NUT215: Fundamentals of U.S. Agriculture  
Fall 2016 Syllabus

**Class Meetings:**  
Wednesday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Jaharis, Room 118

**Instructors:**  
Tim Griffin | timothy.griffin@tufts.edu | 125 Jaharis

**Office Hours:**  
Wednesday 1:15 – 2:15 pm or by appointment (Tim)  
By appointment only (Ashley)

**Teaching Asst.:**  
Ashley McCarthy | ashley.mccarthy@tufts.edu

**Graduate Credits:**  
1 credit

**Prerequisites:**  
Graduate standing or instructor approval

**Course Description**

This course covers the major social, institutional and human aspects of the U.S. agricultural system, both as it exists today as well as its historical development. After consideration of agricultural systems in general and of the values that underlie different concepts of agriculture, it covers some of the key historical forces that have made U.S. agriculture what it is today, and the major role of the federal government, both past and present. The next part of the course focuses on the people who grow our food, the rural communities in which they live and work, and the development of alternative food systems (i.e., local and regional) as potential mechanisms to transform relationships between agriculture, society, and economy.

**Course Learning Objectives**

1. **Food is complicated.** You will explore economic, political, ecological, and social forces that continually shape U.S. agriculture.
2. **Tradeoffs are unavoidable.** You will analyze various stakeholders’ perspectives within the U.S. agricultural system, particularly as they relate to decision-making.
3. **Data is critical.** You will develop skills in agricultural data analysis and persuasive communication, which are important for careers within the food system.

**Course Materials**

There is no textbook required for this course. Required readings, lectures, videos, and other assigned materials will be posted on the Trunk course site (https://trunk.tufts.edu/xsl-portal). For additional information on class topics, recommended readings will be posted by class period on Trunk.
Classroom Conduct & Participation

Our number one priority for this class is to maximize your learning and long-term retention related to the above objectives. We aim to do this by creating a dynamic, active learning environment together with you. There will be frequent in-classroom discussions and activities, and it is critical that you do two things 1) actively and respectfully participate and 2) read or watch required materials prior to coming to class.

You can enhance your learning by participating actively and taking notes thoughtfully and selectively. Using a laptop to take notes will allow you to capture more information, but you may cognitively process, and thus retain, less information. As such, we encourage hand-written but permit electronic note taking. Laptops should not be used for personal purposes during class. Finally, please turn off your cell phone prior to the start of each class.

Academic Integrity

If you haven’t already, please visit the Tufts website on academic integrity (https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy). Violations of these policies will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.

In particular, plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstance. Avoiding plagiarism is outlined in section IV of the above booklet. We reserve the right to use the anti-plagiarism program, Turnitin.com, to evaluate student work. Please speak with one of the instructors if you have any questions about these policies.

Accommodation of Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to academic accommodation appropriate to their needs. If you require accommodations for this course, please speak with one of the instructors confidentially prior to the end of the second week of classes.

Grading

Your grade in this class will be determined as follows:

- Final paper = 35%
- Topical assignments (3) = 30%
- Mini-quizzes (5) = 25%
- Participation = 10%

Total = 100%

The mini-quizzes will be short in duration (20 minutes) and length (1-3 questions) and will ask you to integrate what you are learning throughout the class. We’re doing this because frequent, low stakes quizzes enhance learning and retention, not because we’re
The topical assignments (TAs) and the final paper will be submitted using the assignments tool in Trunk.

The participation category is a combination of your participation in class and participation in brief online reflections, which we reserve the right to assign throughout the semester. Satisfactory in-class participation means that you come prepared for class, contribute meaningfully to discussions, refrain from using technology for personal purposes, and follow the ground rules we establish together at the beginning of the semester. The online reflections will take place in the Trunk forum tool. Reflections are an opportunity to converse with your classmates and instructors outside of class. They are not anonymous, and we expect you to respond to at least one other posting for each assigned reflection. We will post general guidance for reflections in Trunk.

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due 24 hours before the start of that week’s class (i.e., Tuesday, 9:00 am).

Late assignment policy: Please notify one of the instructors at least 48 hours in advance if you know you will be unable to meet a deadline, or as soon as possible in the event of an emergency. Assignments that are turned in late without advanced notice will be reduced by 10% (half a letter grade) the first day they are past due, and 5% each day thereafter.
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Course Schedule
Subject to change at instructors’ discretion

Introduction to U.S. Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Due This Week &amp; Quizzes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 7</td>
<td>Introductions; Defining Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>Development and Change in Agriculture; Industrialization of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>Pre-1930’s Policy; The Dust Bowl as a Turning Point; Agriculture and Agrarianism in Literature</td>
<td>Mini-quiz #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>Land Use, Farm Size; Travelogue of U.S. Agriculture</td>
<td>TA #1</td>
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U.S. Agricultural Policy

| Oct 5       | U.S. Policymaking 101 |                        |
| Oct 12      | Introduction to the Farm Bill | Mini-quiz #2 |
| Oct 19      | Commodity and Conservation Titles | TA #2 |
| Oct 26      | Other Current Farm Bill Titles | Mini-quiz #3 |
| Nov 2       | State and Local Policy |                        |

Farms and the Food System

| Nov 9       | Farmers: Profiles, Trends and Barriers | TA #3 |
|            | Farm Labor: Past and Present |                        |
| Nov 16      | Agriculture and Rural Communities | Mini-quiz #4 |
|            | U.S. Food System Trends |                        |
| Nov 23      | NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING |                        |
| Nov 30      | Food System Scales |                        |
| Dec 7       | Grab Bag | Mini-quiz #5 |
| Dec 14      | Final paper |                        |