Child Policy Research Certificate Program
Coursework Requirements

Six courses are required to complete the certificate:


2. PubPol 241/CCS 241 - Multi-Method Approaches to Social and Policy Research or research methods course from your major department (best to take spring of sophomore year)

3. Independent Study focusing on an issue related to children and families – can be taken as ChildPol 350S or in student’s major department (best to work on in fall or spring of junior year)

4. ChildPol 495S - Multidisciplinary Approaches to Contemporary Children’s Issues (capstone course taken spring of senior year)

5. Elective

6. Elective

Course Descriptions

ChildPol 250S – Child Policy Research (cornerstone course)

This introductory course serves as a unifying academic experience for students pursuing this certificate. The course covers the major developmental stages of childhood, and the intersection between the child and the major influences in a child's life: parents/family life, schools, and neighborhoods and communities. Emphasis is placed on the application of theory to solving complex societal problems that confront children in today's world. Because it is hoped that the certificate draws students from different majors, the material comes from different disciplines. Furthermore, students engage in discussion to integrate learning across traditional disciplinary boundaries. This course is required of students wishing to complete the certificate, but is open to all undergraduate students and is cross-listed as PubPol 242S.
Research Methods Course

Students are encouraged to take PubPol 241, Multi-Method Approaches to Social and Policy Research (cross-listed as ChildPol 241), a prototypical methods course. This course is designed to prepare students for independent research in the social sciences and public policy. The goals are to help students understand and critically evaluate the research of others, and to provide them with the necessary tools to develop and carry out their own research projects. The course begins by exploring crucial steps to conducting research, including developing research questions and hypotheses, research design, and methods of data analysis. An important objective of the course is to review and understand the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches in research on contemporary social problems. Another important feature of the course is its hands-on component. In a lab setting, students apply text analysis software to analyses of current policy debates. Students also receive a hands-on introduction to statistical applications software. In lieu of this course, students may take a methods course in their home discipline with approval from the certificate director.

ChildPol 350S - Research Seminar (or Independent Study)

The research seminar, listed as ChildPol 350S, requires each student to engage in an original, rigorous and empirically sound research project of their choosing. The goals of the seminar are to individualize the certificate for students by helping each focus on a specific topic with a specific mode of inquiry. With this project, the student demonstrates independence of thought, in-depth analysis of a problem facing children and an original contribution to scholarship. Over the course of the semester, the student is required to develop hypotheses, test their hypothesis using the appropriate methodology, and then draw conclusions to be discussed in the context of a scholarly piece. The methods used by students will be diverse, but could include original data collection, secondary data analysis, qualitative interviews or case studies. Given that the students represent different disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives, their projects span disciplines and methodologies. Each project culminates in a scholarly written project. Each student is mentored by a faculty member who will be identified by the student in consultation with the certificate's director. Faculty members typically come from a pool of faculty affiliated with the program, but any member of the Duke University tenure-track or regular rank faculty member may be a mentor, pending approval from the director. The faculty member is responsible for meeting regularly with the student and supervising the student's research. Additionally, the certificate's director oversees and provides support for projects and assists with any management issues that should arise.

ChildPol 495S - Multidisciplinary Approaches to Contemporary Children’s Issues (capstone course)

The certificate culminates in this capstone course, taken in the spring of senior year, which integrates the various components of the certificate by providing a forum for the students to share and expand upon their research projects and knowledge. In this course, they will learn how to translate their scholarship to
policy recommendations. Students will learn how to present their analyses in oral, academic, and lay-public forums as well as look at an issue from historical, political, economic, psychological and sociological perspectives. Each student will learn to communicate a research project in multiple formats, including a policy brief, poster presentation, editorial, op-ed, and research summary. Communicating a project in these multiple formats and to various audiences will teach students to translate their scholarship to policy and practice.