

Public Policy Studies

Department Website: <http://pbpl.uchicago.edu>
 Program of Study

Public Policy Studies is a multidisciplinary major grounded in the social sciences, with substantial inputs from economics, sociology, political science, and law, among other disciplines. The major recognizes that public issues are not neatly contained within traditional disciplinary boundaries and that analysts possessing a broad range of social scientific understanding, quantitative expertise, and communication skills are well placed to contribute to improved public policies. Public Policy involves direct contact with policy problems, ensuring that academic speculations are well-informed and connected to real-world conditions.

The Public Policy Studies major strives to put analysis before advocacy, stressing that compelling policy analysis is a central component of effective advocacy. We aim to be open and helpful to students of all political persuasions and challenge students to rethink clichéd responses to policy problems. The program of study for the BA degree in Public Policy Studies is designed to introduce students to policy analysis and implementation, equip them to use quantitative and economic techniques and methods, train them in policy research, and give them a thorough grounding in one or more specific policy areas.

The program also encourages students to undertake an internship experience either during the academic year or during the summer. PBPL 29600 Internship: Public Policy offers academic course credit for students completing an approved, policy-oriented internship.

Students should contact the program administrator with questions about meeting requirements for the Public Policy Studies degree.

Program Requirements

The suggested sequence described below is typical, but many other variations are possible. There is flexibility within the program regarding when required courses can be taken.

First and Second Years

During their first or second year, students should take two quarters of calculus plus STAT 22000 Statistical Methods and Applications or STAT 23400 Statistical Models and Methods.

Many students take the following required three-quarter sequence in their second year, although sometimes students defer taking one or more of these courses until later. Taking the courses in the same year is *not required* and the courses may be taken in any order.

PBPL 22100	Politics and Policy	100
PBPL 22200	Public Policy Analysis	100
PBPL 22300	Policy Implementation	100

Students are required to take either PBPL 20000 Economics for Public Policy or ECON 20000 The Elements of Economic Analysis I; completion of one of these two courses is a prerequisite for the sequence course PBPL 22200 Public Policy Analysis. PBPL 20000 Economics for Public Policy assumes no prior economics training, whereas ECON 20000 The Elements of Economic Analysis I requires ECON 19800 Introduction to Microeconomics or other prior training in microeconomics.

Third Year

Students typically complete the courses that follow in their third year.

Quantitative Methods

Students are required to take PBPL 26400 Quantitative Methods in Public Policy.

Courses in an Area of Specialization

Students should identify their area of specialization and submit a proposal for their program of study to the program administrator by the end of Winter Quarter in their third year. Students are required to complete three substantive policy courses that make up a specialization in a public policy field. Students may meet the specialization requirement in one of two ways: (1) by taking three courses that thematically connect (e.g., courses in urban politics, urban economics, and urban society would count as an urban specialization; or courses in international relations, international finance, and history of the European Union might be an international specialty); or (2) by taking three courses beyond the introductory course in one discipline other than public policy (e.g., economics, political science, sociology, statistics). Courses that satisfy the area of specialization requirement do not have to be listed or cross-listed as public policy courses; however, these courses should involve a substantial policy component. Please see the Public Policy Studies website for examples of some specialization courses: pbpl.uchicago.edu/page/areas-specialization.

Research Practicum

Students must fulfill a two-quarter research program. One of the quarters must be drawn from a “Methods” course, and the other quarter must be drawn from a “Windows” course. Most students will fulfill this requirement through the two-quarter “practicum” sequence PBPL 26200-26300 Field Research Project in Public Policy I-II. The traditional practicum is designed to teach research methods (e.g., focus groups, community surveys, GIS mapping) in a hands-on way and provide a “window” from the ivory tower into the “real world.” Many of the practica in the past have involved collective work on a real-world policy problem with a community organization or government entity; see, for example, some final reports at <https://pbpl.uchicago.edu/cprt>.

Alternatives to the traditional two-quarter practicum PBPL 26200-26300 Field Research Project in Public Policy I-II can be drawn from the Methods and Windows courses listed below. A common option is the one-quarter practicum PBPL 26301 Field Research Project in Public Policy, which can count for either a Methods or Windows course and is offered frequently. Students may petition the program director for permission to fulfill either their Methods or Windows requirement (or both) with courses that are not listed.

