

**Harris School of Public Policy/University of Chicago
Policy Lab in Labor Market Regulation
PPHA 60000-4**

Fall 2024 – Thursdays, 3:30 – 6:20 pm, Keller 0010

WEEK 1: WE MEET AT 5:00 PM ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 in KELLER 1022

Faculty Advisor:

Paula R. Worthington

pworthington@uchicago.edu

Course Description & Client

This Policy Lab has one client, the Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship at the University of Chicago Law School (the IJ Clinic). The IJ Clinic (like the Policy Lab) engages university students in vital, real-world work – advocating for and assisting low-income entrepreneurs in Chicago. In the last few years, the IJ Clinic has focused on occupational licensing – the requirement that people need permission from the state to enter an occupation. It helped create a bill to investigate licensing in Illinois and supported the work of Illinois’s Comprehensive Licensing Information to Minimize Barriers (CLIMB) Task Force. The IJ Clinic is part of the Institute for Justice (IJ), a nationwide nonprofit, public interest law firm with a mission to push back against government abuses and protect Americans' rights to shape their own lives and chase their own dreams. IJ has worked on licensing issues for many years, producing related reports, analysis, litigation support, and model legislation. *This Lab is an approved elective for the Markets and Regulation Specialization.* Three distinct projects and teams will be part of this Lab; see the course Canvas site for more details:

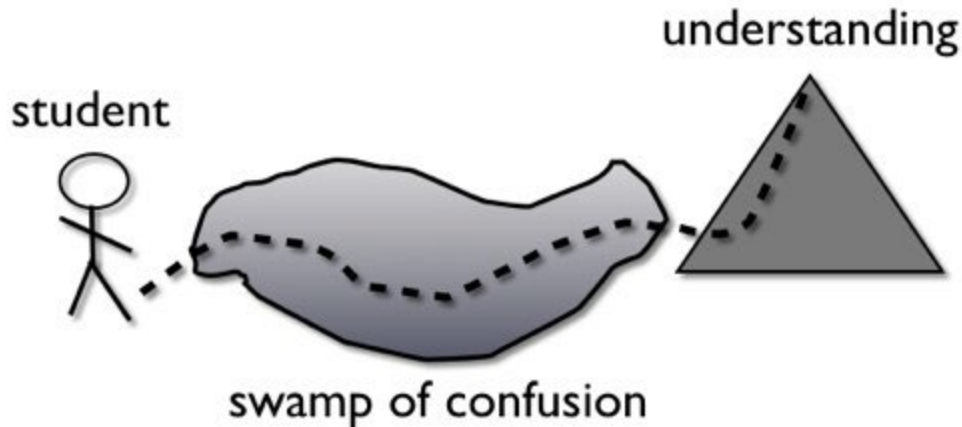
- Conducting a Sunset Review of Illinois’s Cosmetology Act
- Assessing the Costs and Value of Training and Educational Requirements
- Increasing Opportunities for Justice-System Involved Individuals

Teams will conduct research and analysis, draw conclusions, develop recommendations, and present final deliverables to client leadership at the conclusion of the quarter. Client meetings will occur throughout the quarter as needed.

Learning Objectives

Before itemizing any specifics, it is worth emphasizing how this class differs from many others at Harris. In a nutshell, in the Harris Policy Labs program we both fear and embrace the idea that the “path of learning goes through the swamp of confusion.”¹

¹ Rhett Allain, “Learning Goes through The Land of Confusion,” *Wired*, February 3, 2010, <https://www.wired.com/2010/02/learning-goes-through-the-land-of-confusion/>.



(Image from Allain, Rhett. "Learning Goes through The Land of Confusion." Wired, February 3, 2010. [https://www.wired.com/2010/02/learning-goes-through-the-land-of-confusion/.](https://www.wired.com/2010/02/learning-goes-through-the-land-of-confusion/))

In other words, the Policy Labs experience can be messy and even scary! There are no problem sets or exams, and there are few clear-cut and specific "problems" to solve. In that sense, the course is intended to provide a taste of real-world policy analysis and policymaking, albeit with the structure of a course, advisors, and other supports.

