

Power, Equity and Society

Course Information

This is a course about society and (in)justice. This course invites students to strengthen their understanding of the role that proficiency in STEM fields, as well as other frames that create cultural hierarchy, play in our society and the responsibilities embedded within the practice of associated professions. Through readings, video, group projects and discussion, this course develops capacity for understanding and critiquing how technological decision-making can perpetuate - as well as constructively rebalance - disparities in power, resource access and health in U.S. society. 3 credits.

Faculty Information

Karen Merritt, PhD, MPH | Instructor | 207-266-0413 (cell); email: karen.merritt@maine.edu

Course Structure

This course is offered in asynchronous on-line format. Readings, discussion postings, group and individual projects and lecture will be via Brightspace. Time commitment is 10 hours/week.

Instructional Materials and Methods

Discussion content will be made available weekly in Brightspace;

Textbook: DIY Detroit: Making Do in a City Without Services (Kinder; 2016)

Course Goals

Students' knowledge and skills will be developed in relation to the following course outcomes:

- Identifying and articulating the benefits and boundaries of technological frameworks in society;
- Identifying ethical issues involved in the practice and application of technological proficiency;
- Discussing how STEM proficiency shapes and affects public and private roles;
- Demonstrating understanding and the ability to discuss concepts of power and hierarchy in cultural exploration; and
- Demonstrating skills of effective cultural analysis and communication.

Instructional Objectives

Through readings, class discussion and video, students will gain broad understanding of:

- Major socio-cultural trends and movements that have shaped the current U.S. landscape;
- The impact of these trends and movements on access disparities within communities; and
- The link between disparities in access and disparities in health that are apparent as functions of race and socio-economic status in this country.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Gain skills in identifying, describing and critically analyzing the social and cultural impacts of technological decision-making in our society;
- Develop 'nested understanding' of how power and technology create differences in health and health access as a function of race and socio-economic status in our society; and
- Gain skills in interpreting, presenting and explaining mapped content in ways that guide viewers/readers to see underlying patterns and relationships in that content.

Course Content and Expectations

Weekly Class Content (see weekly topic list below) - Brightspace presentation

Weekly Readings | Discussion | Rotating responsibility to create weekly question framework

Biweekly Video Discussion - 6 videos over the semester | Discussion guidance provided

Semester Reading | Project - DIY Detroit: Making Do in a City Without Services (Kinder; 2016)

Course Topics and Grading

Week(s) Topics

1	Introduction Course Structure
2	Technological Centering and the Myth of Equal Access
3-4	Socio-Technical Understanding Frameworks and Omissions
5-6	20th Century History – Seeing The Cycle and Marginalization of Communities
7	Serial Forced Displacement and the Geography of Indifference
8	Social Determinants of Health – Seeing Inequity and Inequality
9	Break Week
10-11	Narrative Challenges and Bias – Solving without Understanding
12-13	Recontextualizing Power: The False Metric of Reasonableness
14	ReDesign, Remediate and (Re)-Question: Who is The Work For?
15	Finals Week (no exam) Final written project due

Grading:

Readings Discussion Group Participation - 25%

Readings Discussion Group Coordination | Leadership (rotating) - 5%

Video Discussion Group Participation - 25%

DIY Detroit - Midterm Assignment - 10%

DIY Detroit - Final Project - 25%

Attendance | Engagement - 10%

Course Policies

Valuing, Recognizing, and Encouraging Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Promoting and valuing diversity in the classroom enriches learning and broadens everyone's perspectives. Inclusion and tolerance can lead to respect for others and their opinions and is critical to maximizing the learning that we expect in this course. Our own closely held ideas and personal comfort zones may be challenged. The results, however, create a sense of community and promote excellence in the learning environment. Diversity includes consideration of: 1) the variety of life experiences others have had, and 2) factors related to "diversity of presence," including, age, economic circumstances, ethnic identification, disability, gender, geographic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, social position. This class will follow principles of inclusion, respect, tolerance, and acceptance that support the values of diversity.

Classroom Community Expectations

In this course, we will address a range of topics that can be difficult to discuss. For this reason, please approach both our course materials and our class discussions with an open mind. Always express agreement, disagreement, and debates with classmates in a civil manner. Similarly, be willing to listen to peers and faculty when they disagree with you or present a different viewpoint and refrain from interrupting your classmates. There is a zero tolerance policy for harmful behavior or speech in this class.