

# PUBLIC HEALTH LAW AND POLICY

**PHLT/PSCI 230**  
SPRING 2026

## Syllabus

v.2026.1.25

**Course #:** PHLT/PSCI 230

**Title:** Public Health Law and Policy

**Course Description** [from CDCS]: The course introduces the legal and social justice frameworks for urgent public health issues, such as vaccinations, tobacco regulation and gun control.

**Credits:** 4

Semester/Year: Spring 2026

**Class Day/Time/s:** M/W 2:00 – 3:15

Location: **Gavett 312 [NEW LOCATION]**

**First Class:** W 1/21/26

Last Class: W 4/29/2026

**Lab Days/Times:** n/a

**Labs begin:** n/a

Last Lab: n/a

**Location:** n/a

**Does this course use Blackboard Learning Management?** Y N Yes

**If yes, explain how Blackboard will be used:** Readings posted, assignment instructions, examples and rubrics, submission portals, feedback boxes, Discussions, VoiceThread, quizzes.

This course will be taught remotely in part for the first half of the semester. During these weeks, there may be some *asynchronous* scheduling. Asynchronous means that you can learn at your own pace for part of that week because some of the scheduled classes will have been canceled and replaced with pre-recorded lectures. The weekly schedules will be posted on Blackboard, and weekly announcements/emails will be sent out. Read them.

**Course Webpage/s:** n/a

**Instructor:** Molly McNulty

Contact Email: m.mcnulty@rochester.edu Contact Telephone\*: blank

Office Hours\*\*: by Zoom appointment Office Location: Morey 206

**Teaching Assistants**

Maggie Sulce

Joanna Lee

**Entrance Prerequisites:** None

**Course Aims & Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate basic research skills for locating primary law
2. Define the constitutional doctrines underpinning public health law
3. Define the successful components of a community coalition
4. Explain how law can either promote health equity or maintain structural inequities

**General Course Requirements:** Students are expected to spend approximately 12 hours per week, including class time, to earn credit for this course. This time will include reading and listening to the recorded lectures, writing assignments, and studying for quizzes.

**Required Texts:**

- Burris, The new public health law: a transdisciplinary approach to practice and advocacy (Included in UR Essentials pack) (Ebook also available via Rush Rhee)
- The New York Times free student subscription

Please check Blackboard daily for reading assignments. All articles and links to other podcasts and videos will be posted on Blackboard.

**Recommended Reading**

- Wiley, Public Health Law and Ethics (4<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2025) (Included in UR Essentials pack)

**Assignments**

1. Legal Brief (15%)
2. PH Law & Policy in the News (10%)
3. COVID-19 Reflection (5%)
4. Legislative Policy Brief (20%)
5. Community Coalitions (10%)
6. Equity Analysis (20%)
7. Blackboard Discussions (TBD) (10%)
8. Attendance/Participation (5%)

**Recommended Attire:** n/a

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is required, except for 1 unexcused absence.

**Grading:**

Each assignment in this course is graded on a 100-point basis, weighted as follows. For example, an assignment that is graded out of 100 points might be worth 15% of your final grade.

Legal Brief	15%
PH Law & Policy in the News	10%
COVID-19 Reflection	5%
Legislative Policy Brief	20%
Community Coalitions	10%
Health Equity Paper	20%
Attendance/Participation	10%
Discussions (6)	10%

There will also be opportunities for students to earn up to 3 points of extra credit.

This course follows the University of Rochester Grading Rubric for converting points into letter grades.

**Attendance:** Attendance is tracked using the **Qwickly tool**, which provides a unique code for you to check in. You can miss 1 class for any reason (Absent-Unexcused) and still receive full points for attendance. **Email the TAs when:** (1) you are seeking an excused absence (24+ hours in advance) (2) you missed a class and think your absence counts as “excused,” email the TA within 24 hours after the start of the class you missed, or (3) you were in class and were mistakenly reported as Absent-Unexcused. Please note that we are aware of students who can enter the “Present” code when absent. This is a violation of the Academic Honesty code and will be reported.

**Assignment Late Work:** If you submit an assignment late, there will be a 1-point deduction from your assignment grade every day that the assignment is late. After 7 days, late assignments will not be accepted, and you will receive a zero. If you feel that your situation might warrant an extension, please email Prof. McNulty (not the TA) 24 hours ahead of time to let me know. I will respond to let you know whether the extension is granted, and what the new deadline is.

**AI:** Any use of these tools is flatly prohibited in all these writing assignments except for the following parameters. This prohibition extends to searching for broad overviews; conceptual outlines; recommended language, sentences, or paragraphs; identifying research sources – including legal sources and looking up laws by topics. The reason for this prohibition is to uphold the University’s values placed upon development of your critical thinking, reasoning, and writing skills.