So! We intend that by the end of this course, students will:

- Learn or enhance capacity to work with incomplete data, frustrating clients, conflicting priorities, and other ambiguities
- Learn or enhance capacity to manage a complex project from inception to completion
- Develop or enhance teamwork skills
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the assigned policy area by researching, analyzing, and synthesizing data related to the topic, drawing conclusions from the analysis, and developing concrete policy recommendations
- Collaborate extensively with fellow students, faculty advisors, and clients to develop and produce deliverables that provide useful information to the client and meet the client's needs
- Develop or enhance oral and writing skills by delivering final analysis and recommendations to the client organization in the form of verbal and written deliverables

Prerequisites

Second-year graduate students and one-year masters students (not in their first quarter) are eligible to enroll.

Class Meetings and Weekly Time Commitment

Formal class meetings are weekly on Thursday afternoons. ***In week 1, we will meet on Tuesday, October 1, from 5:00 to 7:20 pm in Keller 1022, and we will NOT meet at all on Thursday October 3.*** Weekly sessions will be devoted to team work on your project as well as occasional lectures or small

group activities. In addition, you should plan to spend 7-10 hours per week outside of class on your project (this includes team meetings, client meetings, etc.).

Course Structure and Expectations

As discussed above, this course is structured differently than a traditional academic course. Class meetings will utilize a combination of seminar format with discussion, time for teamwork and other meetings, and hands-on learning activities in place of traditional, one-way lecture. Policy Labs are “experiential learning” courses, and we have found that successful experiences for students, advisors, and clients are built on several key elements:

- **Professionalism is essential.** Bring your “A-Game” to class and all aspects of your project. Take individual responsibility for the quality of the work you do in and out of class.
- **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. Expect the unexpected, be flexible, and be courteous and respectful to your teammates, to your client and to accommodating the client’s needs.
- **Expect imperfect and incomplete data—and lack of clarity about your project!** A client will rarely have all of the data needed for a project, and what data are available may be in a terrible format, incomplete, etc. Expect to work with imperfect data, and expect challenges associated with its use. Clients may say one thing in week 2 and another in week 6, complicating your team’s efforts. Frustrating! But remember, your advisors are here to help you work with what you have and/or direct you to other sources as needed, and despite these challenges, we set and maintain high quality standards for the work produced and shared with clients.
- **Confidentiality is critical.** 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 trust that we will not divulge what we learn in ways that could be detrimental to them. Students are required to keep all data and materials shared by the client confidential, as well as to keep the content of conversations with clients in confidence. All students are required to sign a confidentiality pledge at the start of the quarter. Violation of the pledge may result in academic penalties.

Course Materials

Background materials and client materials will be posted to Canvas. Students may also choose to store and share their work using other platforms as well (Box, Google Drive, etc.).

I will use the Canvas site intensively, and students are responsible for any and all material there—including feedback provided on submitted work. The site’s navigation tabs on the left-hand-side panel will help you find what you need; key tabs include:

- Syllabus: links to this document, plus links to project team pages
- Modules
 - Week 00: General resources for all students and teams
 - Weeks 01 to 09: weekly plans and schedules
- Assignments, by category, with assignment weights

Teaching and Learning Environment and Expectations

The Harris School prioritizes developing and supporting the professional skills of its students.

- Students are expected to attend class each week at the Keller Center. Students with an unexcused absence will receive a material “haircut” on the attendance and professionalism component of their grade.
- Because of the interactive nature of this class, I will not record class sessions, nor will I use contemporaneous Zoom sessions.
- I encourage the use of email and try to respond in a timely fashion. Please do not use the Inbox/Messaging feature of Canvas to communicate with me. I also do not text, tweet, or Facebook message regarding course matters, and I don’t even use Slack! *So please check your UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO email and CANVAS regularly.*
- I will schedule office hours as needed throughout the term and post the details to Canvas.

