and problem-solving questions. The exams are open-note and will be administered through D2L. The final exam is comprehensive.
20	Exam 2	
25	Final exam	
15	Concept check quizzes	Three concept check quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. These quizzes will be used to check your understanding of the material leading into the exam.
10	Current event responses	There will be 8 current event responses assigned throughout the semester. Students are asked to find an article from a trustworthy news outlet and write a one paragraph response summarizing the article and connecting the article to material covered in class. Consult the Current Event Response Grading Guidelines & Rubric document available in the "Week 1: Welcome to AFRE 100!" module on D2L.
10	Homework assignments	There will be 8 homework assignments during the semester. It is imperative that you submit your own homework assignment and, most importantly, answer questions in your own words . Homework assignments with identical answers will result in each receiving a score of 0. At the end of the semester, your lowest scoring homework assignment will be dropped and is not used to calculate your average score in this category.
100	Total points	

Grade Point Assignment (Grading Scale)

The table below describes the relationships between grade point average, percentage, and performance.

Grade Point Average	Percentage	Performance
4.0	90 to 100%	Excellent Work
3.5	80 to 89%	Above average
3.0	70 to 79%	Good Work
2.5	60 to 69%	Mostly Good Work
2.0	50 to 59%	Average work
1.5	40 to 49%	Below average work
1.0	30 to 39%	Poor work
0	0 to 29%	Failing work

Late Work Policy

All assigned work will be due on Sunday by 11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time. Any assignment not handed in on time will be considered late. Late assignments will be discounted at 5-points per day.

Viewing Grades

Grades will be posted on D2L the week following the deadline. If there are any questions regarding the posted grade, please contact Daniela Kwon (kwondaye@msu.edu), our Teaching Assistant, first.

5. Course Policies

Diversity Equity and Inclusiveness

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are important, interdependent components of everyday life in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) and are critical to our pursuit of academic excellence. Our aim is to foster a culture where every member of CANR feels valued, supported and inspired to achieve individual and common goals with an uncommon will. This includes providing opportunity and access for all people across differences of race, age, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, migratory status, disability/abilities, political affiliation, veteran status and socioeconomic background. (See the full CANR statement: www.canr.msu.edu/news/canr-statement-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion)

Face Coverings

Consistent with current MSU policy, students are required to wear properly fitting masks – covering both mouth and nose – during all indoor class meetings and activities. Please refrain from eating or drinking during class to avoid having to remove your mask. If you do consume food or drinks inside, remove your mask only to take a sip of beverage or a bite to eat and replace the mask properly between each bite and sip. Non-compliance by students with the MSU mask requirement will result in the initiation of disciplinary actions, up to and including removal from the university.

If you have a medical condition that prevents you from safely wearing a face covering, you should contact [MSU's Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities \(RCPD\)](#) to begin the accommodation process. You must receive documents attesting to your exemption from the mask mandate before entering an MSU building without a mask.

For the latest information on MSU's COVID-19 procedures and requirements visit: msu.edu/together-we-will/faqs/.

Commit to Integrity: Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the [Academic Freedom Report](#) states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See [Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#) and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also the [Academic Integrity](#) webpage.)

Inform Your Instructor of Any Accommodations Needed

From the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD): Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.

Participation and Engagement

During all classes, the instructor expects students to be fully engaged and prepared to discuss reading assignments. Students are encouraged to ask questions of the instructor, guest speakers, and their peers.

Active participation includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

1. Asking and answering questions of the instructors, peers, or guest speakers
2. Bringing forth new ideas, information, or perspectives to academic conversations
3. Discussing your readings and reflections with instructors and peers
4. Meeting with the instructors to discuss your interests, assignments, or project
5. Questioning information presented and discussed
6. Participating in small group discussions and activities
7. Assuming responsibility for personal behavior and learning

While working on group projects, students should be mindful of other students in their group; therefore, it is important for all participants to exercise:

- Respect for themselves, each other
- Openness and a positive attitude toward new ideas and other's ideas
- Flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity
- Good communications amongst themselves.

Complete Assignments

Assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through **D2L** unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested from instructor before the due date. Extensions will not be given beyond the next assignment except under extreme circumstances.

All discussion assignments must be completed by the assignment due date and time. Late or missing discussion assignments will affect the student's grade.

6. General College and University Policies

All other general college and university policies applicable to this course are available at the following link: www.canr.msu.edu/academics/courses/policies

Please review these policies. Topics covered in these general policies include:

- Students with disabilities, Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD), and accommodations
- Student rights under the family educational rights and privacy act (FERPA)
- Student release authorization form
- Religious holiday policies
- Grief absence policies
- Students in distress policies
- MSU student athlete policies
- Course add-drop policies
- Honors options
- Course Management system policies
- Final exam policy and attendance
- Grade dispute policies
- Academic honesty and integrity, plagiarism, and disciplinary procedures
- Disruptive behavior
- Harassment and discrimination policies
- RVSM University reporting protocols
- Limits to confidentiality
- Social media policy
- Web accessibility policies
- MSU Code of Teaching Responsibility
- SIRS
- Commercialization of lecture notes
- University Learning Goals

7. Lauren's Promise



For more information:

www.laurenmccluskey.org/