

**APBI 490 SYLLABUS: 2017/18**  
**Agricultural Ethics and Public Policy**

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*Instructor*

Dr. Adam Shriver

Email: adam.shriver@ubc.ca

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***Course Description***

An introduction to ethical debates about modern agricultural practices.

Agriculture was essential in the development of human civilization and continues to be essential for modern life. The practice of farming has also historically been associated with good morals and virtuous character. But as farming practices have changed to keep pace with the increased demands of a growing population, many of the practices of modern farming have become the subjects of intense public debate. Questions about the relationship between modern agriculture and the environment, animal welfare, and human health and nutrition have been discussed in numerous scholarly and popular publications. Moreover, those who choose farming as a profession are increasingly constrained by the demands of the food industry. This course will introduce students to debates about the direction of agriculture at the policy level and provide them with the tools needed to effectively engage in these ongoing debates.

***Expected Learning Outcomes***

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Become familiar with ethical debates surrounding modern agricultural practices, including debates about:
  - a. Sustainability
  - b. Land use
  - c. Animal welfare
  - d. Human health and nutrition
  - e. Trade, fair trade, and worker's rights
  - f. Biotechnology
  - g. Global poverty
2. Learn how to argue for a position on these topics to a general audience
3. Develop critical thinking and writing skills
4. Gain a greater appreciation of how different ethical frameworks can lead to different conclusions about modern farming practices

***Marking Scheme***

Current events	10	
Essays	60	(3 short essays at 20 marks each) <b>or</b> (1 short essay and one 1 long essay)
Final Oral Presentation	10	
Class participation	20	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

## **Current events**

The first oral presentation, worth 10 marks, will be a short presentation at the beginning of a class about a current event or news item related to agricultural ethics. The presentation will summarize the article and highlight the ethical issue(s) raised. Accompanying the essay will be a short (less than one page) typed essay with a link to the original article, a brief summary, and a critical comment on the article.

## **Essays**

Students will have the option of either writing three short papers, worth 20 marks each, or writing one short paper worth 20 marks and a longer paper worth 40 marks for the end of the term. The short paper(s) will be five to seven pages long, while the longer paper option will be ten to fourteen pages long (double-spaced and printed, not hand-written). Topics will be assigned later, but will involve your analysis and argument about the issues discussed in class.

A useful guide for understanding how the papers will be graded can be found here: <http://dailynous.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/lewin-philosophy-paper-grading-rubric-1-xl-page.pdf>. Grading will not always precisely follow this rubric, since there is a difference in how much can be accomplished in shorter versus longer essays (for example, it's more difficult to fully engage with other's arguments in shorter essays), but more detailed instructions and grading criteria will be provided during the course.

Late assignments without appropriate reasons will be penalized. Your instructor has the final authority to decide whether or not you have a legitimate excuse for late submission of papers.

## **Final Oral Presentation**

Students will deliver a 10-12 minute oral presentation on their final term paper topic during the last three weeks of the course. The presentation will be worth 10 marks.

## **Class Participation and Attendance**

Students can earn marks (20 marks total) based on active participation during discussions, attendance, and peer review of final presentations. This can also include (concise!) typed reflections on topics covered in class, but does not require them (note: these reflections will only be accepted prior to or at the beginning of classes where the topics are covered).