

# Conservation Agriculture Policy Course Syllabus

June 2020

Class Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85824537803?pwd=cU1mSUVLUctwTStxT1dlZjNkMGpWZz09>

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## Introduction

Hello! I am looking forward to our class this summer. We will be meeting virtually **on Zoom** each Friday in June from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Please have your video on for class (if you have connectivity restraints, reach out to me and we can find ways to accommodate). If you have any questions outside of class, please feel free to contact me by email or phone to set up a meeting.

This one credit course will examine state and federal standards for natural resource conservation on agricultural land in Vermont and the associated effects of conservation policy on farmers.

We will discuss Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) and the variety of environmental conservation programs available at the state and federal levels which are designed to assist farmers to achieve conservation compliance. Students will learn how to identify on-farm natural resource concerns and how to effectively communicate with farmers.

The course will incorporate 2 virtual farm visits where students will see specific types of conservation practices implemented by farmers to protect natural resources and increase air, water, and soil quality on- and off-farm.

Students will acquire a basic understanding of the interplay between state and federal regulations in Vermont and how regulations affect farms on-the-ground. In addition, students will be introduced to environmental issues on farms, common conservation methods, and cost benefit analyses of conservation practices. For the final project, students will complete an overview of another state's agriculture regulatory systems in comparison to Vermont's RAPs and provide policy improvement recommendations.

## Class 1 - June 5

### **Federal Conservation Programs**

**Read:**

- 2018 Farm Bill Title II Primer <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IF11199.pdf>
- Food Security Act  
<https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/99-198%20-%20Food%20Security%20Act%20Of%201985.pdf> Read Chapter 4 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program **pg 79-89, pg 94-109**

- Explore the NRCS website (especially EQIP)  
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>

9:00 Introductions

9:30 Federal Working Lands Conservation Programs

-Farm Bill

2018 Farm Bill: <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr2/BILLS-115hr2enr.pdf>

-Food Security Act

10:00 USDA NRCS

-Overview (History, Offices, Staff, Earth Team)

-Conservation Planning

-Programs (EQIP, CSP, EWP, CIG)

11:00 Field Office Technical Guide

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/fotg/>

-Overviews, job sheets, and practice standard

## **Class 2 - June 12**

### **State Conservation Programs**

**Read: Vermont RAPs**

[https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/documents/RAPFINALRULE12-21-2018\\_WEB.pdf](https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/documents/RAPFINALRULE12-21-2018_WEB.pdf)

9:00 RAP overview

10:00 Practice Descriptions

11:00 State Financial and Technical Assistance Programs

## **Class 3 - June 19**

### **Farm Visit: Shire Beef**

9:00 Soil health practices and manure management

10:00 Shire Beef Video

10:30 Interview with Farmer

11:00 Conservation Program and RAP connections

## **Class 4 - June 26**

### **Farm Visit: Richardson Family Farm**

9:00 Final Projects Discussion

10:00 Richardson Family Farm Video

10:30 Interview with Farmer

11:00 Reflection and Wrap-up - Discussion about farm practices and viability

## **Final Assignment**

Students are asked to compare and contrast Vermont's RAPs with another state's agriculture conservation standards. Students should craft policy recommendations to improve their state's current agriculture policies based on what they have learned in this class. The recommendations may take the form of legislative draft edits, if applicable. The final paper should be between 6-10 pages.