

AEC 301 01W - TRENDS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY FALL 2026

Instructor: Brian Toney, Ph.D.

Classroom: Online

Lecture Time: TR 2:00pm-3:15pm (Lecture will be recorded and shared on D2L)

Office Hours: TR 9:30am-10:45am, or by appointment

Office Location: AGET 231

Course Description

Analysis of current trends in the food industry, including norms, specifications, and standards; trade issues; and policies with national and international scope that affect the U.S. food industry. The focus is on developing an understanding of the causes and consequences of such trends, the various issues involved, and how they affect stakeholders and society. Prerequisites: Junior standing.

Textbook/Materials Required

None.

Student Learning Outcomes

After studying all materials and resources presented in this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain current and emerging trends across food production, processing, distribution, retail, food service, and consumer markets.
2. Distinguish short-term events from longer-run structural trends and explain the economic, technological, demographic, environmental, institutional, and policy drivers involved.
3. Explain how norms, specifications, standards, certifications, and regulations shape food-industry decisions and market access.
4. Analyze trade issues and policies with national and international scope that affect the U.S. food industry.
5. Evaluate the causes, consequences, trade-offs, and uncertainty associated with food-industry trends for affected stakeholders and society.
6. Analyze, evaluate, or solve problems using a set of circumstances, data, texts, and other evidence.
7. Interpret empirical data and observable facts and use credible evidence to support conclusions.
8. Communicate evidence-based analysis in written, oral, and/or visual forms appropriate to audience and occasion while demonstrating an understanding of societal and civic issues.

Student Learning Objectives:

After studying all materials and resources presented in this course, students will be able to:

1. Develop a concise trend scan using multiple credible sources.
2. Describe the timeline, drivers, evidence, and uncertainty surrounding a selected trend.
3. Map the stakeholders, incentives, likely benefits, costs, and unintended consequences associated with an industry development.
4. Compare public regulations with private norms, specifications, standards, and certification systems.
5. Interpret basic food-industry, market, policy, and trade data.
6. Evaluate a domestic or international trade or policy issue affecting the U.S. food industry.
7. Develop alternative scenarios and explain how stakeholder outcomes may differ across those scenarios.

Preferred Form of Communication: All email interaction must be done through your TAMUC email. Always make sure the name of the course is in the title of the email [AEC 2317].

Communication Response Time: Emails will be responded to within 48 hours Monday – Friday.

Instructional and Design of Course Overview

This course is face-to-face, so it is expected that students will attend regularly. The 4 assignments and midterm are administrated over D2L with a due date of Sunday 11:59pm. The final exam is administrated over D2L (over other online format) with a due date of Monday, December 8th at 12:30pm.

Exams (80%)

Students will have a midterm and final exam in this course, which covers topics covered in the textbook and lectures. All exams will be administered over D2L and must be *completed* by 12:30pm of the due date. Failure to submit the exam by 12:30pm will result in an automatic 25% penalty.

Homework Assignments (20%)

Students will be assigned weekly homework assignments. These assignments are based on real-world scenarios that will help students better understand the inner workings of the food and fiber industry. Students should work hard and have fun with these assignments. Students should always upload their homework to D2L.

Component of Course	Percentage of Grade
Midterm	40%
Final	40%
Assignment 1	5%
Assignment 2	5%
Assignment 3	5%
Assignment 4	5%
TOTAL	100%

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade
A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	59% or less
The instructor reserves the right to curve grades at the end of the semester, depending on the class's overall performance on the curriculum. The instructor would only implement a curve improving the final letter grade of students.	

Policies for Late Work

1. Exams

- Failure to submit exams by the Sunday 11:59pm due date will result in an automatic 25% penalty off the grade of the exam. If the exam still isn't turned-in by that Monday 8:00am, the student receives a 0% on the exam and are advised to drop the course.

Note that students can avoid these penalties altogether by emailing the instructor

their completed exam via brian.toney@tamuc.edu before the due date. Even if the instructor doesn't respond immediately, the email is time-stamped to prove when the exam was completed.

2. Assignment

- Late assignments will be accepted for grading with the following deductions from the grade
 - Late by 1-2 days = 10% reduction from final grade
 - Late between 3-5 days = 30% reduction from final grade
 - Late by greater than 5 days = 0% on the assignment

Make-Up Policies

The instructor acknowledges that 'life happens', forcing students to miss class, assignments, and exams. In such a scenario, email the instructor proof of the incident (e.g., doctor's note, broken down car) and arrangements will be made to make-up any missed assignments/exams without any penalty.

