**PPHA 35720: Higher Education Policy**

**Spring 2025**

*Time***:** M,W 10:30 – 11:50 am
*Location***:** Keller 0021
*Units***:** 100

*Instructor Information*

- Name: Dr. Derek Rury (He/Him/His)
- Email: rury@uchicago.edu
- Office: Keller TBD
- Office hours: TBD

*Teaching Assistant*

- Name: TBD
- Email: **TBD**
- Office hours: TBD
- Zoom: TBD

*Cross listings*

- EDSO 35720
- EDSO 28030
- PBPL 28030

*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:* This course explores significant policy challenges in higher education, both in the United States and internationally. Key topics include models of individual educational investment decisions, justifications for government intervention in higher education markets, the long-term social and economic impacts of higher education, and the behavior of higher education institutions. Students will apply economic models and assess empirical research to examine contemporary policy debates such as free community college, financial aid and student loans, affirmative action, accountability in higher education, and student debt relief. The course has two main objectives: (1) to provide students with a strong understanding of the higher education landscape and its associated policies and (2) to equip them with analytical tools and theoretical frameworks for evaluating higher education policy. Coursework includes substantial reading, writing, in-class discussions, and presentations, all aimed at strengthening students' oral and written communication skills on these issues.

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

- Manipulate and solve simple economic models that address topics in higher education, such as the demand for education as well as the labor market outcomes of college graduates.
- Identify and critique quantitative methods to study higher education policies in the U.S. with an emphasis on causal methods.
- Outline the pros and cons of different education policies in higher education, both theoretically and empirically.
- Discuss with peers how both economic theory and empirical research support or discredit particular arguments for current policies in higher education.

*Assignments and Grades:*

- **Participation (20%):** Students are expected to attend class and contribute to an environment of learning and engagement. Alongside points for attendance, students will be evaluated by how much the contribute to participating in discussion and within teams.
- **Policy brief (20%):** Students will write a 3-5 page report on an education policy topic. Instructions and guidance for the policy brief can be found on the canvas website.

- **Data Assignment (20%):** Students will be asked to download data sets and perform analyses. Students will engage with empirical issues that arise when studying the effect of education policies.

- **Debate (20%):** Students will form teams and debate a controversial topic in higher education policy. Students will be randomly assigned to be either pro or against a particular position and work together as a team to win the debate

- **Policy Presentation (20%):** Students will form groups and present a policy solution a problem in higher education. The presentation should directly state the problem, how it affects important outcomes and how it could be changed using arguments we cover in the class.

*Grading:* The grading distribution will follow the following scale:

- A: 92-100
- A-: 90-91
- B+: 88-99
- B: 82-87
- B-: 80-81
- C+: 78-79
- C: 72-77

- C-: 70-71
- D+: 68-69
- D: 62-67
- D-: 60-61
- F: < 60

*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 3 percent of a student's course grade.

*Policy on collaboration:*

- **Policy briefs and Data Assignment:** 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 Policy Presentations:** Students are expected to work with their assigned groups for both the debate and group presentations

*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 the day after class. Readings that we discuss in class must be completed before class meets to discuss them.

In this course, we emphasize interactive learning, where student engagement is central to shaping the educational experience. Rather than relying on traditional lectures, we foster open discussions that encourage active participation, allowing students to contribute their thoughts and questions. This approach not only cultivates critical thinking but also deepens understanding of the material. By creating a collaborative learning environment, we aim to enhance academic skills and foster a strong sense of community among students.

*Attendance:* Attendance is required and will comprise part of your participation grade. Attendance will be recorded each class via a sign-in sheet. Students are also encouraged to attend class and engage with course material and active learning opportunities as these provide valuable benefits to the class.

*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:** TBD

*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. Assignments must be submitted via the course website on canvas. This policy will be amended to with the university's guidelines on religious accommodations.

*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.

*The Use of Artificial Intelligence in This Class\**

In the college classroom, the incorporation of AI tools has become a valuable resource, providing students with innovative learning experiences. While the environment is lenient in embracing AI technologies to enhance educational outcomes, there is a collective emphasis on fostering responsible usage. Students are encouraged to leverage AI for research, data analysis, and writing assignments, recognizing its potential to streamline tasks. However, a cautious approach is underscored, urging students to critically assess the information generated by AI algorithms and to remain vigilant about potential biases (e.g. factually incorrect statements or references). The overarching goal is to empower students to harness the benefits of AI while instilling a mindful awareness of its limitations and ethical considerations, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for learning rather than a substitute for critical thinking.

*This section was generated using AI tools

*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](here).

*Calendar*

| Week | Monday | Wednesday |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | 3/24 | 3/26 |
| Week 2 | 3/31 | 4/2 |
| Week 3 | 4/7 **(Policy Brief due)** | 4/9 |
| Week 4 | 4/14 | 4/16 |
| Week 5 | 4/21 | 4/23 **(Data Assignment due)** |
| Week 6 | 4/28 | 4/30 |
| Week 7 | 5/5 | 5/7 **(Debate)** |
| Week 8 | 5/12 | 5/14 |
| Week 9 | 5/19 **Policy Presentations** | 5/21 **Policy Presentations** |
| Week 10 | **Finals** | **Finals** |