



Spring 2024 COM 443 Equity by Design

–The premise of this course is that systems of oppression, inequality, and inequity are designed – and can be redesigned. Charting a path toward equity and justice means creating spaces where power, privilege, and oppression are actively and intentionally considered. Equity-based design approaches ensure a more equitable distribution of design’s benefits and burdens, meaningful participation in design decisions, and recognition of community-based, Indigenous, and diasporic design practices. Practicing asset-based community building, mutuality, reciprocity, solidarity, empathy, humility, co-creation, and power sharing are all methods to cultivate equity and justice. By the end of the course, students will apply these methods to their own work and develop understandings about how to enact equity by design.

Attributes: GEP Diversity Course, 3 credits

M,W 1:50 - 3:05 Merion Hall 174
Aimée Knight, PhD aknight@sju.edu

Course objectives

Marginalized Community Recognition

- ◆ ***Culturally-Informed Design Analysis*** Students will analyze, articulate, and understand how multiple theoretical approaches of aesthetics and design inform the way audiences from diverse communities act, interact, and produce meaning. They will explore and appreciate

the cultural nuances that shape these interactions, promoting a deeper understanding of community-specific design considerations.

- ◆ ***Equity and Diversity in Design*** Students will develop an understanding of and identify the experiences and contributions of particular cultural communities that have been systematically marginalized by design. They will actively engage with and celebrate the richness of diverse cultural perspectives, fostering an inclusive approach to design that acknowledges and addresses historical marginalization.
- ◆ ***Critical Design Awareness*** Students will understand the complex, dynamic, and dialectical nature of designs' benefits and burdens, especially how design can reproduce and challenge the matrix of domination (white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, settler colonialism, and other forms of structural inequality). Through critical analysis, students will explore the impact of designs on various communities, recognizing the potential for both positive transformation and unintentional reinforcement of structural inequalities.
- ◆ ***Bias Reflection and Challenge*** Students will describe and reflect on issues of bias and privilege in their own lives and the lives of other cultural groups, understanding how to challenge white dominant culture in their own design practice. They will actively engage in self-reflection and community dialogue to identify and address biases, fostering a commitment to dismantling oppressive systems and promoting inclusivity in their design work within the broader community.

Required readings

To purchase by beginning of class:

[Deepa Iyer Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection \(2023\).](#)

Readings on Canvas:

Brown, Adrienne Marie. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press.

Butler, Octavia. E., & Jemisin, N. K. (2019). *Parable of the sower*. Grand Central Publishing.

Costanza-Chock, Sasha. (2020). *Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*. The MIT Press.

Creative Reaction Lab. (2018). *Field Guide: Equity-Centered Community Design*. Creative Reaction Lab.

Iyer, Deepa. (2022). *Social change now: A guide for reflection and connection*. Thick Press.

Okun, Tema (2001). *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*.

Assignments

Group project: Designing Critical Futures

Activities due Fridays at midnight. Evaluation: 60% In a semester-long project, you will take an active role in reimagining a real issue in a community and crafting a more equitable and inclusive future. Spanning fifteen weeks and divided into carefully crafted stages, you will select a community or issue of personal significance and embark on a journey of community engagement, creativity, intersectionality, collaboration, and digital design. You will work in groups and take a hands-on approach to engaging with communities, promoting inclusivity, and making a real impact through a tangible project. Full assignment on Canvas.

Reading Responses and Class Discussion

Responses due Mondays before class 20% Reading responses are pre-class writing activities which demonstrate your engagement with the ideas in the assigned weekly course material. An effective response demonstrates that you have thoroughly read and understood the material (or that you ask and attempt to answer compelling questions that reveal careful reading). The responses will develop connections between the material and the themes of the course and demonstrate that you have considered the implications of the materials. Although these are not formal academic papers, they should be carefully written and *cited* nevertheless. (MLA or APA). Include direct quotes from the readings that support your integration of the material. Be specific about the works you're discussing, give details to back up any assertions you may make, include references, page numbers, when appropriate. Finally, pay attention to grammar and mechanics. Reading responses are short answers (typically between 200-300 words). These are due *before* class. Late work is deducted 20% per day.

Final Reflection

Reflection 10% This assignment invites you to reflect holistically on your semester project, providing a platform to evaluate your journey, celebrate your growth, and contemplate your commitment to social justice and the design of critical futures. This assignment encourages you to contemplate your project's journey, the knowledge and inspiration acquired across various phases, and the impact your digital project has had or is poised to have on the community it serves. Reflections must integrate and reference relevant class materials (or relevant outside sources) to support your insights and claims. You may use APA or MLA citation styles to reference these materials and sources effectively (necessary to receive an A). Full assignment on Canvas. Due during finals week.

