course overview

How can we encourage and inspire meaningful social change? How can we design and implement effective programs that address social injustice? How can we realize human rights, secure civil rights, and end oppression in our communities, across our country, and around the world? We will attempt to answer these questions by exploring specific steps of the design process. A key goal of this course is to acquire an intellectual and applied understanding of the principles of program design and development, which include a sustained consideration of historical context and issues affecting the quality of program implementation. Attention will be devoted to specific steps within the design and implementation process, as well as case studies of real-world programs with a focus on anti-oppression. We will examine a range of topics, including: finding inspiration; identification, recruitment, and retention of target audiences; audience-centered design; creating strategic goals and writing learning goals; and ensuring sustainability. What counts as a social need or social problem is subjective and complex and programs can therefore be difficult to manage and evaluate. In light of this, our exploration of design will include consideration of the organizational, ethical, and political contexts of implementation. Course assignments are student-driven. Throughout the quarter, we will work together to build a series of historical Timelines on prejudice and oppression. Students will work in small groups on a number of Innovation Challenges. And, starting early in the quarter, students will work in teams on a Design Project in which you will design and write an implementation proposal for an original social program.

when & where

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30pm - 1:50pm
Annenberg Hall, Room G02, 2120 Campus Drive, Evanston
For course documents, some texts, and assignment boards, see Canvas
learning goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to…

a. Navigate a complex, iterative design process when creating online and in-person social programs, including being able to…
   i. Conduct research to investigate a specific injustice and identify potential program audiences;
   ii. Create strategic program goals and write skills-driven learning goals for program participants;
   iii. Design social programs with implementation plans that are realistic, sustainable, and ethical.

b. Navigate the design process through frameworks for human rights, social justice, and anti-oppression, including being able to…
   i. Work through the design process while considering the historical and political contexts of ongoing injustice;
   ii. Explain how identity, privilege, and power contribute to marginalization and violence against specific groups of people;
   iii. Identify the institutional, cultural, and personal silencing that can be barriers to dialogue and social action to address injustice;
   iv. Create social justice programs that instill and enhance individual and collective resilience, empathy, healing, and action.

assessment

*Individual Assignments: 20%*

*Attendance and Class Participation: 25%*

*Timelines & Innovation Challenges: 25%*

*Design Project: 30%* (including preparatory assignments)
course team

instructor
Danny M. Cohen has a background in youth leadership and informal education and trained as a learning scientist at Northwestern with a specialization in Holocaust memory and human rights pedagogy. A distinguished professor of instruction here at the School of Education & Social Policy and The Crown Family Center for Jewish & Israel Studies, Danny teaches about Holocaust memory and the design of Holocaust and human rights education. He is the founder of Unsilence, a national nonprofit that uses storytelling, the arts, and serious games to unsilence hidden injustice and support communities to break taboos and have tough conversations about human rights. A faculty fellow of the Auschwitz Jewish Center and an inaugural Commissioner of the Illinois Holocaust & Genocide Commission, he designed and facilitated the pedagogical track of the inaugural docent training program at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. In addition to authoring academic articles on Holocaust and human rights education, Danny is a human rights fiction writer. His debut novel, TRAIN, was selected as the inaugural text of the national Museum Teacher Fellows book club of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Originally from London, Danny lives in Chicago with his husband and their daughter. He is also a visual artist, a singer-songwriter, and a member of the folk-rock band They Won’t Win. Email: dannymcohen@northwestern.edu

teaching assistant
Andrene Wright is a first generation American born and raised in Long Island, New York. She graduated from the City University of New York (CUNY) John Jay College in 2017 and began her PhD career at Northwestern University the fall of the same year. Andrene specializes in American Politics, specifically, urban politics and political behavior at the intersection of race, gender and class. She is especially committed to centering the voices of Black women not merely through the production of academic work, but especially within communities that are often overlooked. Email: andreenwright2016@u.northwestern.edu

teaching assistant
Anya Patel holds a Master’s in Public Health from Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine. She received her Bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University in Social Policy with a certificate in Civic Engagement. Anya was born and raised in Illinois and has worked at a number of Chicago-based organizations including the Obama Foundation and the Domestic Violence Legal Clinic. Anya is an Unsilence facilitator and education designer. Her Unsilence work includes leading youth and community workshops, as well as the design of Unsilence online and in-person learning experiences. Anya’s professional goal is to operate in love for the betterment of the surrounding community and to work towards equitable solutions to global issues. Email: anyapatel2019@u.northwestern.edu

office hours
By appointment
individual assignments: journal entries & final course reflection

**journal entries** At the end of each week throughout the quarter, with the aim of promoting deep reflection, you will post a Journal Entry (250 to 400 words) to Canvas by 5pm each Friday, reflecting on course texts, class discussions, and design team meetings from that week. There is no need to develop a formal argument. Stream-of-consciousness, informal prose, a list of questions, and bullet-points are all appropriate. Try to avoid “the pressure to be profound”; a Journal Entry should be simple and honest. If you respond to one another’s Journal Entries, please be respectful.

