

# AEDECON 8203

## FOUNDATIONS AND FRONTIERS OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEM ECONOMICS

### Spring 2022 Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Zoë Plakias  
 E-mail: plakias.2@osu.edu  
 Office: 323 Agricultural Administration  
 Office hours: By appointment ([www.calendly.com/zoeplakias](http://www.calendly.com/zoeplakias))

#### COURSE DETAILS

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Time: T/Th 9:10-11:00 AM  
 Location: 328 Agricultural Administration  
 Credits: 2

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

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In this course, we will consider foundational papers in agricultural economics that remain relevant to our discipline today and contemporary work from highly ranked applied economics and general interest economics journals that builds off and tests these earlier theories. The intent of this approach is to provide you with: (1) theoretical foundations that are relevant to settings both within and outside the field of agricultural economics, (2) practice in contemporary methods of empirical analysis, and (3) exposure to both current topics of interest in agricultural economics. By the end of this course, I expect that you will be able to:

- Recognize the role of agricultural economics as a field
- Recognize the elements that make a high quality economic journal article
- Effectively describe and derive foundational economic models
- Effectively describe and implement contemporary econometric methods
- Converse knowledgeably about current issues in agriculture

#### PREREQUISITES

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Ph.D. Level Microeconomic Theory and Ph.D. Level Econometrics or permission of instructor

#### REQUIRED READING

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There is no required textbook for this course. Required and optional readings will come from a variety of sources, all posted on Carmen and on the reading list at the end of this syllabus. I may add or subtract readings during the semester; if so, these changes will be announced in class and I will update the reading list on Carmen and the syllabus accordingly.

#### GRADING

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The grading for this class will be broken down as follows:

Referee Reports (x3)	50%
Replication Assignment (x1)	40%
Participation	10%

The grading scale will be:

A	93.0-100	C	73.3-76.6
A-	90.0-92.9	C-	70.0-73.2
B+	86.7-89.9	D+	66.7-69.9
B	83.3-86.6	D	60.0-66.6
B-	80.0-83.2	E	<60.0
C+	76.7-79.9		

**PARTICIPATION**

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You are expected to come to class unless there are extenuating circumstances. I will always have a synchronous Zoom link available for the class for those who need it. That said, please prioritize coming to class in person and let me know with as much advance warning as possible if you don't plan to be there in person on a particular day or if you will be absent. As you a graduate student, you are expected to participate in class. This means coming to class having completed the day's required readings as often as possible and participating in discussion about them during class.

**REFEREE REPORT**

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You will be required to submit three referee reports over the course of the term. These referee reports will provide an opportunity to engage closely with the assigned readings. Collaboration on the referee reports is not permitted. There are five referee report options; these papers are starred on the reading list. You can sign up (first-come, first-serve) via the link under the Course Logistics module on Carmen. I will provide further details of the referee report assignment at our first class meeting.

**REPLICATION ASSIGNMENT**

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You will be required to submit one paper replication assignment at the end of the term (Friday, April 29 @ 11:59 PM). You may work on this assignment alone or with a classmate. The replication assignment will serve as an opportunity for you to practice your empirical and technical skills in agricultural economics. I will provide further details of the replication assignment at our first class meeting.

**OFFICE HOURS**

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I am very happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss any questions you might have. Please don't hesitate to schedule time with me that works with your schedule via Calendly ([www.calendly.com/zoeplakias](http://www.calendly.com/zoeplakias)). Tuesdays and Thursdays I am generally available to meet in person if you prefer that to Zoom. Mondays and Fridays I am available to meet via Zoom. Wednesdays I am not available for meetings.

**E-MAIL**

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I try to respond to e-mail about class within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. If you don't hear from me within that time frame, feel free to e-mail me again to nudge me.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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Collaboration is permitted where specified, but in all situations you must complete your own work. Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

## MENTAL HEALTH

A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other, and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. These kinds of challenges affect college students, graduate students and even professors in the course of the academic year. If you are experiencing any of these challenges, personal problems or situational crises during the semester, please don't hesitate to contact the OSU Counseling and Consultation Service (614-292-5766; [www.ccs.osu.edu](http://www.ccs.osu.edu)) for assistance, support and advocacy. This service is free and confidential. I understand it can help for you to be seen sooner by the OSU Counseling and Consultation Service if you call them with a faculty member. If your mental health is affecting your ability to succeed in this class, you are welcome to set up an appointment with me outside of office hours and we can call together to set up an appointment for you.

## 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 Oct. 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 Ohio State University.

In cases of sexual harassment or violence, Ohio State will:

- Respond promptly and effectively to sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking,
- Provide interim measures as necessary
- Provide confidential and non-confidential support resources,
- Conduct a thorough, reliable, and impartial investigation,
- Provide remedies as necessary.

