FRE 306 SYLLABUS – INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL FOOD MARKETS (3 credits)

WINTER 2025 – TERM 1

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

WELCOME TO FRE 306 – COURSE DESCRIPTION

Image of Dr. Karen Taylor

Welcome to FRE 306! I'm Dr. Karen Taylor, and in this course, I will provide you with an overview of global food markets, combining theory and real-world application. We will specifically focus on how food prices form, what affects food prices, how food markets work globally and by commodity. We will examine trade in food products, the interdepence of commodity markets, and how market power and institutions play a role in global food markets.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: **Dr. Karen W. Taylor, PhD, MBA, P.Ag.** | UBC Food and Resource Economics

Contact: kw.taylor@ubc.ca

E-mail is preferred. I typically respond to emails within 24 hrs, except weekends. If you don't get a timely response, please feel free to email me again.

Cell:

Office Hours: TBD – or by appointment (office hours is available in person or via Zoom). I'm on campus Tuesdays & Thursdays, and virtually available M/W/F.

Office hours will be formally scheduled before all exams. I invite you to attend office hours if you're wanting to clarify course content, validate your understanding of the content, seek additional resources or for any other purpose that can enhance your learning experience during the course

Teaching Assistant: Xiao Han

Contact: xiao.han@ubc.ca

Office Hours: To be posted shortly on Canvas. More office hours to be held before exams.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Session and Term: Winter 2025 (September 2 to December 20, 2025)

Lectures: Tuesdays / Thursdays at 3:30 pm – 4:50 pm.

Lectures will be held in person, in ESB Room 2012.

Lectures will be taught in-person because it's the most effective way to engage in the topics that form a critical part of your learning. All lectures will be recorded, and the links will be uploaded to Canvas. If

you have to miss a class, lecture slides and supporting material will be available on Canvas, and you are welcome to clarify content during Office Hours.

PREREQUISITES

ECON 101 or ECON 310 (Principles of Microeconomics).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed with specific goals in mind. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand how food prices are determined, past and present patterns of world prices.
- Distinguish between food price trends, spikes, cycles, and effect of by-products; gain experience in examining data (especially prices).
- Understand how government policies and exogenous factors like weather can influence world prices and trade flows, including recent high-profile policy measures such as US tariffs on China, and inflation.
- Distinguish between the effects of these trade measures and their impacts on small countries and large countries.
- Understand the role of storage, its effect on seasonal prices, and how geography can also interact to produce certain spatial and seasonal price patterns in the context of trade.
- Assess the role of international institutions and rules governing trade such as the WTO, international commodity agreements, etc.
- Assess implications of various aspects of market structure and organization such as increases in firm size and market power in both domestic and international markets, including supply chain management and price discrimination.
- Understand the effects of market power within food supply chains on various participants in those chains, including farmers and consumers.
- Apply a variety of economic tools (e.g., excess supply/demand analysis, farm-retail margin model, rural-urban trade/storage model) to food markets to understand effect of real-life shocks to food markets.
- Examine the operation and role of futures markets in determining food prices.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT:

The learning assessment items below will keep us on track to meet our learning goals.

Learning Assessment Activity	Percentage	Responsibility
Problem sets (best 4 out of 5)	20%	Individual
Group Discussion Response (2)	10%	Groups of up to 4
Discussion & Class Participation	15%	Individual
Midterm Exam	20%	Individual
Final Exam	35%	Individual
Total	**100%**	

Problem Sets (best 4 of 5) - Individual

Purpose: The purpose of the problem sets is to apply knowledge learned in class to real-world scenarios.
Due dates: 2 before the midterm, 3 after the midterm.

Group Discussion Response (2) – Groups of up to 4 people

Purpose: The purpose of the group discussion is to discuss with your peers about policies learned in class and how they affect the food market.
Due dates: 1 before the midterm, 1 after the midterm.

