

Bulletin Preview

[IS] AECN 445. **Agricultural and Natural Resource Policy Analysis** (NREE 445) (3 cr II)
Lec 3. Prereq: ECON 211; ECON 212 or AECN 141.
Capstone course. ECON 311 and 312 recommended.

Introduction to the application of economic concepts and tools to the analysis and evaluation of public policies. Economic approaches to policy evaluation derived from welfare economics. Social benefit-cost analysis described and illustrated through applications to current agricultural and natural resource policy issues.

This course was proposed and certified for two outcomes (8 and 10).

ACE Certification

In its review of requests for ACE certification, the Interim ACE committee (eventually the UCC ACE subcommittee) will use such criteria as:

- Does the course clearly address the Learning Outcome(s) identified?
- Does the course provide students with opportunities to develop the knowledge/skills necessary for successful achievement of the Learning Outcome(s)?
- Does the course provide students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcome(s)?
- Does the course reinforce at least one of the following as appropriate for the discipline and as identified by the department offering the course: Writing, Oral Communication, Visual Literacy, Historical Perspectives, Mathematics and Statistics, Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Ethics, Civics, Social Responsibility, Global Awareness, or Human Diversity?
- Have the hosting department/unit and the instructor(s) agreed to follow through with their responsibilities as outlined in the ACE Course Certification Request Form?

Students select which one outcome they will receive ACE credit for. Faculty should indicate which one or two ACE Learning Outcome(s) are satisfied by the course.

SLO8. Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance to society.

Describe opportunities students should have to learn the outcome. How is the learning objective embedded in the course?

This course addresses the theory and practice of public policy analysis. Public policy is the way in which citizens of a country work to achieve broad collective goals. Understanding the nature of public policy and the technical and ethical dimensions of its application is critical for exercising civic responsibility. Although the main focus of this course is on agriculture, natural resources and the environment, the principles developed are relevant to the analysis of a wide range of public policy issues. The course includes readings and classroom discussions of ethics and the relation of ethics to public decision-making. One class session is devoted entirely to a roundtable discussion of an ethical issue selected by the students and students are repeatedly asked to consider the ethical implications of the public policy issues under discussion. In addition, the exams are based on essay questions and one part of the midterm exam asks students to work through alternative ethical theories as they relate to a practical public policy issue. The student projects that will be used to assess achievement of this outcome require inclusion of ethical considerations in evaluating a chosen public policy. Careful evaluation of the pros and cons of particular policy directions is a paradigm of good civic behavior and the overall goal of this course is to strengthen students' capabilities to make such public policy assessments.

Describe student work that will be used to assess student achievement of the outcome and explain how the students demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the outcome.

Problem sets, a report on one of the E. N. Thompson Forum lectures, exams and the student project all test students' understanding of ethics and civic responsibility. The main student work that will be used to assess student achievement of this outcome, however, is the student project. For this project, students are required to select a public policy issue in consultation with the instructor and to develop a report evaluating the benefits and costs of particular policy options for dealing with this issue. Students are encouraged to carefully consider economic and non-economic benefits and costs associated with alternative policies and to reach and defend a reasoned conclusion on the best course of action for dealing with the problem being analyzed.

As part of the ACE certification process, the department/unit agrees to collect and assess a reasonable sample of students' work and provide reflections on students' achievement of the Learning Outcomes for its respective ACE-certified courses.

Please comment on your plans to develop a process to collect and evaluate student work over time for the purpose of assessing student success for this ACE outcome.

The student projects will be evaluated in terms of the professionalism of the discussion and the presentation of results. This course is a capstone course for the Department of Agricultural Economics. We are currently beginning the implementation of the PEARL assessment tool. The Department has identified three student learning outcomes for our programs: 1) Students will master economic theory, business principles and quantitative analytical methods as applied to practical issues/problems in food, agriculture, business, community viability and natural resources; 2) Students will develop an understanding of international economic forces that have an impact on US agriculture and the domestic economy; 3) Students will have the ability to effectively communicate to both specialized and lay audiences such matters as agricultural business management decisions, business marketing plans, and economic and/or public policy analysis through written, oral and electronic means as individuals and/or team participants. We are currently collecting products from the capstone courses, including the student projects done for this course (AECN 445) in an effort to develop a departmental scoring guide (rubric) to assess how well students are achieving the learning outcomes and to generate feedback on how to strengthen our programs in this area. This course targets all three of the Departmental learning outcomes. In addition to the student projects, I administer a short, un-graded quiz on the first day of class. The same questions are part of the

SLO8, answer #3 continues on page 3

final exam providing me with before-and-after snapshots of what the students know. This helps me to determine which parts of the course the students seem to have mastered and which parts need more attention in the future. Our assessment efforts fit well with the assessment needs of the ACE program. For the ACE program, assessment of the department learning outcomes will be broadened to include specific rubrics for the evaluation of what the student projects reveal about students' abilities to make ethical judgments and their commitments to excellence in their roles as citizens.

SLO10: Generate a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.

Describe opportunities students should have to learn the outcome. How is the learning objective embedded in the course?

