

## CDAE 208 / PSS 295: Agricultural Policy & Ethics

---

[Spring 2020, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30-9:45 AM, 110 Jeffords. Three Credit Hours.](#)

Dr. Terence Bradshaw [tbradsha@uvm.edu](mailto:tbradsha@uvm.edu). (802) 922-2591

Office hours: Tues 10:00 am – 12:00 pm / Weds 10:45 am / 12:00 pm. Jeffords 210

*Appointments preferred. I am also available other times, please email to schedule.*

Teaching Assistant: Katie Horner, [Catherine.Horner@uvm.edu](mailto:Catherine.Horner@uvm.edu)

### Pre-requisites

CDAE 102 or equivalent. Please email the instructor if you have questions about your preparedness to take this course.

---

### Course Description

This course examines historical, political, ecological, technological, social, economic, and ethical facets of American agriculture, food policies, and the Farm Bill and particularly their effects at the farm level. We will cover US and Vermont agricultural policies, and examine the causes, nature, and effects of government participation in agriculture, the relationship of agriculture with the political and economic systems, environment, food system, and the impact of involved groups. Specific topics will include development of agriculture policy in the US, background of current ag programs, political nature of ag legislation, provisions in the Farm Bill, environmental programs, organic farming, farm support programs, and consumer issues related to ag and food policies. We will also examine specific Vermont agricultural issues including food labeling and EPA mandate to reduce phosphorus flow into Lake Champlain.

### Course Learning Objectives

***Live life on terms you believe in, but Aspire to be humble.***

Students completing this course are expected to:

1. Attain a basic level of knowledge of U.S. and Vermont state agriculture policies.
2. Understand the main components of the Farm Bill and other policy instruments and their effects on the agriculture sector.
3. Evaluate credibility and quality of information relating to agriculture and farm policy.
4. Use critical thinking skills to evaluate complex issues and present their positions using well-referenced written and oral arguments.

### ***Discriminate ideas - not people***

This is an active participation course. All students will be expected to contribute to class discussions; to present information to the class through various formats; and evaluate and have arguments in an oral and written setting. Therefore, this course is presented in a supportive environment where all students, staff, and guests will be encouraged and supported to speak your minds. As a policy course, content is at times expected to become political. All points of view will be respected in this course, and intolerance shown toward faculty or other students is not acceptable. However, we expect students to consider topics with an open mind and use skepticism when evaluating claims. For graded assignments, students will be evaluated on the quality of your arguments, not on the positions that you take.

### Contacting course instructors or TAs:

The default method for contacting the course instructor or TA is via email.

All emails should begin with the subject line “[CDAE 208]...”

This will allow for incoming messages to get flagged and not missed in overstuffed inboxes. Please use professional language in emails. Text messaging is not an appropriate method for communication with instructors and teaching assistants. My personal cell phone number is listed at the top of this syllabus, use it only in an emergency and not during or immediately prior to class meeting time.

## [Course Structure and Pedagogy](#)

We will use *engaged learning techniques* in this course that are designed to empower students to participate in instruction and develop feedback mechanisms to improve learning and continual course development. Therefore, course expectations, topics, and methods may change based on student input. This course is designed as much to develop *critical thinking* and *argument development* as it is to deliver content on agriculture policy. Material delivery will employ a combination of readings, lectures (instructor and student-led), in-class debates, journaling, homework, and peer review. Students are expected to be resourceful in acquiring the relevant evidence to best inform their work.

## [Required Course Materials:](#)

***A right to know comes with a responsibility to learn.***

There is no required textbook for this course. Readings will be placed on Blackboard as assigned. Readings recommended by guest speakers will also be posted as assigned. Not all of the resources needed to complete this course will be given to students. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the literature and other sources to best study farm policy. We encourage students to use the UVM Library [Agriculture Research Guide](#) when sourcing evidence to reference and use in papers, presentations, and other course outputs.

*This course will require that students use iClickers for many class sessions.* Please be prepared to bring a registered, working iClicker the third class meeting (by January 21) and each class thereafter. For more information on iClickers at UVM, see: <https://www.uvm.edu/ctl/technology-for-teaching/clickers/>.

## [Sources and Citations](#)

All work must include appropriate citations. Please consider the quality of sources and provide complete information in APA format (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>). Websites may be acceptable sources of information, but consider blogs, sites without credited authors, and commercial sites as lower in quality than reputable University, Extension, and government sites.

Readings for each week's classes will be posted to Blackboard by the previous Friday. Reading reactions will be required in the weekly journal entries. Those reactions are intended to spark discussion from the readings that will be continued during some classes. Please complete readings and reactions on-time and be prepared for classroom discussion.

## [Guest Speakers:](#)

***Enjoy people.***

The inclusion of numerous guest speakers provides a seminar component to this course, and introduces students to people who are involved in agriculture and agriculture policy that you might not otherwise have access to. Guest speakers are donating their time to this course. Please show them respect, and plan to be in-class by 8:30 on guest lecturer days. The course will draw on the experience of outside speakers which may include Congressional aides; representative from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets; UVM Extension and other departments; and advocacy groups including NOFA-VT and Rural Vermont. Speakers will address and answer questions on the Farm Bill, nutritional programs, organic agriculture, and controversial ag/food/policy topics.

