

explore majors with OAAS!

The Office for Academic Advising Support
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Major: Public Policy, BA

Public Policy looks at how policies are designed, implemented, and administered by local, state, and federal governments. It also offers specialty courses in nonprofit organizations, climate change policy, advocacy, lobbying, and urban policy.

What skills do students develop in this program?

Students learn the basics of how politics works in practice. Students get introductory data analysis skills through assessing policies and learn how policy gets created. Students deliver presentations, learn how to be effective advocates for a policy through writing, and build knowledge of public and nonprofit sector jobs and careers.

What kind of student is a good fit for Public Policy?

If you are interested in making a difference, this is the major for you. As a BA in Public Policy major, you can, for example, learn to advocate for bike lanes, then learn how to get a bike lane proposal through the city council, assess its impact, and refine the policy. Public policies impact people's lives. Do you care about the environment? Then use the BA in Public Policy to learn how to lobby for policy changes that match your passion.

This major is for students who are passionate about changing the world and putting that passion into practice. Public Policy is the ultimate "Here, we do" as it explores how policies are adopted, implemented, and acted upon. All you need is a passion for making a difference - we teach the advocacy, lobbying, and basic data analysis skills to give you the tools you need to shape your future and that of your community.

Are there any popular classes in the program that you would suggest or recommended classes for a student who is just starting to explore the major?

- PPS 101: Introduction to Public Policy
- PPS 208: Introduction to Nonprofit Organizations
- PPS 251: Urban Poverty
- PPS 260: Climate Change Policy
- PPS 346: Advocacy and Lobbying

What are examples of internships and/or research opportunities that students in this major are currently working on or have access to as majors in this program?

Students intern in municipal government and ward offices in policy areas like Urban Planning, Environment and Sustainable Development, Community Development, Social and Support Services, etc. Students also intern in a range of nonprofits; for example, one student is currently working with the City of Peoria and a nonprofit to assess the effectiveness of a new transportation subsidy program. Students can also join the Chaddick Institute's Midwest trips to see municipal government in action, meet with elected political officials and political staff and learn how governments work to make a difference in society, take a trip to shadow a legislator in Springfield, Illinois, or attend a session of the European Parliament on our Study Abroad program.

What are students doing after graduation?

Graduates are working in Ward Offices, municipal government, state government, on political campaigns, etc. Some students go into working with nonprofits which have a range of partnerships with the government. Cities work on multiple policies from mosquito abatement to water quality, health care, social justice and community development, equitable housing, climate policies, and a whole lot more.

Students also enter into graduate programs that are equally diverse, with students exploring Law, Public Administration, Public Policy, Criminal Justice, and Diplomacy. The BA in Public Policy gives a broad-based introduction to how policies that shape our lives are developed, implemented, and assessed. If you want to change lives, then explore the BA in Public Policy.

Other interesting facts about the Public Policy major?

Careers in government tend to have great benefits and offer lifelong learning. You make a direct impact on communities and work to make services to people more effective. Government jobs are a route to having a major impact on the world and the places where we live. One of our most exciting courses is "Running for Political Office" which has many guest speakers who won elections and made a difference in the Chicago area and beyond, and we also offer BA in Public Policy majors policy-focused Study Abroad trips (e.g. to the EU and NATO in Belgium), and domestic trips to shadow legislators in Springfield, Illinois, and Washington, DC.

Every town has a local government - there are lots of public policy jobs out there! Also, many of the 300-level courses are shared with graduate students in the School of Public Service, so there's the opportunity to interact with graduate students on a regular basis. All the School of Public Service's graduate degrees are available as combined degrees, and we also have a BA+JD. Lastly, the BA in Public Policy has a close relationship with the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development and its popular Chaddick Scholars program, which takes students to cities in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin to meet with policy administrators who explain how they are making an impact in their communities, on everything from implementing bike lanes to encouraging historic preservation and local business investment.