What is design justice and what does it look like? How can design and the placemaking professions advance social justice? What is our agency in this?

In order to imagine a different future – one that is more equitable and just – we need to make space to dig in, explore and have conversations about what that would look like. This graduate seminar offers an opportunity to engage in discussion, debate & exploration around the ways that design and the place-making professions – long used as tools of oppression – can be reclaimed to advance social justice, equity and inclusion.

The spirit of the seminar is exploratory and experimental – it is a venue for us to think together about these complex issues and consider ways forward toward more equitable environments and strategies. This course is designed to enhance critical reflexivity, challenge our assumptions, become aware of our own positionality, and consider alternative framings. This is what Paolo Freire calls “Conscientization.”

Topics will include:
- explorations of conceptions of justice and equity
- environmental and climate justice
- critical race theory/anti-racist work
- examining privilege & white supremacist culture/exploring meaningful white allyship
- decolonization/indigeneity
- social & ecological reciprocal healing
- radical approaches to design & planning

In exploring these topics, the course will offer creative freedom to pursue your particular interests in design and social justice through a creative/research project of your choosing.

This course is open to all majors, welcomes a diversity of perspectives and skill sets, and encourages innovative thinking.