## [Course topics](#)

This is an interactive, dynamic course. As such, topics and course schedule will change according to student's interests, speaker availability, and where we are in a particular topic in relation to other course activities. A schedule is posted under *Course materials* in Blackboard and will be updated at least two weeks prior to class.

Very broadly speaking, course topics may include: general U.S. government and civics; Vermont politics; the U.S. Farm Bill; the demographics and production statistics of the agriculture sector; commodity crop production; organic and regenerative agriculture; dairy farming and its importance to Vermont; agricultural labor; environmental issues surrounding farming; animal welfare; biotechnology, and other topics. Students are encouraged to participate in course and topic development and selection.

Blackboard and other electronic communications:

*Pay attention to what's going on around you.*

UVM Blackboard is the primary tool for course management and all assignments must be submitted and will be grade via that system. In the event of a Blackboard outage, alternative electronic means for submitting assignments will be presented. If assignments are accepted via email, and announcement will be made prior to submission which will include specific instructions for tagging subject lines in order to track assignments. Assignments should not be turned in as paper copies unless otherwise stated. *Assignments will not be accepted via cloud services such as Google Docs.*

Students are expected to pay attention in class and to not use electronic communications for non-course purposes. However, we are well-into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and computers and phones are critically important methods for acquiring and sharing information. I may poll the class during meetings to provide input on certain topics, so the ability to contribute in real-time will be valuable. Feel free to bring your laptops and phones to use for these purposes. Cell phones should always be muted in class, and thumbs should not be idly scrolling screens.

Attendance Policy and Classroom Environment Expectations:

This course meets only one day per week, so any absence will result in a full week of missing class. Students are expected to attend and participate in class discussion. Students are specifically expected to attend, arrive on time, and show respect for guest speakers who are often volunteering their time. Tardiness and absences will affect the professionalism component of your grade.

1. If you are ill and missing only one day of classes, you can contact class professors by phone or e-mail directly and leave a clear message including your name, and that you are ill and will be missing the class.
2. If you are ill for 2 or more classes or experiencing a personal problem that will cause you to miss more than a day of classes, you must contact Whitney Northrop in the CALS Student Services Office or Student Services in your college. She will notify the instructors for you, but you will also need to work with your instructors to discuss his/her expectations in reference to your absence.
3. It is important that you as the student (not your advisor and not your parent) contact Student Services directly if at all possible. By doing so, we will have a very clear understanding of the nature of the illness or problem and how we can best help you.

Grading Criteria/Policies:

*Love your work. Work your love. Get your work done.*

Graded materials will consist of a combination of objective instruments (tests and quizzes) and subjective writings (presentation, reflections and essays). The purpose of the assignments is to give you an opportunity to present your views with supporting arguments. You will be graded on the how you present your supporting statements, not on your views.

- Reflections 20%
- Essays 20%
- Assessments 20%
- Presentations 20%
- Discussion Board 10%
- Surveys 10%

- All grading will be completed on Blackboard. Grading rubrics for assignments will be available and viewable.
- Late assignments: As an iterative and reflection-driven course, it is important to keep up with the assignments. Assignments will automatically be deducted 10% of the total grade for each day late. No assignments will be accepted after five days unless the absence has been approved by CALS Student Services. *Please read that again.*
- This course uses the standard Blackboard grading schema to convert numeric to letter grades. Numeric grades are not rounded to the next highest integer: an 89.9 is not a 90.

**GRADING SCHEMA USED FOR THIS COURSE**

	minus (-)		plus(+)
A	90-93.9	94-96.9	97-100

B	80-83.9̄	84-86.9̄	87-89.9̄
C	70-73.9̄	74-76.9̄	77-79.9̄
D	60-63.9̄	64-66.9̄	67-69.9̄
F		<60	

- *Special requirements for Graduate Students taking the course:*

This is a 200-level course, and as such, it is aimed primarily toward upper-level undergraduate students and is designed to focus on and assess integration and presentation of knowledge and concepts. It is, however, also approved for graduate credit without a separate section. Students who are taking this course for graduate credit must inform me of such designation the first week of class. Graduate student assignments and activities are the same as for undergraduates, but the word length, citation expectations, and general rigor is expected to be greater. I will publish a separate addendum within each assignment that includes extra effort required for graduate credit. For example, graduate student journal; entries are expected to be 500-800 words in length, and should reference at least one outside source of information for context.

There will be no 'D' grades given to graduate students, the minimum passing grade for them is 70.

- As a rule, I do not negotiate with students over minor grade corrections on assignments. For every student who feels they received a subjectively low grade on an assignment, there are multiple students who likely received a subjectively high grade. If you feel like there was an egregious grading error on any given assignment, by all means discuss it with me, but it is highly unlikely that the grade will change unless a strong and compelling case is made. In my experience after assigning hundreds of course grades, any student can achieve a high grade in my courses by simply staying up on readings, attending and participating in class, and completing assignments on-time and according to the instructions.
- If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf>.
- For information on grading and GPA calculation, go to <https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/grades>.

