

**Harris Policy Lab
(PPHA 60000-2)
Autumn 2023**

Alexandra Tate, PhD
Department of Medicine
atate@uchicago.edu

TIME AND LOCATION

Mondays, 3:00-5:50*, Keller 2112

**Due to the University's Week 1 academic schedule, class Week 1 will be held Friday 9-11:50am*

OFFICE HOURS

My office hours are typically Tuesday afternoons and Wednesday mornings. Sign-ups for my office hours take place via Calendly. Office hours will be held via Zoom using a link provided on Canvas and the Calendly site. Students may make individual or group appointments. Groups may sign up for two consecutive 15-minute slots if needed.

<https://calendly.com/atate-officehours/f23>

PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR

Nicholas DiRago, PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, UCLA
ndirago@g.ucla.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 5-6pm and Fridays 9-10am, or by appointment. Students can sign up for individual or group appointments below.

<https://savvyca.com/ndirago/oh23f>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Autumn Quarter 2023 Health Policy Lab focuses on improving health outcomes through addressing unmet social and community needs. Students will be divided into three teams, and each team will be assigned to work on a project for the Lab's client for the duration of the quarter. Under the guidance of the Faculty Advisor, Alexandra Tate, and with support from the Professional Advisor, Nicholas DiRago, teams will conduct research and analysis, draw conclusions, and present final deliverables to client leadership and staff at the conclusion of the quarter. Client meetings will occur throughout the quarter as needed.

The Health Policy Lab has a single client, described below, and each enrolled student will be a team member on one of the following projects. Project scopes that describe these projects in more detail will be shared at the beginning of the quarter.

Client: David Meltzer, MD, PhD, Fanny L. Pritzker Professor of Medicine and Section Chief, Hospital Medicine, University of Chicago, Faculty Director, Center for Health and the Social Sciences and the Health Lab at UChicago's Urban Labs.

Dr. Meltzer is a globally recognized expert in health economics and public policy, focused on the theoretical foundations of medical cost-effectiveness analysis and the cost and quality of hospital care, and on pragmatic policy solutions to address unmet social needs at the community level as a critical component for improving health outcomes of vulnerable populations. Students will work on projects that support and advance three of Dr. Meltzer's ongoing initiatives.

Assessing Unmet Social and Community Needs in City of Harvey, IL through a Resident Survey

The Roommates Project: Understanding and Overcoming Policy Barriers

Classifying Patterns of Unmet Social Needs among Patients of the C4P Program at UChicago Medicine

Faculty Advisor: Alexandra Tate, PhD, is a medical sociologist and Research Director in the Department of Medicine at the University of Chicago. A mixed-methods sociologist, she studies how people with different backgrounds and experiences make difficult decisions. Her current work examines how the doctor-patient relationship and health policies influence decision-making, particularly in difficult contexts like oncology care and near the end-of-life. To do this, she brings together conversation analytic, ethnographic, causal inference, and natural language processing methods to study the complex machinery of how decisions are made and their impact on larger health policy and social issues such as health disparities, the dying process, and relations with institutions. She has also published research on how the Covid-19 pandemic and related institutional policies impacted end-of-life care decision-making and advance care planning. Dr. Tate serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, and is a Scholar at the Center for Healthcare, Science, Delivery and Innovation at UChicago. Her work has been published in interdisciplinary journals such as *Social Science and Medicine*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Health Communication*, and *Patient Education and Counseling*, and in clinical research journals such as *Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*. She also teaches courses for the Health & Society minor in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago.

Professional Advisor: Nicholas DiRago is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Nick is an urban sociologist and social demographer who studies the organizational and spatial aspects of housing markets, neighborhood inequality, and urban governance in the United States. He holds expertise in quantitative and demographic methods, specializing in spatial analysis, and has published peer-reviewed research in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Socius*, the *Journal of Urban Health*, and *The Sociology of Housing* (University of Chicago Press).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course,

- Students will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the assigned policy area by researching, analyzing, interpreting and synthesizing data related to the topic, drawing conclusions from the analysis and developing concrete policy recommendations.
- Students will collaborate with students, faculty, advisors and clients to create deliverables that provide useful information to the client and meet the client's needs.
- Students will learn or enhance their capacity to manage a project from inception to completion.
- Students will develop and enhance teamwork skills.

- Students will develop and enhance presentation skills by delivering their final analysis to leadership at the client organization.

OTHER POLICIES AND LOGISTICS

Expectations:

Setting clear expectations is the key to any successful working relationship. As students, you can expect the following from your faculty advisor and professional advisor:

- We will come to class prepared and ready to engage in lively (and respectful) discussion.
- We will support you through all of your work with your client (but we won't do the work for you or have difficult conversations for you.) Relatedly, we expect you to incorporate our feedback into your client deliverables.
- When we are in class, our attention will be only on our work together.
- We will hold regular office hours, and we will do our best to be responsive to your questions.
- We will be clear about the limitations of our expertise.