**final course reflection** At the very end of the quarter, you will write a personal individual reflection on what you learned over the course. Send your final individual course reflection in the body of an email – not as an attachment – to Andrene, Anya, and Danny.

**late assignments** To be fair to all students, any late assignments, including group assignments, will be docked the equivalent of one half-grade (for example, from a B+ to a B) for each 24-hour period delay in submission. Assignments submitted after seven days beyond the stated deadline may receive a fail grade.

attendance & class participation

**discussion** This course is student-centered. The quality of class discussion will be determined by what you put into it. As you read or watch each course text, note down what you find surprising. Come to each class with questions, ready to discuss what surprised you, to critique each text, and to discuss how each text relates to other course texts. Be prepared to contribute to all class discussions, including small-group activities, and bring your creative hat! (You may bring a laptop or tablet to class to take notes and to access readings, but please refrain from checking your email, social media, etc.)

**absences & make up assignments** You must attend all class sessions. Your punctuality and attendance will be factored into your class participation grade. If you know that you will be late or absent for a class session, email Andrene and Anya. All absences must be supported by a valid reason and supporting documents, if available. If you miss a class, you must complete a make up assignment. It is your responsibility to obtain class notes from another student and, within one week of the missed class, to email Andrene, Anya, and Danny an essay of around 500 words (posted in the body of the email, not as an attachment) on the related class texts and class activities. Make up assignments will be factored into your class participation grade. A missing or poorly written make up assignment will affect your class participation grade.
timelines

Throughout the course, we will work together to build a series of Timelines on prejudice and oppression – grounded in our research and exploration of credible sources – to represent a history of prejudice and oppression in the United States and around the world. The Timelines will be dynamic and open-ended. We will distribute specific prompts for building the Timelines as the quarter progresses. The goal of these Timelines is to provide historical context for our course texts, discussions, and assignments. In addition, the Timelines serve as springboards for the Innovation Challenges.

innovation challenges

Throughout the course, you will work on a number of Innovation Challenges. For each Innovation Challenge, you will work in a group (of 2 or 3 people) to design a new program of your choice inspired by our course texts and our Timelines. Design Challenges are quick, intense assignments that can take many forms, depending on your interests.

Innovation Challenge Guidelines:

- Choose a topic that interests you and your group. For each challenge, you must work with a different group of 2 or 3 people. Each Innovation Challenge must connect clearly to course texts and Timeline sources. Build an original design that fills a gap in what already exists in the world. Work quickly. Don’t worry about submitting something that isn’t polished. For example, if you’d like to design an app or a website or a complex three-years multi-structured learning experience, there’s no need to design it fully. It’s absolutely fine to submit a rough sketch of your ideas.

- When we design, it is crucial that what we create – and the processes we use to create them – are people-centered. As we’ll explore throughout the quarter, it’s all too easy to allow our assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes of different communities and social groups to get in the way of lived realities. Each of your designs should include your research on the voices, perspectives, and experiences of your audience(s), and you must make clear in each Innovation Challenge how your research guided your design.

- Be creative and open-minded. Think big and bold. In case you need to kick-start your thinking, here are a few ideas: Design a national teacher training program… Create a plan for an innovative summer camp or an after-school program… Write the outline and a scene for a theatre production that will travel to middle schools across the country… Put together the mock-up of a global app… Create a rough sketch for a traveling exhibition… Design a community center or create a cutting-edge community dialogue program… Create a choose-your-own-adventure based learning experience or an educational WebQuest… And so on. The design possibilities are endless!
• Think critically about your design. These Innovation Challenges are intended to be spaces of exploration – and of failure, too. It’s likely that you’ll develop an idea that you realize won’t really work! After all, it’s so rare to create something effective in one iteration in such a short amount of time. Take time to explain why it isn’t such an effective design or what needs improvement, more development, or a full rework. Just as we’re interested in your big ideas, we’re interested in your design process and behind-the-curtain thinking. Therefore, please always include a short discussion of the limitations or pitfalls of your design idea.

