

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS

Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREC) 412
Agricultural Commodities Marketing

Syllabus *Fall 2026*

Instructor: Stephen R. Koontz Office: 266 Nutrien Agricultural Sciences Building
Phone: 970/491-7032
E-Mail: Stephen.Koontz@ColoState.Edu

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 PM. M-F, and by appointment. Virtual available.

Class Meeting Location and Time: 103 Nutrien Agricultural Sciences Building 2:00-2:50 PM MWF.

Online Course Timing: The online version will run concurrently with the campus version. The schedule for all assignments, including examinations, is identical between the online and campus course.

Course Objective:

Agricultural marketing and agribusiness principles applied to current marketing problems related to livestock and field ~~and horticultural~~ crops.

This is a course on agricultural commodity markets and commodity futures and options markets. The emphasis will be on major commercial agriculture field crops and livestock. (There will be no horticultural crops.) The course will involve study of the role of futures markets as an institution in a market economy, as well as use of futures contracts and options on futures contracts in firm asset and risk management. Topics emphasized will be: mechanics of futures and options trading, hedging strategies, basis relationships between cash and futures markets, fundamental and technical behavior of commodity futures prices, market analysis, market regulation, and understanding commodity market performance.

Prerequisites:

Agricultural and Resource Economics 310: Agricultural Marketing is a requirement. It is recommended that students be in their junior or senior year at university. An intermediate or junior-level agricultural marketing course and agribusiness management course are the most useful supporting courses. Statistical and graphical analysis using spreadsheets will be conducted. Therefore, skills in MS Excel, statistics, and econometrics will be useful. Market data and other commodity market information will be gathered so knowledge of search engines and different information sources will be useful.

Course Materials:

The required course text is *Agricultural Futures and Options: Principles and Strategies*, Second Edition, by W.D. Purcell and S.R. Koontz. It is available in PDF form on the class website.

The book *Market Wizards* by Jack D. Schwager (John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, 2012, ISBN 978-1-118-27305-0) is also required reading.

Finally, subscribing to and reading the *Wall Street Journal* is a requirement.

Class material will be posted at <https://webdoc.agsci.colostate.edu/koontz/>. Students should make sure the email address tied to their eID is up-to-date and a Colorado State University email is preferred.

A recommended book for the course is *A Complete Guide to Futures Markets: Technical Analysis, Trading Systems, Fundamental Analysis, Options, Spreads, and Trading Principles*, 2nd Edition, by J.D. Schwager and M. Etzkorn. This is an additional resource and supports course material and student professional development.

Examinations, Problems Sets, and Grading:

Two One-Hour Mid-Term Examinations	200
Final Examination	150
Problem Sets and Quizzes	300
Writing Assignments	100
Discussion, Research, and/or Participation	<u>50</u>
TOTAL	800

The instructor reserves the right to change the number of points allocated in the Discussion, Research and Participation section of the grading formula. It is unlikely but changes may also be made to Problem Sets and Quizzes. Any changes will be communicated.

Four 50-point problem sets will be assigned. This work will cover techniques discussed in the course and like material will comprise portions of exams. Problem sets will be completed outside of class and must be turned in before class on the due date. Late problem sets will receive a reduced score unless prior arrangements are made. Problem sets are to be an independent effort by a team of two students. Some across-team communication is encouraged but if there is evidence that the effort has not been independent then no credit will be earned. Students in the online section will most likely complete work individually.

Approximately five 20-point quizzes will be given. The quizzes are used to familiarize students with the types of questions asked on tests and to develop problem solving skills. There are no make-up quizzes. Students must communicate with the instructor prior to missing a quiz. If you do that then you will be excused from that quiz requirement.

There will be four one-page 25-point Writing Assignments. Each assignment will synthesize information and strategies discussed by one of the traders in *Market Wizards*. If you trade futures, or any investment instruments, then this will be one of the most useful books you will read. There are many Market Wizard books so get the correct version. Assignments will be graded as follows. Acceptable assignments will receive 100% or 85% of the possible points depending on the quality of the work. Students will have two days to revise work marked unacceptable. Acceptable revised assignments will receive 80% of the possible points. Unacceptable revised assignments will receive 50% of the possible points.

Reading the *Wall Street Journal* is a requirement for the course. Students are expected to find and read futures industry, commodity market, and commercial agriculture articles. Participation points may be given for accurate and thoughtful discussion. Students are also expected to take an interest in their investing future. This implies finding and reading articles related to personal and retirement investing. Discussion threads within the course online website can be a means of elaborating on these topics. Participation points may be awarded to quality discussion.