That said, of course, public health and/or personal health circumstances may evolve in ways forcing changes to these plans. Potentially relevant university policies and resources include:

- COVID guidance: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/medical-services/covid-19/>
- “Learning Remotely” resources: <https://learningremotely.uchicago.edu/>

Deliverables and Grading

In some sense, the final work product delivered to the client is the “only” thing that matters. However, these Labs are intended to develop your emerging skills—analytical, communications, interpersonal, and overall professional skills. This means the *process* matters along with the *product*. Furthermore, in this course, you will be evaluated at both the individual and group (team) level. Professor Worthington will assign course letter grades after consultation with our client **and your fellow teammates**, and these grades will reflect your quarter-long effort, commitment, and engagement. Products and processes will be judged on quality and timeliness. More specifically, your course grade will be based on the components listed below:

- 15%: Attendance, participation, and professionalism
 - This entails being prepared, on-time, professional, and actively engaged throughout the quarter.
 - For example, students are expected to contribute to positive team dynamics and interactions, receiving and providing feedback with respect throughout the term.
- 15%: “Process” deliverables, such as:

- Team contract
- Preparing for initial client meeting
- Team work plan and execution
- Preparing for mid-quarter client meeting
- Reflections on team contract and work plan
- 20%: “Milestone” deliverables, such as:
 - Data assignment
 - Qualitative interview
 - Drafts of slides
 - Drafts of policy brief
- 50% “Final” deliverables such as
 - Policy brief or memo, which likely includes a short “executive summary” as well as technical appendices
 - Presentation
- In some cases, additional materials (computer programs, Excel files, etc.)

A few other comments about grades:

- Your course grade will reflect both your individual effort and accomplishments as well as those of your team. Peer evaluations *will* be a factor in determination of your course grade.
- In general, I do not use rigid numeric scales for assigning letter grades. Instead, I “scale” each item to have a max score of 100 and then compute your numeric course score as the weighted average of those scores (with the assignment weights as specified above). With those numeric scores in hand, I consider the distribution of scores and aim to assign letter grades to scores in a manner no less generous than the “standard” Harris School grade distribution:
 - A (1/8)
 - A- (1/4)
 - B+ (1/4)
 - B (1/4)
 - B- or lower (1/8)
- Students sometimes wish to request review and regrading of their returned work. If you wish to request reconsideration of your work, please follow these guidelines:
 - All requests must be submitted by email to me, with appropriate files and documentation, along with an explanation of why your work should be reconsidered.
 - All regrade requests should be submitted within one week of having the work returned to you.

Harris School and University of Chicago Resources

- Harris School supports are described here: <https://harris.uchicago.edu/student-life/dean-of-students-office/academic-support-programs>
- From the home page of the University’s [Learning Remotely](https://learningremotely.uchicago.edu/) site, links to learning and health and well-being resources are provided: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/> and <https://learningremotely.uchicago.edu/learning-resources/> .

- Students needing urgent mental health care can speak with clinicians over the phone 24/7 by calling (773) 702-3625.

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

No surprises here, but all University and Harris School policies apply to this course. The best source of information is from the Harris School's Dean of Students Office: <https://harris.uchicago.edu/student-life/dean-of-students-office>. That page includes links to [Harris School policies](#), [University Academic Policies](#), and [University General Policies](#). Some specific items to highlight:

Academic Integrity

All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic Integrity and honesty. Among other things, this means that students shall not represent another's work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage.

- It is worth explicitly stating the University's approach: "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."
- Any students suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Harris Dean of Students (Kate Shannon Biddle) for investigation and adjudication. The disciplinary process can result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University. In addition to those penalties, I reserve the right to assign a grade of "F" for any assignment for which a student is found to have committed academic dishonesty; in a subset of such cases, a student may also receive a grade of "F" for the course, earning zero credit.

Artificial Intelligence

I have prepared a separate document with policies regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools. But in a nutshell, the policy requires students to:

- Comply with existing University and Harris School policies, including those pertaining to academic integrity
- Review and confirm the both the accuracy and the ownership of AI-generated content
- Disclose the use of any and all AI-generated content
- Refrain from sharing any confidential or sensitive data or information with publicly available generative AI tools
- Understand that compliance is at the individual as well as team level
- Communicate with clients to ensure their policies and expectations are met