

PPHA 35700 Economics of Education Policy

Time: M,W, 9:00 – 10:20 am

Location: Keller 0007

Units: 100

Instructor Information:

- Name: Dr. Derek Rury (He/Him/His)
- Email: rury@uchicago.edu
- Office: Keller 3043
- Office hours: M,W 11:30 am – 12:30 pm or by appointment

Teaching Assistant

- Name: Nicolas D'Azevedo
- Email: ndazavedo@uchicago.edu
- Office hours: M 5:00 – 6:00 pm via zoom
- Zoom: [https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/93076157823?pwd=U0RjYUpHZFVhRDBhaXJWcjlxG5UT09Links to an external site.](https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/93076157823?pwd=U0RjYUpHZFVhRDBhaXJWcjlxG5UT09Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.)

Textbooks (optional)

- Angrist, Josh and Pischke, Jorn-Steffen. *Mastering Metrics*, Princeton University Press (2015)
- Lovenheim, Michael and Turner, Sarah. *Economics of Education*, Worth Publishers (2018)

Course Description: PPHA 35700 (Economics of Education Policy) is an upper division class covering topics in education policy. The course will address which education policies work and which do not. We will also focus on how these policies are evaluated. The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with the methods and research frontier in the economics of education, with an emphasis on policies designed to improve students' outcomes. We will explore and discuss a wide range of educational policy issues, including the returns to schooling, student incentives, teacher labor markets,

school choice, accountability, school funding, and higher education. Throughout the course, we will pay close attention to the methods employed to evaluate the effects of education policies.

Course Objectives: At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Manipulate and solve simple economic models that address topics in education, such as the demand for education as well as the labor market outcomes of students and teachers.
- Identify and critique quantitative methods to study education policies in the U.S. with an emphasis on causal methods
- Find appropriate data sources used in analyzing education policy, and perform simple statistical analysis to study education topics
- Analyze how both economic theory and empirical research support or discredit particular arguments for current education policies

Assignments:

- **Problem set (Due 4/3):** This assignment will ask students to solve mathematical models used to study student decision-making, returns to education and the production of education
- **Policy brief (Due 4/12):** Students will write a 3-5 page report on one of three education policy topics. Instructions and guidance for the policy brief can be found on the canvas website.
 - Universal Pre-k
 - Performance pay for teachers
 - Student loan forgiveness
- **Data Assignment (Due 4/24):** Students will be asked to download data sets, and perform analyses that highlight important empirical issues we will cover that arise when studying the effect of education policies.

- **Discussion (Scheduled for 5/3):** Students will form teams and debate the merits and downsides of student loan forgiveness that was enacted in 2022.
- **Group Presentation (Scheduled for week of 5/15-5/17):** Students will form pairs and select a paper to present to the class. Presentations will be about 15 minutes.
- **Final Exam (Scheduled for 5/22):** Written final exam

Grading: Students' overall score will be calculated by the following weights:

- Problem Set – 15%
- Policy Brief – 15%
- Data Assignment – 15%
- Debate Score - 10%
- Group Presentation – 20%
- Final Assessment – 25%

Podcasts: As part of the course, students will be required to listen to 5 different podcasts. Information on podcasts can be found in the modules section.

Extra Credit: A single extra credit assignment will be offered during the course. The professor will determine when and in what form this assignment will be offered. It will be worth up to an additional 5 percent of a student's course grade.

Policy on collaboration:

- **Problem set and Data Assignment:** Students are encouraged to work together on the problem set and data assignment, but not in groups larger than four. Students must record the names of the other students with whom they worked.

- **Policy brief:**Students may consult with other students, for brainstorming and feedback, but students are not allowed to collaborate in the actual writing of the policy brief.
- **Debate and Group Presentations:**Students are expected to work with their assigned groups for both the debate and group presentations
- **Final Exam:**Collaboration is not allowed in final assessment

Class Policies and Information

Course Format: Class meetings will consist of lecture based on slides as well as group discussion. There will be at least one group discussion each class meeting, in which students work in groups to answer a question posed to the class or respond to a prompt. Slides will be posted to Canvas website once all content from the slide has been covered. Readings that we discuss in class must be completed before class meets to discuss them. Reading due dates will be updated as we progress.

Attendance: Attendance is not required and will not be recorded. As the main content of the course will be through slides and discussion in class, however, attendance is highly recommended.

Zoom attendance: Students are encouraged to attend in-person, but in circumstances when that is not possible, students will be able to attend via zoom. **Students should email the professor if they plan to attend any class via zoom.**

Zoom link:

<https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/5070138220?pwd=eGo4SThuUGR4YmN2dE5xWW1hUTRKUT09>
Links to an external site.

Late Assignments: Students can turn in late assignments **one day after the due date.** If students do this, the maximum number of points that will be available for that assignment will be **reduced by 25%.** Assignments will not be accepted two days after the assignment is due. This policy will be amended to with the university's guidelines on [religious accommodations](#).

Turning in Assignments: The problem set must be turned in in class on 4/19. Late assignments can be left in my mailbox the following day (see late assignments policy above). Problem sets not turned in during class but turned in later that day will be considered late and be subject to the late assignment policy. The policy brief and data assignments must be turned in online on Canvas.

Diversity and Inclusion

In this course, we will strive to uphold the norms and expectations of the University of Chicago and the Harris School. 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](#): "The Harris School of Public Policy welcomes and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives as part of our commitment to building an inclusive community. *Fostering an environment that encourages rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the involvement and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions.* As a leading public policy school, Harris holds diversity as a core value. That includes not only diversity of opinion, but diversity along a broad spectrum of factors, including race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, religion, socio-economic background, and social or political belief. Recognizing the value of diversity and inclusion is essential to combating discrimination, addressing disparities, and cultivating ethical and clear-eyed policy leadership."

Academic Integrity

Please note that an important element of academic integrity is fully and correctly attributing any materials taken from the work of others. Feel free to consult with me before completing assignments if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others. More generally, please familiarize yourself with the [University's policy](#) on academic honesty, which applies to this course. Of course, I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise regarding this matter, I will forward all related materials to the College for further review and action.

Acting with academic integrity means, in brief, not submitting the statements, work, or ideas of others as one's own. Students are expected to comply with university regulations regarding honest work. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak with me before the assignment is due. Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a penalty befitting the violation, up to and including failing the course and further University sanctions. For more information, consult the student manual.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you require any accommodations for this course, please bring a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) to me as soon as possible so that we may discuss how your accommodations may be implemented. 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 disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. Student Disability Services is located at 5501 S. Ellis Avenue.

University policies: You can find more information on the university's policies [here](#).

Calendar

Week

Monday

Wednesday

Week 1	3/20 Why Study Education Policy?	3/22 Human Capital Model
Week 2	3/27 Signaling Model	3/29 Returns to Education
Week 3	4/3 Education Production Function (Problem Set Due)	4/5 School Finance
Week 4	4/10 School Choice	4/12 Intro to causal inference (Policy Brief Due)
Week 5	4/17 Pre-K/early childhood	4/19 K-12
Week 6	4/24 K-12 (Data Assignment Due)	4/26 Higher ed
Week 7	5/1 Higher ed	5/3 Debate
Week 8	5/8 Graduate School	5/10 Behavioral Economics in Education
Week 9	5/15 Presentations	5/17 Presentations
Week 10	5/22 Final Exam (9:00 – 10:20 am)	