The Methods courses include:

PBPL 26301 Field Research Project in Public Policy
 PBPL 27040 Public Finance and Public Policy
 ENST 26433 Practicum in Environmental Management
 GEOG 28201 Intro to Geographic Information Systems
 PLSC 22913 The Practice of Social Science Research
 PPHA 34600 Program Evaluation
 PPHA 34810 Mixed Methods Approaches to Policy Research
 SOCI 20001 Sociological Methods
 SOCI 20112 Applications of Hierarchical Linear Models
 SOCI 20118 Survey Research Overview

The Windows courses include:

PBPL 26301 Field Research Project in Public Policy
 PBPL 24751 The Business of Non-Profits: The Evolving Social Sector
 CHDV 20305 Inequality in Urban Spaces
 ENST 26433 Practicum in Environmental Management
 GEOG 26800 Geography Issues in Housing and Community Development
 SOCI 20140 Qualitative Field Methods

The research practicum is generally taken by students in their third year. Students who plan to study abroad in Winter or Spring Quarter of their third year may opt to complete the research practicum in their second or fourth year. One of the goals of the practicum requirement is to prepare students to write excellent BA papers, so generally it is best if the practicum can be taken before the fourth year.

Fourth Year

Students must write a BA paper in their fourth year. The required seminar course, PBPL 29800 Senior Seminar, offered in the Autumn Quarter, is designed to assist students in developing and writing their BA papers. The instructor of PBPL 29800 Senior Seminar, the public policy preceptor, serves as a reader for the BA papers. Students are encouraged to choose a faculty adviser as a second reader for the project. Outstanding BA papers can earn an honors designation. In early April, fourth-year students present their BA papers at a Public Policy undergraduate research symposium.

The PBPL 29800 Senior Seminar informs students about sources, methods of research, and treatment of evidence. Students work throughout Winter and Spring Quarters with the preceptors (and possibly faculty advisers) in revising their BA papers. In addition to the PBPL 29800 Senior Seminar requirement, students may take one or two quarters of PBPL 29900 BA Paper Preparation: Public Policy for general elective credit. PBPL 29900 BA Paper Preparation: Public Policy, typically coordinated by a preceptor or faculty adviser, is designed to ensure that students will have sufficient time to write a quality BA paper.

Public Policy Studies may accept a BA paper that also is being used to satisfy the requirements of a second major. Approval from both program chairs is required to submit one BA paper to two majors. A consent form, to be signed by both chairs, is available from the College advising office. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student’s year of graduation.

Courses

Many courses in related disciplines (e.g., Anthropology; Economics; History; Law, Letters, and Society; Political Science; Sociology; Biological Sciences) count toward the major when used as “specialization” courses.

Summary of Requirements

GENERAL EDUCATION

MATH 13100-13200	Elementary Functions and Calculus I-II (or higher) *	200
Total Units		200

MAJOR

PBPL 26400	Quantitative Methods in Public Policy	100
PBPL 22100 & PBPL 22200 & PBPL 22300	Politics and Policy and Public Policy Analysis and Policy Implementation	300
ECON 20000 or PBPL 20000	The Elements of Economic Analysis I Economics for Public Policy	100
STAT 22000 or STAT 23400	Statistical Methods and Applications * Statistical Models and Methods	100
Three courses in an area of specialization		300
PBPL 26200-26300	Field Research Project in Public Policy I-II (or equivalent)	200
PBPL 29800	Senior Seminar	100
BA paper		
Total Units		1200

* Credit may be granted by examination.

It is recommended that students take an additional course in statistics.

Grading

All courses counting toward the public policy major must be taken for quality grades unless students have prior approval for P/F grading from the undergraduate program chair.

Honors

Fourth-year students are eligible for honors if their overall GPA is 3.4 or higher. Those students are recommended for honors if their BA papers are judged to be of superior quality. For additional information about qualifying for honors, visit the Public Policy Studies website (pbpl.uchicago.edu).



Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.