#### Academic Support Services:

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: [www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/)  
Writing, Speaking and Argument Program: <http://writing.rochester.edu/>

**Academic Honesty:**

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty)

**Disability Resources:**

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: [http://disability@rochester.edu](mailto:disability@rochester.edu); (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

**Credit Hours: 4**

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for a total of three "academic hours" per week. The course also includes approximately 9 hours of solo work per week. The course will be offered in a hybrid format combining in-person classes with recorded lectures that can be viewed asynchronously (outside of class time).

**ASYNCHRONOUS SCHEDULE  
CLASS TOPICS, DATES, ASSOCIATED ASSESSMENTS, DUE DATES**

TOPIC	DATE	ASSESSMENT	DUE
Introduction to Course	1/21		
What Is Public Health	1/23	D1 What Is Public Health?	1/25
What Is Public Health Law and How Is It Connected to Public Health	1/26	D2 What Is Public Health Law	2/1
Judicial Research: How To Find An Opinion	2/2	A#1 Legal Brief	2/8
II. Constitutional Foundations			
Federal Public Health Authority	2/9		
Federalism (revisited) and Preemption	2/16	D3 Federalism	2/15
Individual Rights and Due Process (2 CLASSES)	2/23	D4 Due Process and Public Health Law	2/22
Review of Legal Brief, Intro to Assgt 2 News	3/2	D5 Equal Protection	3/1

## COURSE SCHEDULE + ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

MODULES AND CLASSES	DATE	MODE	DUe DATE	ASSIGNMENT
<b>I. Foundations</b>				
Introduction to Course	1/21	RECORDED CLASS		
What Is Public Health	1/23	RECORDED CLASS		
What Is Public Health Law and How Is It Connected to Public Health	1/26	RECORDED CLASS		
What Is Public Health Law and How Is It Connected to Public Health	1/28	IN PERSON CLASS		
Judicial Research: How To Find An Opinion	2/2	RECORDED CLASS		
Judicial Research: How to Analyze An Opinion	2/4	IN PERSON CLASS		
<b>II. Constitutional Foundations</b>				
Federal Public Health Authority	2/9	RECORDED CLASS	2/8/2026	A#1 Legal Brief
State/Local Public Health Authority	2/11	IN PERSON CLASS		
Federalism (revisited) and Preemption	2/16	RECORDED CLASS		
Individual Rights and Due Process (2 CLASSES)	2/18	IN-PERSON CLASS		
Individual Rights and Due Process (2 CLASSES)	2/23	RECORDED CLASS		
Review of Legal Brief, Introduction to Assignment 2 News	2/25	IN PERSON CLASS		
Equal Protection	3/2	RECORDED CLASS		
Powers and Limits of Administrative Agencies	3/4	IN-PERSON CLASS		
Review of Legal Brief	3/16		3/8/2026	A#2 News
<b>III. Application of Constitutional Doctrines</b>				
Legislative Research: Why and How	3/18			
COVID-19/ Isolation and Quarantine; Intro to Assignment 3	3/23			
COVID-19/ Isolation and Quarantine	3/25			
Tobacco Regulation and Commercial Speech	3/30		3/29/2026	#3 COVID Reflection
Review of News Assignment	4/1			
Reproductive Rights (2 CLASSES)	4/6			
Reproductive Rights (2 CLASSES)	4/8			

<b>IV. Role of the Community in Public Health Law and Policymaking</b>			
Authentic Community Partnerships: Lessons Learned	4/13		
The Health Coalitions Convened by Common Ground Health	4/15	4/12/2026	#4 Legislative Brief
<b>V. Role of the Law in Achieving Public Health Equity</b>			
Health Equity Defined	4/20		
TBD	4/22		
TBD	4/27	4/26/2026	#5 Coalitions paper
Wrap-up	4/29		
		5/6/2026	#6 Health Equity

**Key Dates**

2/8/2026	Legal Brief
3/8/2026	PH Law & Policy in the News
3/29/2026	COVID-19 Reflection
4/12/2026	Legislative Policy Brief
4/26/2026	Community Coalitions
5/6/2026	Equity Paper
5/10/2026	Attendance/Participation
4/26/2026	Discussions (10)

**Other Information:**

The Center for Community Engagement supports classes that connect students and communities in the classroom. This is a community-engaged course that counts toward the Certificate of Achievement in Community-Engaged Learning. If you are interested in learning more about community-engaged courses, you can check out the course list. Any questions can be emailed to cel@ur.rochester.edu

Change History

1/19/25 *UPDATED with new class location (Gavett), new class titles (Review of Assignments)*

1/25/26 *Changed # of Graded Discussions to 10 from 6, for ease of calculations  
Added Table of ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS DATES, TOPICS, AND ASSESSMENTS*