Independent research and synthesis are also an important part of the course. Class material should elicit

follow-up discussion outside of class through the course website. This course will also follow current market events – both in commodity markets and investments – and these events are appropriate for electronic discussion. Electronic discussion is also ideal for communicating additional information gathered through independent research. Examples of additional information gathered through independent research include: newsletters, reports, and other objective information. There is an opportunity to receive 50 points for contributions to discussion and additional engagement in the course.

There will be two 100-point mid-term examinations given during the semester. Make-up exams will be the option of the instructor. If any student must miss an exam due to an emergency, or due to a scheduling conflict which is communicated prior to the exam, then the student's final grade may be based on the other exams taken. The 150-point final examination will be comprehensive with important portions of the course weighted equally or with a slightly heavier influence on the last portion of the course. Material requirements for each exam will be clearly communicated.

Final grades for the class will be determined on the standard 90-80-70-60 scale. Any student receiving less than 60% on the graded course material will receive an "F." There are no exceptions. If a student shows improvement in exam scores over the semester, the instructor reserves the right to weigh the end-of-semester exams more heavily when calculating that student's final grade. The instructor will make minimal use the +/- grading system.

If you are a student who needs accommodation in this class due to a disability or health condition, then please make an appointment with the instructor to discuss your needs. Accommodations need to be identified prior to implementation. A verifying accommodation letter from Resources for Disabled Students is a must. Student Disability Center website <https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/>.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy:

University AI policy in course work is at the discretion of the faculty teaching each course. In this course, AI use is acceptable within a specific scope. AI use in any work product should be viewed as a co-author. AI use to construct communications that are intended to demonstrate thinking is not acceptable. Most of your work should be your work – you are the author with no co-author. For example, exams and Market Wizards writeups. There is joint work in this course and that effort there should be you and your human co-author. For example, problem sets. AI use as a co-author is not acceptable. AI use to facilitate learning is acceptable. AI use is acceptable for learning how to do work a task in, for example, Excel.

Attendance Policy:

There is no formal attendance policy. However, there is a participation policy. This is a learning-by-doing course and there are a variety of means of communicating that you have learned. But if you are enrolled in the campus course and need to miss a class meeting for whatever reason then please email me in advance. This is to alleviate any problems satisfying the assignment schedule.

Academic Integrity Policy:

University academic integrity policies are enforced. Students should read and know these policies. Submitting any assignment implies that your work is in compliance with the University Academic Integrity Policy. Submitting any assignment implies the work is an independent effort by the student.

Final Exam:

The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 15, from 4:10 PM – 6:10 PM. Any changes needed to this must be made with the instructor by Monday the last week of class.

Communication Protocol and Professional Conduct:

Office visits, virtual meetings, phone calls, and email are all acceptable means of communication with the instructor. I expect students to use the skills developed in communications courses: introduction, purpose, and rapport. Emails must do the following: identify the sender and not just the email address, contain a signature with contact information, and include “AREC 412” at the beginning of the subject line. The file name of email attachments must include the same, date, sender last name, and a description of the contents of the attachment. I have a strong preference for PDF file types as attachments. Finally, professionalism is a requirement for in-class and electronic communication. Questioning and discussion are essential. Communications about the course or instruction that are not objective and related to the spirit of the endeavor are not appropriate. Expressing frustration over the course – without objectivity – is rarely appropriate. Any perception of threatening communication will be forwarded to university officials. Further, it is my prerogative to not respond to non-objective or unprofessional communication. Any assignment containing non-objective communication will not be graded. I will reserve my efforts to engage with students that are engaged in the course in a professional manner. In short, communication must be professional and objective to the course experience. We stalwart Rams at Colorado State University subscribe to Principles of Community. Learn it, know it, and follow it.

Style/Mode of Teaching:

The teaching style used involves lectures and discussion. The approach in this class will be to introduce and present concepts, work examples and problems related to concepts, and then generalize the problem to encompass the concept. Through this process questions should be asked, answered, issues discussed, and connections made. Teachers call this synthesis and thinkers call this abstraction. The instructor will follow the lecture materials, handouts, and portions of the textbooks closely. However, some of the topics within the textbook will be significantly expanded and others will not be discussed. Also, current market events and conditions will be discussed and used as examples to illustrate important ideas.

