

PPHA 39404/PPBL 29404/CHST 29404: Practicum on Inequality, Household Finance, and Tax Policy

Winter Quarter, 2024

Instructor: Damon Jones

Meeting Time:

Tuesdays, 5:00p-7:50p

Special Make-up Session: Thursday, 1/4, 5:00p-7:50p

Location: Keller Center 0001

Office Hours: Keller Center, 2082, Wednesdays, 4:00p-5:00p (make appointment [here](#))

Teaching Assistants: Kylie Nethers, Alexis Pearson, Morgana Warner-Evans

Office Hours: TBD

Service Requirement: One 3-4 hour tax preparation shift per week, for 6 weeks

Course Objective: The first component of this course will feature interactive lectures on inequality in the US, with respect to class, gender, and race, and how these interact with US tax policy. We will focus on income transfers to low-income households such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. We will also review current policy topics in Household Finance, the study of how households save, borrow, and/or use insurance to overcome unexpected changes in household income. In addition, we will discuss the process of filing tax returns, the prevalence of income tax refunds, and the various industries, both non-profit and for-profit, that have arisen around this phenomenon.

Next, students will go into the field, and work as volunteer tax preparers for a local, Chicago non-profit, Ladder Up. Students will be trained as tax preparers (which requires completing a training course), learn how these services are delivered, and will also learn about the various social goals and public benefits that are often coupled with this process. Tax season begins in late January, and the students will volunteer weekly for about 6 weeks, until the end of the quarter. Students are encouraged, though not required, to continue to volunteer until the end of the tax season, April 15th.

Students will have weekly readings, contribute to online discussions in advance of class, and will participate in in-class discussions related to the material. Students will also produce a final project as a part of a group project.

Course Requirements and Grading: Grades will be based on class participation, homework assignments, a group assignment, and volunteer tax preparation requirements.

1. Tax Preparation Volunteer training (10%)

2. Weekly volunteer shifts with Ladder Up (40%)
3. Weekly reading/discussion post (16%)
4. Lectures and discussion participation (5%)
5. Three (3) writing assignments (9%)
6. Final group project (20%)

Schedule: Lecture will meet on Tuesdays from 5:00pm – 7:50pm. Volunteer tax schedules will differ across student groups. **We will have one make-up lecture on Thursday evening, January 4th, from 5p to 7:50p.**

Homework: Homework will completing assigned readings and reflecting on the service-learning experience; three longer writing assignments; and a final group project. Work must be handed in by the deadline. For every six (6) hours beyond the deadline, you will lose 5% of your grade, receiving zero (0%) percent once 24 hours have passed. **If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact the instructor to work something out.**

Course Website: The course website will be posted on Canvas (course.uchicago.edu). Log in using your CNET ID.

Schedule of Topics

- **Week 1:** Introduction; Guaranteed Income, Labor Supply, Child Tax Credit, EITC
- **Week 2:** Taxes, Refundable Credits, Withholding, and Household Finance
- **Week 3:** Housing, Evictions, Landlords and Renters, Regulations, Land Value Taxation
- **Week 4:** Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility
- **Week 5:** Racial Equity, Structural Racism, System Inequality, Stratification Economics
- **Week 6:** Financial Markets, Poverty, and Inequality
- **Week 7:** Gender Inequality
- **Week 8:** Tax Policy III
- **Week 9:** Comprehensive Tax Reform

Accessibility:

This is a classroom committed to access. If there are any changes that can be implemented to facilitate your greater participation, don't hesitate to contact me so that we can make arrangements.

If you require any accommodations for this course, as soon as possible please provide the instructor with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by

the Student Disability Services office) so that you may discuss with him/her how your accommodations may be implemented in this course.

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University's programs or services, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. To receive reasonable accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Disability Services.

Please contact the office at (773) 702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186 or gmoorehead@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. Student Disability Services is located at 5501 S. Ellis Ave.

Title IX Resources and Mandated Reporting¹

As a faculty member, I am considered an "Individual with Title IX Reporting Responsibilities." This means that if you disclose to me instances of sexual assault, sexual harassment, other sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator of the University. This person's job is to advise members of our community on their options regarding remaining anonymous, confidentiality, the University's process for investigating complaints of sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, and the University's disciplinary process.

If you wish to contact the Title IX Coordinator directly about any of these matters, you can do so by emailing bcollier@uchicago.edu, by calling 773.702.5671, or by writing to Bridget Collier, Office of the Provost, The University of Chicago, 5525 S. Ellis Ave., Room 171, Chicago, IL 60637.

If you need someone to talk to who does *not* have an obligation to report sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking to the Title IX Coordinators, you can reach out to these "Confidential Resources:"

- Sexual Assault Dean on Call (SADoC)
773.834.HELP
- Student Health Service
773.702.4156
- Student Counseling Service
773.702.9800

¹ Language adapted from the syllabus of Dr. Eve L. Ewing.

- Members of the Clergy
(See spirit.uchicago.edu for more information.)