Course Information

Grade Formula: 50% based on policy analysis assignment and 50% on the final examination. The examination will include two technical questions and two essay questions.

Assignments: Four optional homework assignments will be distributed. They will be checked and returned and answers will be provided.

Office hours: Thursdays, 3:30-5:00 p.m., 337 Giannini Hall. For appointments, send e-mail at Zilber@are.berkeley.edu or call 642-6570.

Policy Analysis Assignment
(will be given last month of class)

Each student will be assigned a policy topic by a random lottery. If students don’t like the first topic they pick, then they can have another chance to make another random selection from the remaining pool. The assignment is to prepare a comprehensive economic analysis of the policy topic. It should include the following:

- Citation of two or three major papers on the issue.
- Opinions of two or three experts in the topic area.
- Discussion of the pros and cons of the policy in question.
- Economic framework for analyzing the issue.
- Quantitative measures of the policy impact.
- Analysis of the potential gainers and losers from the policy.
- Discussion of the political context of the policy.

The analysis should be prepared within one week after the assignment is given and presented in a paper about five pages in length.

Last's year topics included:

1. The use of BST (Bovine Semi Tropin). Is it economic?
2. The Sugar Subsidy Program in the United States. Who gains and who loses?
3. Acid Rain. What’s really happening? Is it a problem and for whom?
4. Economic Impact of the Food Stamp Program in the United States.
5. The Economics of Increasing Costs of Federal Grazing Permits.
6. Trading in Air Pollution Rights. Is it working?
7. Are There Barriers to U. S. Exports in Asia? What can be done about it?
8. What Is the Optimal Management of Agricultural Research in California?
9. Foreign Agricultural Aid. Should it be continued and how?
10. Conservation Reserve Program. Is it working?
11. GATT. Does it have negative environmental implications?
12. Endangered Species Act. Should it be changed or dumped?
13. Structural Adjustment Lending Policies. Do they do more damage than good?
14. Cooperative Extension and the Land Grant System. Is it effective? Should it be modified?

You may consider any of the above topics as well as the following:

1. The Economics of Reform in Eastern Europe and Its Impact on Agriculture.
2. Sustainable Development. What does it mean? Is it an applicable concept?
3. The Political Economy of the Restoration of the San Francisco Bay and Delta. What are the alternative plans and what do they imply?
4. The New Farm Bill. What is it all about and who benefits and who loses?