This is a learning-by-doing course. The problem sets and independent work are the main method of this approach. The problem sets are based on real world data and decisions. But this is also a synthesis course. It is important to learn tools and examples, and it is also important to see how these specifics fit into broader concepts and general ideas. The real-world changes but solid underlying principles do not. Problem Sets will be used to give students experience in the mechanical procedures associated with course material. Additional readings and handouts will be used at times to supplement the course material. The instructor will regularly discuss futures-related and investment-related articles in the *Wall Street Journal*. Students are expected to find and read these articles and are expected to be prepared to discuss them. There is almost always something interesting going on in the markets which fits the context of this course.

This is a senior-level capstone course. I expect you to be prepared and interested in the subject – or at least open to an interest in the subject – as there are great career opportunities. I expect professionalism. This material is what the instructor does for a living. I will be prepared and enthusiastic. I expect you to engage in the course. I will not spend your time with work not related to what industry professionals do. (And we will both follow university policies.)

Important Colorado State University Policies:

Links within the below provide information on policies relevant to your courses and resources to help with various challenges you may encounter: <https://col.st/2FA2g> or



Sexual Assault and Violence Elimination

CSU's Student Sexual Harassment and Violence policy, following national guidance from the Office of Civil Rights, requires that professors follow CSU policy as a "mandatory reporter" of any personal disclosure of sexual harassment, abuse, and/or violence related experiences or incidents shared with the professor in person, via email, and/or in classroom papers or homework exercises. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of personal relational abuse, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. While professors are often able to help students locate appropriate channels of assistance on campus (e.g., see the CSU Health Network link below), disclosure by the student to the professor requires that the professor inform appropriate CSU channels to help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, even if the student requests that the disclosure not be shared.

For counseling support and assistance, please see The CSU Health Network, which includes a variety of counseling services that can be accessed at: <http://www.health.colostate.edu/>. The Sexual Assault Victim Assistance Team is a confidential resource for students that do not have a reporting requirement and that can be of great help to students who have experienced sexual assault. The web address is <http://www.wgac.colostate.edu/need-help-support>.

Principles of Community

The Principles of Community support the Colorado State University mission and vision of access, research, teaching, service, and engagement. A collaborative, and vibrant community is a foundation for learning, critical inquiry, and discovery. Therefore, each member of the CSU community has a responsibility to uphold these principles when engaging with one another and acting on behalf of the University.

- Inclusion: We create and nurture inclusive environments and welcome, value and affirm all members of our community, including their various identities, skills, ideas, talents, and contributions.
- Integrity: We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.
- Respect: We honor the inherent dignity of all people within an environment where we are committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.
- Service: We are responsible, individually and collectively, to give of our time, talents, and resources to promote the well-being of each other and the development of our local, regional, and global communities.
- Social Justice: We have the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects.

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Course Outline

	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
I. The Basics	Chapter 1
A) Futures and options contracts: definitions, terminology, and institutions	
B) Price discovery and futures price behavior	
C) Hedging and producer behavior under risk	
II. Hedging	Chapter 2
A) Basis: definition, calculation, normal patterns, and variation	
B) What is risk and risk management?	
C) Basis for Grains: Storage Hedging and Yield Risk	
D) Basis for Livestock	
E) Hedging	
Exam 1	
III. Fundamental Analysis	Chapter 3
A) Grain: Supply and Use Grain Balance Sheets	
B) Livestock: Forecasting with Elasticities and Derived Demand	
IV. Technical Analysis	Chapter 4, 5, 6 <i>Market Wizards</i>
A) Introduction	
B) Bar charts	
C) Additional technical tools	
V. Profit Margin Hedging	Chapter 11
A) Efficient Markets	
B) Integrating fundamental and technical tools	
Exam 2	
VI. Options on Commodity Futures	Chapter 7
A) Introduction	
B) Applications of options strategies	
C) Critique and comparison with futures	
VII. Regulation and Performance of Futures Markets	WSJ
A) Regulation of speculation & futures markets	
B) Performance issues with futures markets	

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Student
Questionnaire

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S.R. Koontz
Fall 2026

1. Name: _____

2. Class: Junior ☐, Senior ☐, Graduate ☐, and Transfer ☐. (✓ all that apply.)

3. Major: _____

4. Academic Advisor & Faculty Mentor: _____

5. List agricultural and resource economics, economics, and statistics courses that you have completed:

6. Why are you interested in commodity futures markets?

7. Commodities of Interest: _____

8. Do you have any real-world experience in trading futures or involvement in hedging or risk management programs? Do not count “mock” or simulated trading.

Yes ☐ or No ☐

If “Yes,” elaborate some. _____

I have read the syllabus and understand the course requirements. _____

(Extract this page from the PDF, fill it out, and submit through Canvas. This skill will be used again.)