As the advisors, we expect the following from students:

- To come to meetings (with us, with each other, with the client) prepared. If we provide feedback on your project between meetings, we expect that you address those things before our next meeting, or come with questions. Your preparation will affect your overall project evaluation.
- Ask for help when you need it. The term is short, so there is not much time to get off track. This is why check-ins will be important.
- Be inclusive. Your team has diverse skill sets. Work together to leverage them all.
- Be curious.

Project Evaluation: We have constructed the course so that we can provide you guidance throughout. This coaching is critical to your success, and your ability to deliver a successful project to your client. While we won't be grading you on these project milestones, we will be evaluating your effort throughout the term—the time you are putting in, the degree to which you delve into the related literature, and the understanding of your data and topic. Your grade for the final project and presentation will reflect not just the final deliverables, but will reflect the process as well. This will be based on our discretion, and our expertise.

Class Meetings: At the start of some classes, there will be a 30-60 minute lecture and discussion on a relevant topic for all three groups. After that, Nick and Dr. Tate will meet with each group for 30 minutes. Other parts of class time will be used for client meetings. Additionally, there be times for groups to work together as a team. Groups should expect to spend, on average, 7-10 hours outside of class time on their project. It is each group's responsibility to coordinate meetings outside of class time with the client, and set these expectations in the first client meeting. Students are expected in-person unless quarantining aligned with University-specific policies.

Attendance: Attendance is required with accommodations for necessary quarantining (see below). If you cannot attend class in person and plan to Zoom in, please inform Dr. Tate, Nick and your

teammates as soon as you are aware of the need to miss class, and no later than two hours before class time. It is your responsibility to arrange Zooming in with your teammates to group meetings.

Participation: Experiential learning requires active participation by all students. Participation will be 15% of your total grade. Participation will be graded as follows:

- Asking questions and participating in dialogue during class discussions and/or during group meetings and/or discussion boards
- Attending and actively participating in group meetings outside of class
- Respectfully collaborating with your teammates and Policy Lab staff
- Attending class meetings (50% of the total participation grade)

Course Materials: There will be readings for all students most weeks. They will be listed in the module for the week. There are relatively minimal, as most reading you will do is focused on your project. Background materials and client materials will be posted to Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly.

Technology: Due to the locations of our Professional Advisor and the client, some course components will take place via Zoom meetings on students' personal computers. We have booked a conference room in Keller for most of these meetings. Students are expected to bring working computers for this purpose and be ready to support other group members in the event of a technical problem to minimize meeting disruptions.

Assignments: Unless otherwise noted, assignments due in a given week are due by Thursday 5:00pm CT of that week, and on behalf of the group.

Getting in touch: The best way to get in touch with us is via email. Please allow 2 business days for a response. If we don't respond within that time, please feel free to send a nudge. We always intend to respond to students promptly, but sometimes reminders can be helpful.

ADA student accommodations: Any student who believes they may need assistance should inform the Office of Student Disability Services by the end of the first week of class. Once you have received an accommodation letter, it should be presented to the course instructor immediately. <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

Diversity and Inclusion: The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to ensure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

- The University's policies are available [here](#). Specifically, the University identifies the freedom of expression as being "vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another. To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University."

- The Harris School’s commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available [here](#): “Consistent with the University of Chicago’s commitment to open discourse and free expression, Harris encourages members of the leadership, faculty, student body, and administrative staff to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial.” We foster thought-provoking discourse by encouraging community members not only to speak freely about all issues but also to listen carefully and respectfully to the views of others.

Academic honesty: From the University’s [policy](#): “It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas as one’s own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University’s disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another’s ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes ‘use’ should be addressed to the instructor.”

For further reading, please see the [University’s Student Manual](#). Potential violations of academic integrity will be referred to the Dean’s office for further review.

Use of Generative AI software: Students are only allowed to use AI tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT or Dall-E, on assignments in this course when advance permission is given by the instructor. Students must submit a written request with an explanation of how they will use a particular tool in their assignment. Students are not permitted to use these tools until permission is granted in writing. The instructor may encourage and give permission to students to use AI tools during class activities and in other contexts when it is considered in support of the course learning goals. Unless given permission to use those tools, each student is expected to complete each course assignment without substantive assistance from AI tools. If you are unclear if something is an AI tool, please check with me. Unauthorized use of AI tools for any purposes in this course will violate the University’s academic integrity policy. As above, potential violations of academic integrity will be referred to the Dean’s office for further review.

Self Care: If you find yourself overwhelmed or in need of additional mental health support, please do not hesitate to reach out to Student Counseling Services.