• CHECK LIST: Depending on what you create, your detailed Design Challenge description should include (bullet-points are fine): (a) the specific problem you’re trying to solve; (b) what you’re trying to achieve; (c) a description of your specific audience and why you chose this audience; (d) evidence that your design is built on the foundation of your audience’s voices, perspectives, and experiences; (e) the location and length of your program; (f) what participants will do and experience; (g) who will be implementing and/or facilitating the program; (h) your strategy for measuring success, and anything else that’s relevant. Post your design description in the relevant Canvas discussion forum, either pasted into the Canvas text box, or as an attachment. If you submit a Google Document, make sure that it can be read by anyone with the link. Proof-read all submissions for spelling, grammar, structure, and clarity.

• COVER SHEET: In addition to your design, post in the Canvas text box a Cover Sheet that includes: (a) full names of all team members, (b) a compelling title, (c) a summary (up to 50 words) of what you designed, including your audience and central goal, and (d) an honest discussion (up to 150 words, bullet points are fine) about the limitations and pitfalls of your design. Along with each Innovation Challenge submission, always include full references for all sources you use (including course texts). Only use credible sources.

An example: Your group is inspired by a course text and a number of Timeline sources that address the history of mass incarceration in the United States. You conduct additional research on the experiences of teenagers who have a parent who is incarcerated. You work together to design a web-based experience that provides teenagers with mental health support. As a group, you write up and submit to Canvas a short design proposal, mostly written in bullet points combined with snapshots of a lo-fidelity prototype, and you briefly explain and critique your design idea.

Another example: Each team member is interested in a different course text for the upcoming week; the texts address sexual violence and hate groups. But the topics feel unrelated and you can’t decide where to focus. As you brainstorm design ideas, you realize that you are all interested in photography. You work together to curate – using a free drag-and-drop website builder (e.g., www.weebly.com) – an online photography exhibition intended for public education on how white supremacy feeds into misogyny. You use carefully-chosen photographs from online (for which you provide full references) and you write concise captions for each photograph to tell a compelling story. You post the link to the website you created along with a brief explanation and critique of your design.
design projects

A key part of this course is a Design Project in which you will work in a design team to develop an original program that addresses a specific and real social problem or need that interests you deeply. This program can be hypothetical, or you may consult with and design for a real-world community or organization. Early in the quarter, you will form design teams of 5 or 6 people. You are encouraged to form teams of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and skills. We encourage you to think about possible topics right away. To support the design process, the Design Project is structured around a number of milestones: each design team will submit a needs analysis, assets report, learning goals, team contract, and LOI. Assignment guidelines will be provided throughout the quarter. The Design Project will culminate in a team presentation – community expo-style – and a group final paper in the form of a design proposal. Detailed guidelines for the Design Project will be distributed later in the quarter.

integrity & support

support Throughout this course, we will study a number of texts, programs, and social issues that may raise personal issues for you or your classmates. For example, we will learn about violence and abuse, including sexual violence and hate-crimes, as well as other difficult issues, such as suicide, gun violence, bereavement, and mass atrocity. Throughout the quarter, please be aware that what you say and write can affect others. Please always try to be respectful and kind. And please be mindful that our classroom community most likely includes survivors of violence as well as those who have witnessed or have been affected indirectly by violence or loss. Please know that NU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide support and guidance with personal issues you might have. In addition, NU’s Center for Awareness, Response, and Education (CARE) is a great resource. CARE provides “information, advice, crisis counseling, support, advocacy, referrals and education about sexual violence (including sexual assault, rape, intimate partner violence and stalking) as well as consent, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality to the Northwestern University community.” Please note that if we read anything within a written assignment – or hear anything during class – of concern, we may need to follow up appropriately.

academic integrity Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide.” All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html

accessible NU Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential. https://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/
**course texts**

All course texts (see links in the course schedule below) are required reading/viewing. If a link is broken, try Googling the title and author of the text. If no link is provided, the text is available on Canvas under ‘Modules’ > ‘Course Pack.’

**Access to The New York Times:** Everyone in the NU Community has access to The New York Times and many other newspapers, magazines, and periodicals. Note: The archived content is not as pretty as The New York Times website and images are usually excluded, but all the written content should be there. If you have problems with access, contact NU Library Services – their live chat service is good.

Access process:
1. Make sure you’re signed in through NU VPN
2. Go to the [NU Library homepage](#)
3. Log in with your NetID
4. Search for ‘New York Times’
5. Click on ‘Online access’ (under the 3rd result in the list)
6. On the next page of results, click on ‘US Newsstream’ (again, 3rd result in the list)
7. In the search box, enter the article title using quotation marks, the year, and the last name of the author
8. This will take you to your final search results – click on the article title
1. INTRODUCTIONS – Tues Jan 7

Assignments before next class

By tomorrow (Wednesday) at 5pm, write and post to Canvas an informal stream-of-consciousness reflection (approx. 300 words) exploring ‘Emotion and Injustice,’ answering the question: What will you do this quarter to manage your own emotional responses to the content about injustice and violence explored in this course?

