If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson

COURSE DESCRIPTION
As artists and designers increasingly turn their efforts to altering conditions for the vulnerable and oppressed, stubborn questions arise around the ethics of engagement. Socially engaged projects seek meaningful change, yet often discourage dissent, reify privilege, remain agnostic about outcomes, and do little to alter larger, structural inequalities. Artists and designers can easily exit projects deemed failures and write these off as learning experiences. Moving from one social injustice to the next, crises and suffering become ‘sites’ from which to develop serialized projects. Armed with empathy and expertise, but with little local knowledge, these practitioners struggle to form equitable relationships with partners and collaborators. This course will examine a range of projects initiated by artists and designers and will challenge the idea that helping is beyond reproach. The course asks how artists and designers might better situate themselves as allies through developing practices that foster solidarity, exercise humility, and distribute agency.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Without a deep understanding of people and cultures, how can we assume to propose a future for them? Exercising humility and developing methods of meaningful engagement is essential to becoming an effective designer. Collaboration with the people who experience design provides unexpected knowledge that allows designers to imagine artifacts, places, and systems that are thoughtfully enhanced or radically new. This course is a laboratory of observation, experimentation, deep listening, analysis, and communication that rethinks power dynamics to better understand how to design both for and with other people. With successful completion of this course you will be able to demonstrate competence in developing, refining, and communicating research interests in a committed, reflexive manner. You will gain an understanding of the strategic and tactical value of design and a sense of the practical problems involved in realizing design solutions and responses. You will gain experience not only in theoretically framing social and political issues, but also in understanding the methodological tools needed to translate problems into creative interventions.

READINGS AND RESOURCES
All assigned readings can be accessed in Moodle. Some are direct links, while others are posted as PDFs. Consult the syllabus to see what you should read for each class. Bring all assigned reading to class, as we will directly reference these texts in our discussions. Since electronic devices are not being used in this course, you should print readings and bring hard copies. Make notes in your readings—highlight key ideas, jot down questions, and provide critique. Please come to class prepared to debate, question, and engage with the themes and ideas encountered in the texts.

The reading list is always aspirational. We might find that we need time to process and choose to move more slowly through the material. As a result, we might not get to some of the readings listed. If we do skip some texts, I will share ideas from these in our class discussions and I hope you will return to these when time allows.

## OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

The following framework, like every strategic design, will evolve as the semester unfolds. Please refer to Moodle for updates and our shared folders for additional resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>week</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>topics</th>
<th>readings/assignments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>introductions / overview of the course</td>
<td><strong>In class:</strong> We will look at Paul Thek’s “Teaching Notes”—questions and activities we will address throughout the semester.</td>
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**Watch:** Have a look at the videos posted on Moodle before we meet. |
|      | 9/13 | from the native’s point of view | **Read:** Geertz, Clifford. 1974. “‘From the Native’s Point of View’: Or the Nature of Anthropological Understanding.” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28(1): 26-45.  

**Assignment:** Reflection on situated and subjugated knowledges. See Moodle and handout distributed for details. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Annotation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>Jamison, Leslie. 2014. “The Empathy Exams,” in The Empathy Exams: Essays. Minneapolis: Graywold Press, pp. 1-31.</td>
<td><strong>Warning:</strong> These readings contain discussions of violence. The Sontag text includes graphic imagery. We may also look at images in class that depict violence. Please come talk to me if you have concerns.</td>
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<td>10/16</td>
<td>Dean, Mitchell. 2005. “Risk” in Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (eds.) New Keywords. Malden, MA: Blackwell.</td>
<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Picture Story. Locate an image of suffering and/or Otherness and annotate the image. Reference at least two readings from the course in your annotations. See Moodle and the handout distributed for details and guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>10/23</th>
<th>no class / fall break</th>
<th>Think about final project possibilities.</th>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Watch:</strong> Have a look at the two segments from Astra Taylor’s Examined Life featuring Judith Butler’s dialogue with Sunny Taylor and Martha Nussbaum.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Generate ideas for final project. Consider methods (see design toolkits in additional resources on Moodle). Identify sites and possible interviewees. Bring rough sketch of project proposal to class and we will workshop these. More details will be posted on Moodle and distributed in a handout.</td>
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| | 11/1 | vita activa: labor, work, and action | **Read:** Arendt, The Human Condition, pp. 81-129. |
| | | **Assignment:** Conduct site investigation and first interview. |

| 10 | 11/6 | the work of homo faber / worlding | **Read:** Arendt, The Human Condition, pp.136-159. |
| | 11/8 | the work of homo faber / worlding | **Read:** Arendt, The Human Condition pp. 159-174. |
11 11/13  speaking, acting agents / spaces of appearance


11/15  speaking, acting agents / spaces of appearance

No reading. Continued discussion of Arendt. Workshop final project (work-to-date) in class. Bring all relevant materials.

12 11/20  social and political interventions in art and design


Assignment: Specific assignments tailored to case studies. Bring work-to-date.