Phase 1: Place-Making and Community Engagement (Weeks 1-4)

In the beginning of the course, we will embark on a journey of place-making and community engagement. You will select a specific community or issue that you are passionate about, whether it's a local neighborhood, a social justice cause, or a particular community group. This

phase is all about building the foundations of equitable design by actively engaging with a community, understanding their needs, and developing a speculative design concept that addresses their challenges and aspirations. As we explore the power of collaboration and inclusivity, you will brainstorm physical spaces, events, or services that promote community well-being and inclusivity. Here we recognize the importance of community participation, mutual respect, and the co-creation of spaces that matter.

Week 1 Introduction to “Equity By Design”

- Monday *MLK Day, no class*
- Wednesday 1/17 Introduction to the course; Octavia Butler video; Students choose a specific community, neighborhood, and topic they are passionate about, aiming to address a particular challenge or aspiration.

Week 2 Project proposals

This week, each group writes a proposal that outlines the selected community or issue, explaining its significance and alignment with the course objectives. The proposal should discuss the specific challenge or aspiration you intend to focus on and the community members who may benefit from the project.

- Monday 1/22 Reading discussion: [Article](#) and [ECCD](#): 1-30
- Wednesday 1/24 Meeting with groups; Co-write project proposal

Week 3 Research and brainstorming

Groups research the chosen community and its context, exploring successful place-making efforts and gathering inspiration from existing initiatives. Groups brainstorm ideas for a speculative design concept that addresses the community's challenges and goals.

- Monday 1/29 Reading discussion: [ECCD](#): 31-50; Discussion in class
- Wednesday 1/31 Meeting with groups; Meeting with groups to complete activity report on place-making.

Week 4 Community engagement

Groups begin to plan how to actively engage with their selected community. This may involve conducting interviews, surveys, and holding a meeting (or coffee chat) with community members to understand their needs, values, and aspirations. Make sure to schedule a community meeting for next week.

- Monday 2/5 *Reading: Meet with your community*
- Wednesday 2/7 Concept Development: Groups develop and refine their design concepts, incorporating feedback from community members and applying principles of place-making and inclusivity. They consider physical or digital spaces, events, or services that can promote community well-being and inclusivity, and they create a detailed project plan.

Phase 2: Social change and reflective action (Weeks 5-8)

In Phase 2, our focus shifts to the exploration of social change through the lens of the book *Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Action*. This practical guide provides a comprehensive framework for reflection and action in the pursuit of justice, equity, and solidarity.

Week 5 Foundational concepts of the social change ecosystem

We delve into the foundational concepts of the social change ecosystem, exploring values, beliefs, and the broader framework that underpins their individual and collective journeys towards social justice.

- Monday 2/12 Reading discussion: Social Change Framework, Values, and Beliefs (pp. 1-39); take [quiz re: roles](#)
- Wednesday 2/14 Meeting with groups

Week 6 Building on the social change ecosystem framework

Students examine the various roles individuals play in social change. The focus is on understanding one's own role and how it contributes to the broader landscape of social transformation.

- Monday 2/19 Reading discussion: Roles (pp. 41-51) + your role (e.g., Builder)
- Wednesday, 2/21 Meeting with groups (via Zoom)

Week 7 Concept application

Students apply the principles from the readings to their design concepts, ensuring that their projects align with the values of justice, equity, and solidarity. They reflect on their roles within the social change ecosystem.

Monday 2/26 Reading discussion: [Tema Okun: White Supremacy Culture](#) ; focus on characteristics: fear, one right way, either/or. denial and defensiveness, right to comfort, individualism, progress is more, worship of the written word, urgency.

Wednesday 2/28 Meeting with groups

Week 8 - Spring Break

- Monday 3/4 Spring Break
- Wednesday 3/6 Spring Break

Phase 3: Design Justice - Ideation & Prototyping (Weeks 9-11)

In Phase 3, our focus expands to encompass Design Justice, incorporating insights from the book "Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need" by Sasha Constanza Chock. This phase delves into the intricacies of generating ideas for art, tech, and design projects, with an emphasis on a diverse and dynamic creative process that challenges structural inequalities.