*Note: All SCS services are covered by the Student Life Fee, and there is no additional cost for students to access their services. See <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/student-counseling-service-spring-quarter-faq/>. Students seeking new services/resources can call 773.702.9800 during business hours (Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.) and ask to speak with a clinician. **Students needing urgent mental health care can speak with clinicians over the phone 24/7 by calling the SCS at 773.702.3625.***

Class Accommodations: You may need to quarantine as part of the University’s current precautions. The lecture portion of the class will be recorded to provide students with flexibility and can be watched later. For group meetings, you will have to coordinate with your team to Zoom in.

Recorded material policy: The University has developed specific policies and procedures regarding the use of video/audio recordings: these policies are explicitly described in the University's [student manual](#) as well as in the guidelines for instructors available [here](#). A couple of points I want to highlight here:

By attending course sessions, students acknowledge that:

1. *They will not: (i) record, share, or disseminate University of Chicago course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats; (ii) retain such materials after the end of the course; or (iii) use such materials for any purpose other than in connection with participation in the course.*
2. *They will not share links to University of Chicago course sessions with any persons not authorized to be in the course session. Sharing course materials with persons authorized to be in the relevant course is permitted. Syllabi, handouts, slides, and other documents may be shared at the discretion of the instructor.*
3. *Course recordings, content, and materials may be covered by copyrights held by the University, the instructor, or third parties. Any unauthorized use of such recordings or course materials may violate such copyrights.*
4. *Any violation of this policy will be referred to the Area Dean of Students*

COURSE STRUCTURE AND GRADES:

This course is different from a traditional academic course. Class meetings will utilize a combination of seminar format with lively classroom discussion, time for teamwork and other meetings, and hands-on learning activities in place of traditional, one-way lectures. Grades are based on attendance, participation, and a set of comprehensive client deliverables as described below.

The nature of a Policy Labs “experiential learning” course requires attention to some specific issues not always present in more traditional academic coursework. Some helpful hints:

- **Flexibility, courtesy and respect are important.** Working on a real project with a client organization is generally not as smooth or as structured as working on a hypothetical assignment in a class, and generally involves some unpredictability and uncertainty. Expect the unexpected, be flexible, and be courteous and respectful to your teammates, to your client and to accommodating the client’s needs.

With regard to courtesy and respect, this will be included as part of your participation grade. See below.

- **Expect imperfect data.** A client will rarely have all of the data needed for a project. Expect to work with imperfect data and expect challenges associated with an imperfect data set. This is one of the realities that this course is designed to help you understand more fully, especially as policy makers you will often have to make decisions with imperfect or incomplete data. Faculty advisors and professional advisors are here to help you work with what you have and/or direct you to other sources as needed.
- **Confidentiality is important.** In your work for this class, you will interact with confidential information, including not only confidential data provided by clients but also insights gleaned from that data and from client meetings. Clients trust us to help them solve difficult

problems, and they trust that we will not divulge what we learn in ways that could be detrimental to them. Students are expected to keep all data and materials shared by the client confidential, as well as to keep the content of conversations with clients in confidence. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Grading:

Individual

- Participation = 15% (see description above)
- Data analysis assignment = 15%
- Peer Evaluations = 10%

Group

- Group process (client meeting agenda, workplan, policy memo draft): 10%
- Stakeholder interview assignment: 10%
- Final presentation and memo: 40%

Further assignment details will be available on Canvas.

Late assignment policy: Unless arrangements are made in advance, any assignment that is late will receive 10% penalty for each 24-period late.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND MILESTONES

Note: course schedule subject to change. Any changes to the below schedule will be communicated via Canvas.

Week 1

In class: Introductions; Review of syllabus; Review of projects; Confidentiality pledge

Week 2

Due (by class time): CITI training; Project background reading

In class: Lecture from Nick DiRago, title TBD; Review agenda template; Work on Project Plan and/or Stakeholder interview assignment

Due: Draft Project Plan; Agendas for first client meeting

Week 3

In class: Meet with client to discuss Project Scope (First hour); Reflections and Adjust Draft Project Plan (remaining time)

Due: Revised Project Plan, Part 1 of Stakeholder Interview Assignment

Week 4:

In class: Q&A with Harris policy lab alum Emily Perish, MPP; Lecture on qualitative and survey methods and ethics in human subjects research

Due: Individual data assignment

Week 5:

In class: Prepare for midpoint meetings

Due: Midpoint meeting agenda and slides

Week 6:

In class (Zoom only): Hold mid-point meeting with client to discuss progress; Lecture on writing a policy memo with Leah Gjertson, Chapin Hall

Due: Part 2 of Stakeholder Interview Assignment

Week 7

In class: In-depth work based on mid-point meetings

Due: Draft policy memo

Week 8

In class: In-depth work on projects

Due: Meet with faculty advisor and professional advisor

Week 9

In class: Practice presentations

Due: Final presentation slides

Finals week

Monday, December 4th 12:00-1:30p: Final presentations in H300 conference room, Billings Hospital, 860 E. 59th street, Section of Hospital Medicine (W300 corridor)

Due by December 5th at 5pm central: Final presentation; policy memo and supplemental materials; peer evaluations