11/22  No class / Thanksgiving break

Work on case studies.

13 11/27  publics and counterpublics


11/29  What constitutes community?


14 12/4 political action / agonism / dissensus


12/6 review / workshop for final projects
Bring all relevant materials/work-to-date on your case study.

15 12/11 no class / reading period Work on case studies.

12/13 final exams final projects due

ASSESSABLE TASKS

Participation Student participation will be assessed by the effort and frequency of contributions given during in-class exercises and discussions, including the student’s ability to engage in constructive criticism of one’s own work and that of fellow students. Attending class regularly and punctually is an obvious prerequisite for successful participation. Participation is not simply speaking in class. Being present, actively listening, responding to peers with respect, engaging ideas from the readings in meaningful ways, being both reflective and reflexive, and building compelling and supported arguments constitute some of the important components of participation. The course includes frequent in-class activities, so it is essential that you are on time and present.

Collaboration While reading, writing, and editing are usually solitary activities, great work emerges in the spaces between people. We will be working in groups and peer review is an important aspect of the course. Your level of engagement when assessing the work of others is considered when evaluating participation.

Assignments There will be weekly assignments throughout the course. Some of these will happen in class, while others will be completed outside the classroom. A rubric for each assignment that outlines assessment criteria will be posted in Moodle (see the “assignments” tab in the course’s main menu). We will carefully discuss the requirements for each assignment prior to the due date. I will collect and provide comments on all assignments. Some of these will be given letter grades—others will be given a check, check-plus, or check-minus.

Assignments are due at the start of the class meeting and you should always bring a hard copy of your work. If you have an exceptional circumstance and cannot complete an assignment, please speak with me before the due date. If you have a personal or family emergency, your welfare comes first. If you are having trouble understanding expectations or assignments or instruction, please speak up. Always feel welcome to visit during office hours.
FINAL GRADE CALCULATION
Collaboration* and Participation 25%
engagement with readings, peer collaboration, active listening, and contribution to a rich and respectful classroom environment, also taking risks
Assignments 40%
these include a combination of graded work and low-stakes assignments that are evaluated as pass/fail
Final Project 35%
case study / creative intervention / (re)design of artifact, place, or system: includes a proposal, a well-researched and clearly argued design brief, and a prototype

TOTAL 100%

*Note: Collaboration is integral to participatory design. While you are not required to work directly with your colleagues to advance one project, you will contribute to the research, development and evaluation of one another’s projects. Given that collaboration is contingent upon participation, you are expected to come prepared to each meeting to think critically and speak generously.

GRADING STANDARDS
Rubrics for all assignments will be posted on Moodle. In general, grading is based on the criteria below:

A/ A- Excellent in all or nearly all respects. The interest of the reader/audience is engaged by the ideas and presentation. Effective organization and writing. Work is marked by originality of ideas.
B+ Clear argument, clear writing, good evidence, appropriate response.
B/B- Technically competent, with perhaps a lapse here and there. The thesis is clear, properly limited, and reasonable, and the proposal is generally good but not distinguished. Use of evidence is sufficient.
C+/C A competent piece of work, but falls a bit short meeting the expectations of the assignment. More or less adequately organized, but less tightly than required. This may be unclear or too simple. Development is lacking. Use of evidence may not be adequate or convincing. Sentence structure may be monotonous and there may be errors sprinkled throughout.
C-/D A piece of work that demonstrates effort on the author’s part, but is too marred by technical problems or flaws in thinking or development of ideas to be considered competent work.
E/F Failing grade. Work does not respond to or meet requirements of assignment. May be too short, grammar and style may be careless.

Final letter grades are determined according to the following scale:
POLICIES

Attendance Because we are working collaboratively and much happens in our class meetings that is essential to the course, absences and lateness are taken very seriously. Arriving late three times will constitute one absence. Students are allowed one absence without consequence. Missing two classes will result in the drop of your overall participation grade by half of one grade. You should come and talk with me if you miss more than one class. Three absences will result in lowering your participation grade by a full grade. Missing more than three classes will lower your overall course grade by a one full grade. Excessive absences will result in failure of the course.

Accessibility Services Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Academic Honesty and Integrity Students are expected to abide by Wesleyan University’s Honor Code in all assignments and examinations. Discussion of class content among students is strongly encouraged, but simply copying a classmate’s responses to homework or exams undermines our community of trust, and keeps you from practicing the skills covered in the assignment. Suspected Honor Code violations will be referred to the Honor Board. If I find that you have plagiarized, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment. A second incident will result in a grade of F for the course. Don’t hesitate to approach me if you have questions or concerns about academic honesty in this course.

Moodle Moodle is an important resource for this class. On Moodle, you can view our course schedule and find readings and other media—both required and recommended. All assignment guidelines and rubrics are posted under “assignments.” I will also post announcements here, so please have a look each week.

Courtesy and Electronic Devices The use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc.) is permitted only when the device is being used in relation to the course’s work. All other uses are prohibited in the classroom and devices should be turned off and placed out of sight before class starts.