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:
  - Counseling and Consultation Service Available 24/7 through the Office of Student Life, [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu), 614-292-5766
  - Medical services through the Office of Student Life Wilce Student Health Center, [shs.osu.edu](http://shs.osu.edu), 614-292-4321
  - Legal services through Student Legal Services, [Studentlegal.osu.edu](http://Studentlegal.osu.edu), 614.292-5853

OSU's Office of Institutional Equity has established procedures and resources for Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention. They are detailed here: [https://womensplace.osu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/2018/04/Reporting-Resources\\_Brochure\\_Columbus.pdf](https://womensplace.osu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/2018/04/Reporting-Resources_Brochure_Columbus.pdf).

## DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you feel that you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs and contact the Office of Student Life's Disability Services at 614-292-3307 or in Room 98 of Baker Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**COURSE OUTLINE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>In-Class</b>	<b>Homework/Reading Due</b>
Th	March 3	Intro day	No reading/homework
T	March 8	<i>Firms + Farms</i>	Read Coase (1937) and Allen & Lueck (1998)
Th	March 10	<i>Supply Response Estimation + Farm Management</i>	Read Nerlove (1979)
T	March 15	<i>Spring Break - No Class</i>	
Th	March 17	<i>Spring Break - No Class</i>	
T	March 22	<i>Supply Response Estimation + Farm Management</i>	Read Uz et al. (2021) + submit Referee Report 1
Th	March 24	<i>Contract Theory + Farm Profitability</i>	Read Williamson (1979) and Wu (2014)
T	March 29	<i>Contract Theory + Farm Profitability</i>	Read Ragasa et al. (2018) + submit Referee Report 2
Th	March 31	<i>Equilibrium Displacement Models + Food Safety</i>	Read Muth (1964)
T	April 5	<i>Equilibrium Displacement Models + Food Safety</i>	Read Bovay & Sumner (2018) + submit Referee Report 3
Th	April 7	<i>Product Differentiation + Food Policy</i>	Read Hotelling (1929) and Mussa & Rosen (1978)
T	April 12	<i>Product Differentiation + Food Policy</i>	Read Réquillart et al. (2016) + submit Referee Report 4
Th	April 14	<i>Demand Estimation + Food Security</i>	Read Lancaster (1966) and Deaton & Muellbauer (1980)
T	April 19	<i>Demand Estimation + Food Security</i>	Allcott et al. (2019) + submit Referee Report 5
Th	April 21	Wrap-up discussion + replication project questions	
F	April 29		Replication Project Due

**READING LIST (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)****Week 1: Firms + Farms**

1. Coase, Ronald Harry. 1937. "The nature of the firm." *Economica* 4(16): 386-405.
2. Allen, Douglas W., and Dean Lueck. 1998. "The nature of the farm." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 41(2): 343-386.

**Week 2: Supply Response Estimation + Salinity**

1. Nerlove, Marc. 1979. "The dynamics of supply: Retrospect and prospect." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 61(5): 874-888.
2. Roberts, Michael J., and Wolfram Schlenker. 2013. "Identifying supply and demand elasticities of agricultural commodities: Implications for the US ethanol mandate." *American Economic Review* 103(6): 2265-95.
3. \*Uz, Dilek, Steven Buck, and David Sunding. 2021. "Fixed or mixed? Farmer-level heterogeneity in response to changes in salinity." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*: 1-21.

**Week 3: Contract Theory + Staple Food Markets**

1. Williamson, Oliver E. 1979. "Transaction-cost economics: The governance of contractual relations." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 22(2): 233-261.
2. Wu, Steven Y. 2014. "Adapting contract theory to fit contract farming." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 96(5): 1241-1256.
3. \*Ragasa, Catherine, Isabel Lambrecht, and Doreen S. Kufoalor. 2018. "Limitations of contract farming as a pro-poor strategy: The case of maize outgrower schemes in upper west Ghana." *World Development* 102: 30-56.

**Week 4: Equilibrium Displacement Models + Food Safety**

1. Muth, Richard F. 1964. "The derived demand curve for a productive factor and the industry supply curve." *Oxford Economic Papers* 16(2): 221-234.
2. \*Bovay, John, and Daniel Sumner. 2012. "Economic effects of the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 40(3): 402-420.

**Week 5: Product Differentiation + Food Policy**

1. Harold, Hotelling. 1929. "Stability in competition." *Economic Journal* 39(153): 41-57.
2. Mussa, Michael, and Sherwin Rosen. 1978. "Monopoly and product quality." *Journal of Economic Theory* 18(2): 301-317.
3. \*Réquillart, Vincent, Louis-Georges Soler, and Yu Zang. 2016. "Quality standards versus nutritional taxes: Health and welfare impacts with strategic firms." *Journal of Health Economics* 50: 268-285.

**Week 6: Demand Estimation + Food Security**

1. Lancaster, Kelvin J. 1966. "A new approach to consumer theory." *Journal of Political Economy* 74(2): 132-157.
2. Dubois, Pierre, Rachel Griffith, and Aviv Nevo. 2014. "Do prices and attributes explain international differences in food purchases?" *American Economic Review* 104(3): 832-867.
3. \*Allcott, Hunt, Rebecca Diamond, Jean-Pierre Dubé, Jessie Handbury, Ilya Rahkovsky, and Molly Schnell. 2019. "Food deserts and the causes of nutritional inequality." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 97(2): 1793-1844.