

**PPHA 60000: Policy Lab**  
**SYLLABUS**

**Faculty Advisor:** Erin Kelley  
Email: [erinmkelley@uchicago.edu](mailto:erinmkelley@uchicago.edu)  
Office Hours: Monday, 12:00pm – 2:00pm

*Erin is an Assistant Professor at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, and a consultant with the Development Impact Department at the World Bank. In her research, she studies labor markets (firm growth, job-search), social protection programs, and technology adoption using randomized field experiments. Her ongoing work includes projects in Bangladesh, Kenya, and India.*

**Professional Advisor:** Cristian Bancayan Navarro  
Email: [cbancayan@uchicago.edu](mailto:cbancayan@uchicago.edu)  
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday: 5-7pm

*Cristian Bancayan is a Research Coordinator at the Behavioral Insights and Parenting (BIP) Lab at the University of Chicago, where he supports large-scale data collection and research on early childhood development. He has prior experience at the BIP Lab, in the Peruvian public sector leading monitoring and evaluation for social protection programs, and at IDinsight in Zambia evaluating a national cash transfer program. Cristian holds a Master of Public Policy from the University of Chicago and a BA in Economics from the National University of San Marcos in Peru.*

**Course Description and Content:**

- The goal of this course is to introduce students to 1) the process of developing policy-relevant research questions; 2) the iterative process that is research; 3) the process of producing key policy outputs.
- Each class will start with a 45-minute lecture on how to effectively write a specific section of a policy memo, including the introduction, literature review, descriptive statistics, main analysis, heterogeneity analysis, and conclusion. This lecture will provide students with the skills needed to create these types of research outputs in the future. After the lecture, the faculty and professional advisor will meet with each group for 30 minutes. Groups will use any remaining time to work as a team (KELLER 1010 has been reserved for break-out sessions)

The course will be structured as follows (subject to adjustments):

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Content</u></b>
Week 1	Lecture 1: Introduction to research
Week 2	Lecture 2: Outlining your report <b>Initial client meetings</b>
Week 3	Lecture 3: Organizing data
Week 4	Lecture 4: Summarizing data
Week 5	Lecture 5: Research design



Week 6	Lecture 6: Design considerations (1)
Week 7	Lecture 7: Design considerations (2)
Week 8	Lecture 8: Example Policy Brief
Week 9	No Lecture – Mock Presentations

### **Prerequisites:**

- Proficiency in R is mandatory. Students are expected to know how to work with data. The professional advisor is available to provide assistance, but they are not responsible for teaching basic coding skills.
- Proficiency in Stats is mandatory. Students are expected to be familiar with causal inference and experimental designs.

### **Logistics:**

- Course website: This course uses Canvas for all materials.
- Office hours: We will hold in-person office hours, at the time above. We recommend using these sessions to ask further questions about how to generate the outputs relevant to your project. If you are interested in joining for office hours, please sign up for 20 minute slots ([found here](#)). Please be respectful of your classmates when signing up for office hours. Any office hour sign-ups more than 2 weeks in advance without prior permission will be deleted.
- Group work: Students will work in groups of 6. While managing team dynamics can be challenging, the best results come from a well-functioning team where everyone contributes equally. Students are expected to collaborate and ensure that each member plays an active role. They should use this opportunity to learn from one another, recognizing that not everyone excels at every task. Discussing strengths and identifying skills that need development is encouraged. By doing so, students can find complementary roles and support each other's growth.

### **Assignments and grading:**

Grades will be determined by attendance, participation, group assessments, assignments, a final presentation, and a final policy memo.

- Attendance will count for 5%
- Participation will count for 20%
- Peer Evaluations will count for 15%
- Assignments will count for 20%
- Final presentation will count for 20%
- Final policy brief will count for 20%

Unless arrangements are made in advance, any assignment that is late will receive 10% penalty for each day late



**Attendance:** You are expected to attend lecture in person as per Harris' official [attendance policy](#). We will take attendance using a sign-in sheet which will be circulated at the beginning of class. Do not email us if you are unable to attend class. The only exception to this policy is for absences that are explicitly cleared in writing through the Dean of Students' office. TA session attendance is not mandatory, and we will not take attendance during TA sessions, but we strongly recommend that you attend.

**Participation:** Experiential learning requires active participation from all students. Each group will present the work completed in the previous week to the faculty advisor, and every team member is expected to clearly explain their individual contributions to advancing the group's work during that period.