Week 9: Understanding the Creative Process

Students engage in hands-on exercises and assignments to investigate the creative research process. They explore different concepts, techniques, and methods to inform and inspire their design projects.

- Monday 3/11 Reading Discussion: Introduction of "Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need" by Sasha Constanza Chock. Discussion on the fundamental concepts and principles introduced in the book.
- Wednesday, 3/13 Meeting with groups

Week 10: Expanding Design and Research Skills

Students actively develop their projects, expanding their arsenal of design and research skills. The emphasis is on critical thinking about audience, content, form, and processes.

Monday 3/18 Reading Discussion: Chapter 1- "Design Values: Hard Coding Liberation" from "Design Justice." Activity: Referencing ECCD Field Guide/Rapid Prototyping pp. 43-45; engage in a prototype activity inspired by the principles of Design Justice.
Wednesday 3/20 Meeting with groups

Week 11: Iterative Prototyping and Feedback

Reading Discussion: Chapter 2 - "Nothing About Us Without Us" from "Design Justice." Students focus on iterative prototyping, seeking feedback from peers and mentors to refine their projects. Emphasis is placed on understanding the messy yet exciting nature of the creative process.

- Monday 3/26 Reading Discussion: "Nothing About Us Without Us" from "Design Justice" by Sasha Constanza Chock
- Activity: Referencing ECCD Field Guide/Testing and Learning pp. 47-50; engage in a testing activity aligned with the principles of Design Justice.
- Wednesday, 3/28 Meeting with groups

Phase 4: Digital Project Design (Weeks 12-16)

In Phase 4, we bring our designs to life. It's time to transform ideas into tangible projects that encapsulate your vision of a critical future. You will choose your digital medium, whether it's a website, multimedia presentation, interactive app, or virtual reality experience, based on the

goals of your project. This phase focuses on content development, technical implementation, and user experience, as you use the knowledge and inspiration gained throughout the course to craft a representation of a critical future. Then, it's time for you to showcase your design project and your deep understanding of your chosen community's needs and aspirations, contributing to a more just and inclusive world.

Week 12

Select Digital Medium: Students choose the final digital medium for their final projects, such as a website, digital platform, multimedia presentation, interactive app, or virtual reality experience, depending on their project's goals.

Content Development: Students create content and media for their digital projects, incorporating their refined design concepts, inclusive approaches, and intersectional considerations. They work on visual design, user interface, and user experience.

Monday 4/1 *Easter Break, no class*

Wednesday 4/3 Meeting with groups

Week 13

Technical Implementation: Students develop the technical aspects of their digital projects, such as web design, graphic design, multimedia production, or app development, depending on the chosen medium.

Monday 4/8 Reading discussion: "Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds"
(Except/PDF)

Wednesday 4/10 COM Career day via Zoom *mandatory

Week 14 Online Class

Technical Implementation (continued): Students develop the technical aspects of their digital projects, such as web design, graphic design, multimedia production, or app development, depending on the chosen medium

Monday 4/15 Meeting with groups (Zoom)

Wednesday 4/17 Meeting with groups (Zoom)

Week 15

Final presentation: Prepare and deliver a presentation that highlights your projects, emphasizing the journey, design process, and the real-world significance of your vision. After each presentation, we will have class discussions where you provide constructive feedback to your peers. Focus on the strengths of their projects, and offer suggestions for improvement.

Monday 4/22 Presentations; Discussion and Feedback

Wednesday 4/24 Meeting with groups, archive project

Week 16

Reflect on your journey throughout the project, considering the knowledge and inspiration gained from previous phases, as well as the impact you have achieved or hope to achieve with your digital project.

Project Reflection

10% final grade; See Canvas for details; due at scheduled final exam time (TBD)

Land Acknowledgment

We recognize and acknowledge that Saint Joseph's University stands on the Indigenous territory known as "Lenapehoking," the traditional homelands of the Lenape, also called Lenni-Lenape or Delaware Indians. Their descendants today include the Delaware Tribe and Delaware Nation of Oklahoma; the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, Ramapough Lenape, and Powhatan Renape of New Jersey; and the Munsee Delaware of Ontario.

Community Agreements

- Stay flexible and patient around any changes, cancellations or schedule shifts as we navigate the semester.
- Ask questions before assuming. The best way to understand the choices, actions, or intentions of one another is by asking.
- When offering critical feedback, do so with the belief that people can change; when receiving critical feedback, listen to others with a willingness to change.
- Learn about ableist and other harmful language

Expectations

Come to class fully prepared to engage in the exchange of ideas. It is your responsibility to be ready to discuss the materials each week. It is expected that you check and respond to messages in Canvas and email at least once every 24 hours Monday-Friday for communication purposes with your instructor and peers.

