Ag Econ 3241 Ethical Issues in Agriculture

Spring 2016
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45am
321 Mumford
3 credits WI

Instructor
Harvey James, 146 Mumford Hall, 573-884-9682, HJJames@missouri.edu

Course Description
In this course we examine ethical issues in agriculture, with particular emphasis on the development of an analytical framework for understanding and evaluating the ethical implications arising from agriculture-related public policy. We study ethical theories, show how economics, philosophy, and science inform on and impact important ethical problems, and consider how (and where) ethical considerations figure in the public policy process. We also study some of the "classic" literature in agricultural and applied ethics. Topics may include the use of technology in agriculture, food safety, environmental protection, poverty and economic development, animal welfare, farm structure, the role of agribusiness, business ethics, sustainability, and government agricultural programs. Prerequisite: English 1000; AgEc 1041 or equivalent; Junior standing.

Texts
3. Upton Sinclair, The Jungle, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005
4. Other readings as assigned.

Course Objectives
An important objective of this course is to motivate a desire on your part to become curious about ethical issues in agriculture and, where necessary, to form and defend judgments and take a stand on important ethical issues in agriculture (and life). If you are suitably motivated, attentive, regularly study assigned reading materials, complete all required writing assignments, and participate actively in class discussions you should, upon completion of this course, be able to

- Identify ethical dilemmas in agriculture as either philosophical or behavioral, and recommend appropriate solutions; recognize and describe implications of alternative solutions to ethical dilemmas in agriculture.
- Distinguish among the major philosophical theories that represent principles of ethical decision-making, including utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue and justice ethics, and determine which theories are most helpful in understanding specific ethical dilemmas in agriculture.
- Recognize the moral foundations of capitalism and how ethical behavior affects and is affected by the institutions associated with capitalism; understand how the institutions of capitalism affect the functioning of our food system.
- Understand the central conflicts involved in ethical debates regarding the environment, biotechnology, animal welfare, farm structure, the role of agribusiness in agriculture, development, sustainability, and agriculture-related public policy, among other topics.
- Construct valid and sound ethical arguments; recognize the strengths and weaknesses of ethical arguments articulated by others; and be more effective at articulating reasons and expressing opinions through oral and written arguments.
- Describe, evaluate and contrast the ideas of authors who have written on agricultural ethics topics.
- Become sensitive to ethical dilemmas we face in life every day.
Course Overview and Expectations
I expect you to come to class regularly and to participate in class discussions. Preparation for the class includes reading the assigned text material before the scheduled class period. To motivate you to prepare for class, I will often give a quiz at the beginning of class on the required reading for that day. I reserve the right to dismiss students who have not read the assigned material for the day. Grading is based on attendance and participation, writing assignments, quizzes, and exams. It is your responsibility to know what is going on in class. For this reason, class attendance is crucial. Additionally, Blackboard contains information and announcements pertaining to the course. I consider a posting at the beginning of class or in Blackboard sufficient warning for all class requirements.

Grading Scale
The individual items are weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group project</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>425</strong></td>
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I will post grades in Blackboard throughout the semester. I will assign final grades based on the total percent, with + and – determined by natural breaks within the distribution and according to individual performance (e.g., a poor showing on the final paper will weight negatively, even if other course requirements are adequate). The following distribution is approximately how grades will be assigned, but I reserve the right to adjust the final grade range according to my assessment of overall class performance.

> 90% = A range
> 80% = B range
> 70% = C range
> 60% = D range
> 50% = D–
< 50% = F

Attendance, Participation and Classroom Etiquette
I will record attendance regularly. You are allowed four absences, excused or unexcused. After that, missed attendance will reduce your final grade. If your grade lies at the border between two grades, I will consider your record of participating in class in deciding whether to "bump" your grade up a level. Moreover, if you are dismissed from class because you have not adequately prepared by reading the assignments, your attendance for that day will be recorded as absent.

Try not to use your cellphone in class. I reserve the right to confiscate cellphones if, in my judgment, they are a distraction in the classroom. If you need a laptop for note-taking, please clear it with me first.

Quizzes
I will periodically give quizzes during class based on readings assigned for that day. Quizzes may or may not be announced. If you miss class and therefore miss a quiz, you will receive a zero for the quiz, unless the absence is excused (e.g., if you inform me ahead of time if you will not be in class). If you have an excused absence, you may make up a missed quiz by turning in a brief (one half to one page) typed summary of the reading(s) assigned for the class(es) you missed. I will drop the lowest quiz score only if we have a sufficient number of quizzes (my judgment).
Group Project
You will be assigned to groups of 4 to 6 students to complete a group project. Specific instructions are on Blackboard. Presentations of projects will be during the latter third of the semester in class.

Writing Assignments
You learn ethics by constructing and evaluating arguments. Writing is one of the best ways of doing this. For this reason, you will do a lot of writing and rewriting in this course. Writing assignments will be announced in class and are posted on Blackboard. They are due in class on the assigned due date. I reserve the option of refusing to accept late assignments. If I accept a late assignment, you will lose at least 50% of points possible on the assignment. All assignments must be typed.