**Peer evaluations:** At the end of the quarter, each team member will be asked to provide feedback on the work completed by the other members of their group.

**Assignments:** Each assignment contributes to a section of your final output, such as the literature review, descriptive statistics, main regression, heterogeneity analysis, draft presentation, and draft memo. These assignments help you maintain a rigorous timeline to deliver the best possible results to the client. They also enable the faculty and professional advisor to provide regular feedback, making it easier to prepare your final policy memo and presentation. Assignments must be typed and submitted electronically. All coding in assignments must be done in R.

**Final Presentation:** Your final presentation should follow the same structure as the policy memo. It should not exceed 30 minutes. It should clearly communicate the results to the client, encouraging them to read the memo in detail to gain a deeper understanding of the main findings.

**Final Policy Memo:** The policy memo represents your final deliverable to the client. It should not exceed 15 pages. We want you to present a clear narrative to the client about the program's impact you are analyzing.

### **Timeline of deliverables:**

Assignment	Date
Assignment 1	Due Monday March 30 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 2	Due Monday April 6 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 3	Due Monday April 13 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 4	Due Monday April 20 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 5	Due Monday April 27 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 6	Due Monday May 4 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 7	Due Monday May 11 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Assignment 8	Due Monday May 18 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Final Presentation	Due Monday June 1st -5 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm
Final Policy Brief	Due Monday June 1st -5 <sup>th</sup> 12:30pm

### **Additional policies:**

- **Email:** We will try to respond to emails within 48 hours (Monday to Friday). If you don't hear back within that time, please resend your email. To ensure we see your message, include '[PPHA



64000]' in the subject line. If your question requires a lengthy response, we will ask you to come to office hours or schedule an appointment to discuss it in person. We encourage you to attend office hours rather than rely on email for questions pertaining to the class.

- Statistical software: Data work for this class will be done in R. We recommend that you use RStudio in conjunction with the tidyverse.
- Confidentiality: Students are expected to keep all data and materials shared by the client strictly confidential, as well as to keep the content of conversations with clients in confidence.
- Generative AI: While AI tools offer valuable assistance in research and idea generation, it is imperative to not let these tools become substitutes for your intellectual engagement with the material. You are permitted to use AI tools as supplementary aids. These can help refine your ideas, finding research material, and editing language to help with translation, spelling, grammar, and improving sentence flow. No more than 20% of any paragraph or assignment may be generated using AI tools. Relying on these tools beyond this violates the principles of academic integrity described above. When you use AI tools, you take full responsibility for the content they generate. You should review and edit any generated content to avoid inaccurate information and copyright infringement. All instances where AI tools are used must be acknowledged. When submitting an assignment in which you used an AI tool, please add a disclosure statement at the end of the assignment which:
  - Names the tool(s) used
  - Describe use (refining initial ideas, providing research insights, improving your writing, etc.)
  - Explains how you further modified the AI-generated content
  - Offers a brief reflection of how using the tool helped you learn.

*Example AI Disclosure: To write the text for this section of the syllabus, I prompted ChatGPT with the parameters of this course and asked it to generate ideas of what an AI policy should include. I supplemented this information by looking at sample policies from different universities and drafted guidelines to reflect what I believe is most applicable. I then asked ChatGPT to review the draft and identify ambiguities where I could be clearer in my instructions. Using ChatGPT helped me to recognize the importance of clearly defining what is acceptable to avoid unintended interpretations.*

### **Academic honesty:**

- The Harris School has a formal policy on academic honesty that you are expected to adhere to. Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) turning in someone else's work as your own, and turning in the same written text as someone else. This course has a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty. Any student found in violation of this academic honesty policy will receive an automatic F in the class. We will also refer all cases of cheating to the office of the Dean of Students. They may in turn impose further penalties as per the Harris School Disciplinary Procedures, including probation and expulsion. If you have any questions regarding what would or would not be considered academic dishonesty in this course, please do not hesitate to ask.

### **ADA 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.
  - For more information, visit <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

### **Diversity and Inclusion:**

- The Harris School embraces and respects the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff, recognizing that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving benefit from a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. Both the University and the Harris School have established principles and guidelines to ensure we remain a community where challenging topics are discussed with kindness and respect for everyone.
  - For more information on the University's policies, please visit <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/university-policies/>
  - For more information on Harris' policies, please visit <https://harris.uchicago.edu/about/diversity-inclusion/our-commitment>