Assignment policy: Late submissions will be accepted up to 24 hours late but will be penalized by 10%. Any assignment submitted more than 24 hours past the due date will not be graded, unless previously discussed with the Instructor. The problem sets must be done on an individual basis unless otherwise specified by the instructor. Discussion and collaboration among students are encouraged; however, for individual assignments, each student must do their own work and submit their original work. **Identical submissions are a form of academic dishonesty and will immediately receive a grade of zero** and possibly negative affect your academic record.

Your assignments are a representation of yourself and should be presented with the same quality as you would a business correspondence or other professional document. The neatness and quality of your submission will contribute to your marks.

Participation Grading:

- Maximum is 15 marks; obtained from in-class participation, such as asking or answering questions, recommending a video or article that explains well or shows a good application of one of the topics in our course. It is important to attend class to receive participation grades. This is a discretionary grade, ultimately determined by your instructor. For maximum grades, it is recommended you self-record your attendance and participation in class. A participation reflection will be prepared by each student and provided at the end of the term.

Midterm and Final Exams

Exam policy: Please bring your UBC Student Photo ID, which is required to write any exam.
There will be NO makeup test, exams, or quizzes. If you miss an exam, you will receive zero marks. Exceptions may be considered for documented medical reasons from UBC's Health Services or extenuating circumstances. In such a case, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor immediately by phone or email (phone is preferred) and not after the exam has taken place.
Notification after the examination date is not acceptable and will result in a grade of zero.

LEARNING MATERIALS

UBC Canvas: Used for Course Materials (Lecture Notes, Cases, Readings, Assignments, Solutions) and student upload of assignment for grading.

Textbook: There is **no single course textbook**, but various readings will be assigned on a topic-by-topic basis. All these textbooks are available on reserve in Koerner and Woodward Library. These include:

Open Source Textbooks:

- Masters, William and Finaret, Amelia. Food Economics (2024). Springer Nature. https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/90424
- Barkley, Andrew. The Economics of Food and Agricultural Markets (2019). New Prairie Press. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/458
- Suranovic, Steve. International Trade: Theory and Policy (2010). Saylor Foundation. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/international-trade-theory-and-policy

Legacy Textbooks:

- Schrimper, R. A. (2001). Economics of Agricultural Markets. Prentice Hall. https://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=2515982
- Timmer, C. P., Falcon, W. P., & Pearson, S. R. (1983). Food policy analysis (Vol. 1983, pp. 1-301). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. https://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=342473
- Reed, M. R. (2001). International trade in agricultural products. Prentice Hall. http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=2402320
- McCalla, Alex and Josling, Tim (1985). Agricultural Policies and World Markets. https://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=495934

Other materials will be posted on Canvas or as weblink.

We may utilize various tools such as iClicker, Slido, Padlet, Top Hat, Kahoot, etc. in class. This will be explained in class throughout the Term.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Come to class. Read the material. Ask questions. Participate. Be curious. Collaborate with your peers. Have fun!

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

UNIVERSITY VALUES AND POLICIES

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on the UBC Senate website.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of The University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and

responsible members of an academic community. Breach of those expectations or failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

Respectfulness in the Classroom:
Students are expected to be respectful of their colleagues at all times, including faculty, staff and peers. This means being attentive and conscious of words and actions and their impact on others, listening to people with an open mind, treating all community members equally and understanding diversity. Students who act disrespectfully toward others will be asked to leave the class and be marked as absent for the day. They may also be removed from a team, lose credit for in-class assessments and activities, or be asked to complete a group assignment individually.

Respect for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:
We strive to promote an intellectual community that is enhanced by diversity along various dimensions including status as a First Nation, Métis, Inuit, or Indigenous person, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, social class, and/or disability. It is critical that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be valued in and well-served by their courses. Furthermore, the diversity that students bring to the classroom should be viewed as a resource, benefit, and source of strength for your learning experience. It is expected that all students and members of our community conduct themselves with empathy and respect for others.

Recordings and In-Class Attendance:
There is no required distribution of recordings of class. Recording will be provided based upon on the decision of the course instructor. Classes are designed as and are intended to be in-person. Your attendance is expected. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the materials you need for missed classes.

