The resurgence of socially-conscious design is due in large part to groups of students and practitioners frustrated by the visible and widening gap between the haves and have nots across our shared landscape. The more recent concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic – as well as the systemic, geographical injustice driving unrest around the nation – only serve to put a finer point on the importance of empowering people to take direct control over their environmental conditions.

This course examines the history, theory, and mechanisms through which architects, designers, planners, and other socially-conscious activists put their professional skills in service to the concept of justice. In weekly readings, videos, podcasts, and lectures, students will be challenged to consider how the articulation of space both shapes and reflects political and social subjectivities and, how that might influence the education, practice, projects, and finally the legacy of architects and designers. The course aims to engender leadership and skill-building for future leaders hoping to use design as a tool for social equity and positive change in underserved communities across the globe.