Illness

If you are unable to attend class due to illness, communicate directly with me through email. A doctor's note will be required if you would like this absence excused. If your absence is due to isolation or quarantine, it is your responsibility to contact me within 48 hours outlining both the date of your expected return to class and a plan to stay on pace with readings and assignments and group obligations during your physical absence.

Grading Scheme

Please note that the exact grade in Canvas will be the grade you receive for the course. I do not “round up,” as it can be a subjective practice. There are extra credit or revision opportunities in class, if you want to make sure you have done everything you can to improve your course grade. automatically. If you are ill, please let me know.

Late Work

Late work is deducted 20% for each late day. If an assignment or project is posted after a deadline (even if it is on the same day as the deadline), it will be deducted 20% automatically. If you are ill, please let me know.

Office Hours and After Hours

My door is open. I hope you will take advantage of my office hours. I am available to offer extended feedback on your projects (beyond the written feedback you formally receive). You don't need to have a problem to schedule a visit, but if you do find yourself having some difficulty or questions (in class or even outside of class) then I certainly want to see you sooner rather than later. If you cannot make scheduled office hours, arrange to see me at another time.

The Writing Center

The Saint Joseph's University Writing Center is free to all members of the SJU community. The undergraduate and graduate student writers who make up the staff can assist you in any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to organizing and developing your ideas, to citing sources to proofreading. They work with students from across the university on a variety of assignments and projects: lab reports, business policy papers, poems, essays, research papers, dissertations, resumes, and personal statements for graduate school applications, among many others. You name it; they've helped writers write it. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The main Writing Center is located in 162 Merion Hall. The Center also has a satellite location in the Post Learning Commons (room 128). For more information, including hours of operation and instructions on how to make an appointment, please visit the SJU Writing Center website at sju.edu/writingcenter.

Rules regarding the use of information in this course

All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI- generated content such as ChatGTP) without proper attribution or authorization is another serious form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss.

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable academic accommodations may be provided to

students who submit appropriate documentation of their disability. If students have need of assistance or questions with this issue, they are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) at sds@sju.edu or by phone at 610.660.1774. The Office of SDS also provides an appeal/grievance procedure for complaints regarding requested or offered reasonable accommodations. More information can be found at: www.sju.edu/sds.

Health and Wellness

Saint Joseph's University recognizes that physical and mental health strongly impact one's ability to do well in school and in life. As a result, there are many helpful campus resources designed to help students to care for their physical, mental, and spiritual health. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol, drugs, identities, finances, etc. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle and challenges. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking assistance sooner rather than later is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides free confidential mental health counseling for all Saint Joseph's University students. Currently, CAPS therapists are conducting tele-mental health counseling for students via a secure version of Zoom. In addition, counselors are available after office hours and over weekends to attend to urgent mental health concerns. To access 24/7 mental health counseling, students can call the CAPS office at 610-660-1090.

<https://sites.sju.edu/counseling/> .

Additional Resources:

- Student Success: <https://sites.sju.edu/thesuccesscenter/student-success/>
- Fitness & Recreation: <https://www.sju.edu/health-well-being/fitness-recreation>
- Center for Inclusion and Diversity: <https://sites.sju.edu/oid/>
- Campus Ministry: <https://sites.sju.edu/campusministry/>

Bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct/assault

Saint Joseph's is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment, as well as other benefits, programs, and activities, that are free from acts of bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. We encourage anyone who has experienced this type of harm to seek help from the University by filing a report through the incident reporting form, or by calling 610-660-1145.

For information about the University's response to reports bias, harassment, and discrimination, including policies, incident definitions, and the role of the University's Bias Activity Review Group, please visit <https://www.sju.edu/offices/titleix-equity/equity> or contact bias@sju.edu. For more information about the University's response to reports of sexual misconduct, including

incident definitions, information for confidential reporting options both on- and off-campus, and resources for support, please visit <https://www.sju.edu/offices/titleix> or contact titleix@sju.edu. While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me for support, please know that I have some reporting requirements that are part of my job responsibilities at Saint Joseph's University. For example, if you inform me of an issue of sexual harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct (Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, or Stalking) I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's Director Office of Title IX, Equity & Compliance.