Students will develop expertise in the economics of public policy analysis including theories of when government intervention is appropriate as well as how to make technical measurements of the costs and benefits of alternative approaches to solving public policy problems. This will be accomplished through a combination of readings, class discussions and practical exercises in the problem sets. In addition, students will be asked to use critical thinking in evaluating one of the E. N. Thompson Forum lectures on public and international affairs. Finally, the student project will provide the opportunity for students to conduct an in-depth analysis of a public policy issue related to their particular interests. In the course of these exercises, students will be asked to draw on information learned in this and other courses to interpret quantitative and other types of information, to communicate clearly and accurately the research and analytical results, and to integrate knowledge and information from other areas that are relevant to the issues being analyzed. Once students have selected their topics for the student projects, the instructor initiates conversations in class during which students are invited to reflect on their own topics as well as those of the other students.

Describe student work that will be used to assess student achievement of the outcome and explain how the students demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the outcome.

Learning outcome 10 requires a scholarly product. For this course, that product will be the student project analyzing a policy issue of the student's choice. The subjects students have chosen in the past include eco-tourism in Nebraska, the benefits and costs of public funding for rural educational programs, federal crop insurance,

protection of the Salt Creek beetle, pesticide policy and sustainable agriculture, water marketing in Nebraska and many others. The reports are written in a style and format that corresponds to the professional standards of the public and private employers for whom these students will eventually work. They require technical capabilities as well as the integration of a wide range of information from other classes and from outside sources. The students are required to make and defend a judgment about the best way to solve the policy problem. As students develop their projects, they are invited to provide progress reports to the class so that their peers can offer any insights that they may have on the topic thereby broadening the scope of reflection beyond that which the instructor can provide.

As part of the ACE certification process, the department/unit agrees to collect and assess a reasonable sample of students' work and provide reflections on students' achievement of the Learning Outcomes for its respective ACE-certified courses.

Please comment on your plans to develop a process to collect and evaluate student work over time for the purpose of assessing student success for this ACE outcome.

The student projects will be evaluated in terms of the professionalism of the discussion and the presentation of results. This course is a capstone course for the Department of Agricultural Economics. We are currently beginning the implementation of the PEARL assessment tool. The Department has identified three student learning outcomes for our programs: 1) Students will master economic theory, business principles and quantitative analytical methods as applied to practical issues/problems in food, agriculture, business, community viability and natural resources; 2) Students will develop an understanding of international economic forces that have an impact on US agriculture and the domestic economy; 3) Students will have the ability to effectively communicate to both specialized and lay audiences such matters as agricultural business management decisions, business marketing plans, and economic and/or public policy analysis through written, oral and electronic means as individuals and/or team participants. The student projects for AECN 445 provide information for all three of the departmental learning outcomes and also involve all the elements listed for ACE Learning Outcome 10 (technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, etc.) We are currently collecting products from the capstone courses, including the student projects done for this course in an effort to develop a departmental scoring guide (rubric) to assess how well students are achieving the learning outcomes and to generate feedback on how to strengthen our programs in this area. In addition to the student projects, I administer a short, un-graded quiz on the first day of class. The same

questions are part of the final exam providing me with before-and-after snapshots of what the students know. This helps me to determine which parts of the course the students seem to have mastered and which parts need more attention in the future. Materials collected for Departmental assessment will also be available for the ACE assessment database. The student projects provide information not only on the professional competencies of students in agricultural economics but also on their general integrative abilities in line with the elements listed for Learning Outcome 10.

What Outcome(s) or skill(s) will be reinforced in this course?

According to the ACE document approved by faculty (Structural Criteria, item 9), "Every ACE course will reinforce at least one of the following skills listed below as appropriate for the discipline and as identified by the department offering the course..." Indicate skills that will be reinforced by the course by clicking on as many as apply and describe briefly how those skills will be reinforced.

These areas are those *OTHER THAN* the one or two outcomes for which you seek ACE certification. Students will not receive ACE credit for the reinforced skills, and the reinforced skills do not need to be assessed for ACE purposes.

Writing

Describe briefly how this skill will be reinforced.

The problem sets, the Thompson report and the student project all include requirements for written discussions that highlight the implications of the research and analysis done and that are presented using appropriate documentation, format and structure. Throughout the course, the instructor provides guidance on how to structure the papers, correct documentation (including avoidance of plagiarism), and other aspects of effective professional writing. Part of the course evaluation is based on the degree of professionalism in the student's writing.

Mathematics and Statistics

Describe briefly how this skill will be reinforced.

The student projects and the problem sets require the use of quantitative data while discussion of the economic theories related to public policy analysis requires mathematical concepts (graphical coordinates, basic calculus, simultaneous equations, statistical modeling) and formal logic. The course includes discussions of the effective presentation of quantitative data as well as practical exercises in cost-benefit analysis and other technical aspects of economic and policy analysis.

Supportive Material

Syllabus (Required)

[ACEaecn445.rtf](#)

Attach a copy of the sample syllabus that clearly identifies:

- The Learning Outcome(s) that are satisfied by the course.
- A brief description of the opportunities this course provides students to acquire the knowledge or skills necessary to achieve the Learning Outcome(s)
- A brief description of the graded assignments that the instructor(s) uses to assess the students' achievement of the Outcome(s).

Cross-list Memo (Required if applicable)

[AECN445_crosslistmemo.doc](#)

If the course proposed for ACE certification is cross-listed, include a letter of support from the chair/head of each cross-listed unit.

Additional Documentation (Optional)