#### Assessments (Graded Work):

- Surveys: There will be two short, non-graded surveys held at the beginning and end of the course to help assess student learning outcomes and to guide future course development. Answers on surveys are anonymous, we only see whether the survey was taken or not.
- Reflections: There will be written weekly reflection assignments collected in your course journal. Journals will have a specific prompt, based on topics and material from the previous week. Reflections should be 300-500 words (unless stated otherwise). Reflections will be submitted weekly through the Blackboard Journal function. Journals will be graded every three weeks.
- Essays: There will be three essays that will explore course topics more in-depth. All essays must be grammatically correct; use good writing form (e.g., do not use long run-on paragraphs; check your spelling; use appropriate citations; use appropriate rhetorical and narrative development skills. Blackboard "Assignments" category.
- Discussion Board: ***If you are going to be on a bandwagon, at least know the music.*** News of the Day is moving to a 21st century, online format. Each student is expected to start a thread in the Blackboard Discussion Board at least once during the semester, and each student is expected to have a minimum of ten posts discussing one another's threads. The discussion board is meant to be a place to share news on Agriculture and Policy. Stories can be current, as it is important to keep up on the events that are unfolding; recent, as there is plenty of material from the past few months and years that is relevant; or historic, and those older pieces should be accompanied by some reflection or analysis as to why it matters today. Grading will be by rubric, which is available and visible in the grade center. I'm looking for appropriate posting skills (language, grammar, formatting), critical thinking, and respectful discussion. Some posts will carry over into class lectures, and some may be prompted by material covered in-class.
- Assessments: There will be a number of unannounced, short in-class quizzes (combined for 25% of total assessments grade) and three longer online (Blackboard) quizzes (worth combined 75% of total Assessments grade) that will assess retention of important facts pertinent to the policy discussions we will be having in class and in our writings. Students will have an opportunity to provide input on what facts are deemed "important". Unexcused absences on quiz days will receive a zero for those. Points for the assessments will be weighted relative to the length and complexity of the

material. Blackboard “Quizzes” category for in-class iClicker quizzes, “Tests” category for the three longer Blackboard quizzes.

In addition to the standard discussion board, students will have an opportunity to select important facts that they feel should be understood by all students in the course by writing suggested quiz questions in a dedicated space in the Discussion Boards section. Posting questions themselves do not affect your grade, but they certainly inform you and your classmates of what should be studied. *Because many of the course question will be pulled from this forum that is open to and viewable by all students in the course, I will not offer a separate study guide for the online quizzes.*

- Presentations: Each student will present orally to the class twice during the semester. Details on presentations will be presented in the first two weeks of the course. Graded presentations will take one of two forms:
  - Mini-lecture. These short lectures will provide topical, factual material that is pertinent to course objectives.
  - Issue debate. Debates will be conducted between two, two-person teams on a specific resolution that will be presented at least two weeks prior to the class in which the debate is presented.

#### Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to complete an evaluation of the course at its conclusion. Evaluations will be anonymous and confidential, and that the information gained, including constructive criticisms, will be used to improve the course.

#### Student Learning Accommodations:

The primary goal for this course is for students to achieve learning objectives, not to meet deadlines and complete assignments. That said, the framework provided by the coursework and due dates is important to help us achieve that goal. It is important for students to complete readings and assignments on-time and to be prepared for class discussions. However, I understand that not every student learns the same way, and we all come into this course with other responsibilities that don't go away when we walk through the classroom door. If a short-term accommodation or adjustment to an assignment or deadline will improve your success in this course, by all means please speak to me about it. *This does not mean that I will reward laziness. Flexibility is not a replacement for you completing the coursework and maintaining the trajectory of the course.*

If you have a more substantial need than a minor adjustment to course requirements, and in keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS, the office of Disability Services on campus. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. A student's accommodation letter lists those accommodations that will not be implemented until the student meets with their faculty to create a plan. Contact SAS:

A170 Living/Learning Center

802-656-7753;

[access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu)

[www.uvm.edu/access](http://www.uvm.edu/access)

#### Religious Holidays:

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time. <https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/religious-holidays>

#### Academic Integrity:

The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.

<https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

#### Code of Student Conduct:

<http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/studentcode.pdf>

FERPA Rights Disclosure:

The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.

<http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/ferparightsdisclosure/>

Promoting Health & Safety:

The University of Vermont's number one priority is to support a healthy and safe community. Resources that may be helpful include:

- UVM CALS Student Services  
<https://www.uvm.edu/cals/student-services>

- Center for Health and Wellbeing:  
<https://www.uvm.edu/health>

- Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS)  
<https://www.uvm.edu/health/CAPS>  
Phone: (802) 656-3340

- C.A.R.E.  
If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <https://www.uvm.edu/studentaffairs>

*This course is taught in memory of Dr. Robert Parsons. His words or words inspired by him inform this syllabus and the experience we will share during this semester.*