All but the final writing assignment will be graded as follows. First, I will assign one of two grades, A (acceptable) or DA (do again). You have the option of doing the assignment again until it is acceptable. However, you are not required to do so. To be eligible for an "A" grade (i.e., A or A-), all assignments must be acceptable – that is, if you have any writing assignments that are not acceptable at the end of the semester, you cannot receive an A in the class regardless of your overall performance in the class. To be eligible for a "B" grade (i.e., B+, B or B-), all but one of the assignments must be acceptable. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are worth 25 points. Assignments that are minimally acceptable will be scored at 20 points. Writing assignments that are exceptional and that show a genuine effort, especially when asked to do again, will be scored at the full 25 points. Once a paper is graded as acceptable opportunities to revise are ended.

Final Paper
Your final writing assignment will be graded using a standard point system. There will be no opportunity to revise the final writing assignment once it has been submitted and graded. Instructions on the final writing assignment, including the grading rubric I will use in evaluating the paper, are on Blackboard. Failure to turn in the final writing assignment will result in an automatic failure of the course.

Final Exam
You will have a final exam on the regularly scheduled final exam date and time. The final exam will be cumulative. You will be tested on your understanding of ethical theories, applications to specific issues we have discussed in class, content of assigned readings and material on handouts and notes from class discussions. Failure to take the final exam will result in an automatic failure of the course.

Absences and Make-Up Policy
You are responsible for all materials discussed in class and assigned in the readings. If you miss class for any reason, you may make alternative arrangements provided (1) I am informed prior to the day the assignment is due, and (2) I approve the excuse.

Academic Honesty
Good grief. This is an ethics class. I expect no lying, cheating or stealing. I expect you to treat your instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students with respect. With that said, here is the obligatory statement of academic honesty: Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor. If I become aware of an incident of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarizing, etc) I reserve the right to give you a grade of zero on the assignment/exam and to report the incident to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies (room 111 Jesse) and the department chair.
Disabilities
If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me after class or at my office. To request academic accommodations (e.g., a note-taker), register with the Office of Disability Services, (http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu), S5 Memorial Union, 882-4696. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on “Disability Resources” on the MU homepage.

Intellectual Pluralism
The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions concerning the quality of instruction in this class may address concerns to either the Departmental Chair or Divisional leader or Director of the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (http://osrr.missouri.edu/). All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.

Recordings
University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may make audio recordings of course activity only upon the approval of the instructor. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express written permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded (e.g., no postings at youtube.com). Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with University regulations pertaining to student conduct matters.

Disclaimer
This syllabus is subject to change to facilitate instructional and/or student needs.

AgEc 3241 Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1 – January 19, 21
Introduction to ethics and ethical issues in agriculture
(1) Comstock, chapter 1
(2) James, “On finding solutions to ethical problems in agriculture,” Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, 2003

Week 2 – January 26, 28
Logic and ethical reasoning
(1) Comstock, chapter 3 (pp. 31-46, 55-62)
(2) Cothran, “How to argue,” The Classical Teacher, 2009

Week 3 – February 2, 4
Theories of ethics
(1) Comstock, chapter 4
Week 4 – February 9, 11
Ethics of technology
(2) Davis, “Letter to Ellen”, *Isaac Asimov Presents the Golden Years of Science Fiction, Fifth Series*, 1987

Week 5 – February 16, 18
Biotechnology and GM food
(1) Comstock, chapter 9, 10

Week 6 – February 23, 25
Discussion of Steinbeck’s *Winter of Our Discontent*

Week 7 – March 1, 3
Why good people do bad things

Week 8 – March 8, 10
Bribery, pressures and ethical behavior
(2a) Hendrickson and James, “The ethics of constrained choice: How the industrialization of agriculture impacts farming and farmer behavior,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 2005
(2b) James and Hendrickson, “Perceived economic pressures and farmer ethics,” *Agricultural Economics*, 2008
(2c) James, Ng, and Klein, “Complexity, novelty, and ethical judgment by entrepreneurs,” *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, 2016

Week 9 – March 15, 17
Environment; intrinsic v. extrinsic value
(1) Comstock, chapter 5
(2) Leopold, “The land ethic,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

Week 10 – March 22, 24
Presentations

Spring Break, March 29, 31

Week 11 – April 5, 7
Animal rights v. animal welfare
(1) Comstock, chapter 11
(2) Hsiao, “In defense of eating meat,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 2015
Week 12, April 12, 14
Discussion of Sinclair’s *The Jungle*

Week 13 – April 19, 21
Farmer voice, knowledge, skills

Week 14 – April 26, 28
Food security and duties to the disadvantaged
1. Comstock, chapter 8
3. Singer, “‘The bread which you withhold belongs to the hungry’: Attitudes to poverty,” *Ethics & Development*, 2000

Week 15 – May 3, 5
Farm scale and competition
1. Comstock, chapter 7

Week 16
Monday, May 9, 12:30-2:30pm – Final Exam, in class
Wednesday, May 11, noon – Final paper due