Writing Exams:
All exams will be in-person and will follow UBC exam protocol. Exams may be online, e.g., in Canvas, but students must be physically present and invigilated. If a student is unable to write an exam, they must contact the Course Instructor and Teaching Assistant before the scheduled exam date/time. Documentation must be provided to explain your absence. If the documentation is considered legitimate, the Course Instructor will let you know how to proceed.

Centre for Accessibility:
The Centre for Accessibility (CfA) facilitates disability-related accommodations and programming initiatives designed to remove barriers for students with disabilities and ongoing medical conditions. If you are registered with the CfA and are eligible for exam accommodations, it is your responsibility to let your Course Instructors know. You should book your exam writing with the CFA using its exam reservation system: for midterm exams or quizzes, at least 7 days in advance; and final exams, 7 days before the start of the formal
exam period.

Copyright:
All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner.

Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline and could be subject to legal action. Any lecture recordings are for the sole use of the instructor and students enrolled in the class. In no case may the lecture recording or part of the recording be used by students for any other purpose, either personal or commercial. Further, audio or video recording of classes are not permitted without the prior consent of the instructor.

Plagiarism Penalties:
Academic dishonesty and plagiarism are taken very seriously. Incidences of academic misconduct may result in a reduction of grade, a mark of zero on the assignment/exams of concern, failing the course or program, escalation/referral to the Dean's office and/or President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline, and/or expulsion from UBC. It is each student's responsibility to review and understand what constitutes academic dishonesty and plagiarism and how to avoid them. Review UBC academic dishonesty policies/penalties and course-specific policies.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use: The use of Generative AI tools at UBC is a course or program-level decision. Students are permitted to use AI tools for formative work such as gathering information or brainstorming but may NOT use it on any assessed work or final submission. Students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit, and any content therein. *Note: AI is a developing area and guidelines of its use may change.* Students are encouraged to learn the material and produce their own output, rather than AI generated output.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Academic misconduct that is subject to disciplinary measures includes, but is not limited, to the following:

- **Plagiarism**, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Correct citations must be provided where applicable for all reports/assignments.
- **Cheating**, which may include, but is not limited to falsification of any material subject to academic evaluation, unauthorized collaborative work; or use of unauthorized means to complete an examination.
- **Submitting others work as your own**, may include but not limited to i. using, or attempting to use, another student's answers; ii. providing answers to other students; iii. failing to take reasonable measures to protect answers from use by other students; or iv. in the case of students who study together, submitting identical or virtually identical assignments for evaluation unless permitted by the course instructor.
- **Resubmission of Material**, submitting the same, or substantially the same, essay, presentation, or assignment more than once (whether the earlier submission was at this or another institution) unless prior approval has been obtained from the instructor(s) to whom the assignment is to be submitted.
- **Use of academic ghostwriting services**, including hiring of writing or research services and submitting papers or assignments as his or her own.

Student Responsibility: Students are responsible for informing themselves of the guidelines of acceptable and nonacceptable conduct for examinations and graded assignments as presented via the Course Syllabus, Instructors, Canvas and UBC academic misconduct policies.
Penalties for Academic Dishonesty: The integrity of academic work depends on the honesty of all those who work in this environment and the observance of accepted conventions. Academic misconduct is

treated as a serious offence at UBC. Penalties for academic dishonesty are applied at the discretion of the course instructor. Incidences of academic misconduct may result in a reduction of grade or a mark of zero on the assignment, examination, or course and/or the matter is referred to the Dean's office and/or President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline.

Resources:

UBC Policies of Academic Honesty:

- UBC Academic Conduct and Discipline (website link)
- UBC Academic Honesty and Standards (website link)

Citing Sources:

- UBC Learning Commons Citation Resource (website link)
- UBC "How to Cite" Sources (website link)

Plagiarism

- UBC Discipline for Academic Misconduct (website link)
- Purdue University Plagiarism Overview website

Welcome to the class!
I hope you have fun and learn a lot!!!