Tentative Class Schedule

Week	Dates	Due (11:59pm Sunday on D2L)	Topics
1	8/20- 8/23		Course Introduction and Food Industry Overview
2	8/24- 8/30		Current Trends in the Food Industry
3	8/31-9/6	Assignment 1 (09/6)	Current Trends in the Food Industry
4	9/7-9/13		Norms, Specifications, and Standards
5	9/14- 9/20	Assignment 2 (9/20)	Norms, Specifications, and Standards
6	9/21- 9/27		Food Industry Trade Issues
7	9/28- 10/4	Midterm Exam (10/4)	Food Industry Trade Issues
8	10/5- 10/11		National Food Policy and Regulation
9	10/12- 10/18		National Food Policy and Regulation
10	10/19- 10/25	Assignment 3 (10/25)	International Trade and Policy Issues
11	10/26- 11/1		International Trade and Policy Issues
12	11/2- 11/8	Assignment 4 (11/8)	Stakeholders and Industry Impacts

13	11/9-11/15		Stakeholders and Industry Impacts
14	11/16-11/22		Emerging Food Industry Issues
15	11/30-12/6	Final Exam (12/3)	Emerging Food Industry Issues
16	12/7-12/13		
<u>Note:</u> This schedule is simply a guide, and the professor has the right to change due dates if necessary. Students are responsible for updated due dates and can find updates via D2L announcements and e-mails. This schedule will never be perfect.			

Academic Integrity

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources is committed to maintaining the integrity and respectability of degrees conferred and course credit earned through our department. Academic dishonesty restricts the understanding of subject material by the perpetrator, distracts and discourages other class members, and reduces the value of the economic signal of degrees conferred through Texas A&M University-Commerce.

The faculty, staff and student members of The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources are committed to protecting the integrity of our courses, regardless of the delivery method. Students are required to electronically sign an Academic Honesty Policy for this course. This document can be found within D2L. **A student who breaches the policy will receive a zero for quizzes, homework, and/or discussions. A student that commits academic dishonesty with regards to an exam will receive an automatic "F" for the course.**

Code of Student Conduct

Texas A&M University-Commerce has established standards of conduct to create and foster an environment that facilitates student learning and development. Students and University student groups are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect for the rights and property of others, and that is consistent with the educational goals and mission of the University. This Code of Student Conduct (“Code”) focuses on personal responsibility and accountability for students’ actions and the impact those actions may have on the greater community. The Student Code of Conduct can be found [here](#). Students are expected to be professional, courteous, and respectful at all times.

ADA Statement Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Technology Requirement

- Browser support

D2L is committed to performing key application testing when new browser versions are released. New and updated functionality is also tested against the latest version of supported browsers. However, due to the frequency of some browser releases, D2L cannot guarantee that each browser version will perform as expected. If you encounter any issues with any of the browser versions listed in the tables below, contact D2L Support, who will determine the best course of action for resolution. Reported issues are prioritized by supported browsers and then maintenance browsers.

Supported browsers are the latest or most recent browser versions that are tested against new versions of D2L products. Customers can report problems and receive support for issues. For an optimal experience, D2L recommends using supported browsers with D2L products.

Maintenance browsers are older browser versions that are not tested extensively against new versions of D2L products. Customers can still report problems and receive support for critical issues; however, D2L does not guarantee all issues will be addressed. A maintenance browser becomes officially unsupported after one year.

Note the following:

- Ensure that your browser has JavaScript and Cookies enabled.
- For desktop systems, you must have Adobe Flash Player 10.1 or greater.

- The Brightspace Support features are now optimized for production environments when using the Google Chrome browser, Apple Safari browser, Microsoft Edge browser, Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, and Mozilla Firefox browsers.

Desktop Support

Browser	Supported Browser Version(s)	Maintenance Browser Version(s)
Microsoft Edge	Latest	N/A
Internet Explorer	N/A	11
Mozilla Firefox	Latest, ESR	N/A
Google Chrome	Latest	N/A
Apple Safari	Latest	N/A

- You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:
 - 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
 - Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
 - Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
- You must have a:
 - Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
 - Speakers or headphones.

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Statement on Campus Concealed Carry

Texas Senate Bill – 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so.

Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

AI Policy

Empowering Responsible and Ethical Use of AI

As your instructor, I encourage the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to enhance your learning experience, productivity, and career success. AI can be a powerful resource for generating ideas, conducting research, and improving your analytical skills. However, it is crucial to use these tools responsibly and ethically to maintain the integrity of your work and uphold academic standards.

Acceptable Use of AI:

1. Research and Idea Generation: Use AI to help brainstorm topics, generate ideas, and gather preliminary information.
2. Data Analysis Assistance: Employ AI tools for assistance with data analysis, such as creating graphs and visualizations in Excel.
3. Improving Writing: Use AI for proofreading to enhance the clarity, grammar, and structure of your writing.
4. Learning and Skill Development: Engage with AI to improve your understanding of course material and develop relevant skills, such as prompt engineering and metrics development.

Unacceptable Use of AI:

1. **Plagiarism**: Submitting AI-generated content as your own without proper attribution is strictly prohibited. All work must be original and reflect your own understanding and effort.
2. **Cheating**: Using AI to complete assignments, quizzes, or exams, undermining the learning process, is not allowed.
3. **Fabrication of Data**: Generating or altering data using AI tools to misrepresent research findings or results is unacceptable.
4. **Misrepresentation**: Presenting AI-generated content or ideas your own is prohibited.