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part A: Global Food Price Dynamics: Trends, Spikes, Cycles, by-products

Week	Topic	Resources
1 Sep 2/4	• Sep 2: No class. Imagine UBC • Sep 4: Intro to FRE 306	Syllabus
2 Sep 9/11	• Why did food prices double in 2008/2009 vs. now (2020-2025)? • Why did real farm prices decline from 1950 – 2020? What has happened recently? What impacts food prices? • *Paths of world food market prices*	Canvas slides (various graphs, charts & tables)
3 Sep 16/18	• Trade Flows and trade-related aspects of commodity markets	
	Assignment #1 – Due Friday, September 19th	
4 Sep 23/25	• Seasonality, Cycles and Storage Model • Why do some farm and food prices cycle up and down regularly over time? • *Price cycles: Hog cycle model; Storage model, seasonality* • Inflation and food prices. How does inflation affect (a) commodity prices and (b) food prices? Do increased commodity prices affect inflation? • Do farm by-products affect commodity markets? • *Economics of Joint Products cycles*	C.P. Timmer, W. Falcon, S.R. Pearson, Food Policy Analysis, 1983, Chapter 4. (available on Canvas. See pdf page 86) R.A. Schrimper, Economics of Agricultural Markets, 2001, Ch. 13 (pp. 252-258)

Part B: International Trade and World Markets

Week	Topic	Resources
5 Sep 30 / Oct 2	**Sep 30: No class due to National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** • Who likes a trade war? Who is hurt by Trump's tariff war with China, and now with everyone? • How do tariffs really work? • *Trade Model: ED-ES Analysis*	Alex McCalla and Tim Josling, Agricultural Policies and World Markets, Ch. 2 RA Schrimper, Economics of Agricultural Markets, 2001, Ch. 10
	Assignment #2 Due – Friday, October 3rd	
6 Oct 7/9	• Effect of currency changes in trade • How do subsidies affect ag and food markets	
	Group Discussion Response #1 – Due Friday, October 10th	
7 Oct 14/16	• How are trade flows affected by transport costs • How do imports and local production interact, especially with seasonal storage? • Rural-urban market model •	Timmer et al, Ch.4: (available on Canvas. See pdf pages 95 and 96)
	Assignment #3 Due – Friday, October 17th	
8 Oct 21/23	**Midterm Exam – Tuesday October 21st** • What are fob and cif prices?	Articles posted on Canvas.

	• Fob-cif prices and trade flows • How does the WTO affect agricultural trade? Trump tried to disable it; what happened and should Canadian farmers be worried? • WTO, trade actions and rules	

Part C: Market Power (Monopoly, Monopsony & Supply Management Models) and Supply Chains

Week	Topic	Resources
9 Oct 28/30	• Are giant food manufacturers and retailers squeezing out farmers and hurting consumers with higher prices? • *Farm Retail margin model (supply chains, market power models)*	R.A. Schrimper, Economics of Agricultural Markets, 2001, Ch. 2, (4, 5), 6
10 Nov 4/6	• When food firms sell their product to different consumers at different prices, does that help or hurt consumers? Does it affect farmers? • *Exercise of Food Market Power* • Does Canada have a farm monopoly through Supply Management? Dairy prices and Monopoly • *Monopoly, Supply Management*	Articles posted on Canvas.
	Assignment #4 – Due Friday, November 7th	
11 Nov 11/13	• **Nov 12 – No class – UBC Midterm Break** • **Nov 13 – Class will be asynchronous.** price discrimination, Brand Names	

Part D: Future Markets

Week	Topic	Resources
12 Nov 18/20	• Futures Markets	
	Group Discussion Response #2 – Due Friday, November 21st	
13 Nov 25/27	• Futures Markets • Current Events: Impact of Climate Change; Student Choice	Articles posted on Canvas.
14 Dec 2/4	• Class Choice / Personal Financial Literacy • Wrap Up & Review	
	Assignment #5 – Due Friday, December 5th	
Dec 8 - 20	**Final Exam – Date to be announced**	

We will do our best to keep to this schedule, but note that this is a **tentative schedule and subject to change**. An updated schedule may be found in Canvas throughout the course, as content and dates change.

Note: We are trying to update resource to Open Source textbooks, so updated readings will be provided as we go through the course. Legacy Textbooks will remain available at the UBC Library.