Some more questions to consider as you write: When we learn about injustice and violence, we can feel many emotions – including conflicting emotions or an absence of emotion – such as feeling sad, outraged, hopeful, frightened, shocked, frustrated, optimistic, hopeless, numb, angry, empowered, indifferent, horrified, pensive, cynical, compassionate, confused, disgusted, connected, vengeful, anxious, forgiving, and many other feelings. What are your typical emotional responses to learning about injustice and violence in the world? Do the people in your life respond differently? Looking ahead at the assigned texts below, how do you expect to respond to this course’s content? Do you use any strategies to help you navigate your emotional responses to violence and injustice? How can we manage anxiety or stress that can often stem from learning about violence? How can we support each other? To what extent are we taught how to respond emotionally to injustice in the world? To what extent does the media affect – and even manipulate – how we respond emotionally to unjust and violent events? How do our emotional responses drive our actions in service of social change? How do our emotional responses to injustice lead to inaction?

For our next class session, please bring from home a well designed and/or a poorly designed object. Others will be handling these objects, so please do not bring in dangerous objects or objects of monetary or sentimental value.

2. DESIGN INSPIRATION – Thurs Jan 9

Texts for this class

Read: Why Homeless Youth Need Lockers (2015) by Megy Karydes
Watch the short video and read: What Does Siri Say After You’ve Been Raped? (2016) by Alison Bowen
Read: The Internet of Way Too Many Things (2015) and Solving All the Wrong Problems (2016) by Allison Arieff

Assignments before next class

Journal Entry for Week 1 by Friday at 5pm
Timeline Research by Monday at 5pm
3. IDENTITY, PRIVILEGE, POWER – Tues Jan 14

Texts for this class
Watch: *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Listen and/or read: *Teaching 6-Year-Olds About Privilege and Power* (2019) by Katrina Schwartz
Read: *Defensive Architecture* (2015) by Alex Andreou

Assignments before next class
Timeline Research by Wednesday at 5pm

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXTS – Thurs Jan 16

Texts for this class
In preparation for this class session, browse through our Timelines
Read: *Children of the Age* (1988) by Wisława Szymborska
Listen and read: *Strange Fruit: Anniversary of a Lynching* (2010, NPR)

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 2 by Friday at 5pm
Innovation Challenge 1 by Monday at 5pm
Week 3

5. A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS – Tues Jan 21

Texts for this class
Read: A Man Called Lemkin (1988) by A. M. Rosenthal
Browse the following documents:
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)
Articles 5, 6, 7, and 8 of The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (United Nations, 1999)

Assignments before next class
Design Project Teams & Topics by Wednesday at 5pm

6. LEARNING GOALS – Thurs Jan 23

Texts for this class

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 3 by Friday at 5pm
Timeline Research by Monday at 5pm
7. FROM PAST TO PRESENT – Tues Jan 28

Texts for this class
Watch: *We Need to Talk About an Injustice* (2012) by Bryan Stevenson
Browse: The websites of the [National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](https://www.ncadp.org) (NCADP) and [Equal Justice Initiative](https://www.equaljusticeinitiative.org) including *Lynching In America* (2017)
Read: *Painter Immortalizes Last Meals of 600 Prisoners Put to Death* (2015) *The Last Supper* by Julie Green, reported by Anya Van Wagendonk
Read and watch: *My Four Months as a Private Prison Guard* (2016) by Shane Bauer

Assignments before next class
Design Project Needs Analysis by Wednesday at 5pm

8. UNSILENCE INJUSTICE – Thurs Jan 30

Texts for this class
Watch: *Can Art Amend History?* (2017) by Titus Kaphar
Read: *Why Grieving Mothers Need to Share Their Stories* by Gwendolyn Baxter and *Unsilence Voices: The Sisterhood* (2019)
Read: *Biased Algorithms Are Easier to Fix Than Biased People* (2019) by Sendhil Mullainathan

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 4 by Friday at 5pm
Innovation Challenge 2 by Monday at 5pm
Week 5

9. PERSONAL SILENCING – Tues Feb 4

Texts for this class
Read: *Confronting Racism is Not About the Needs and Feelings of White People* (2019) by Ijeoma Oluo
Browse the website of *The Voices and Faces Project*

Assignments before next class
Design Project Assets Report by Wednesday at 5pm

10. CULTURAL SILENCING – Thurs Feb 6

Texts for this class
Read: *The Lottery* (1948) by Shirley Jackson
Read: *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963) by Martin Luther King Jr.
Browse: *Hate Groups Map* (2017) Southern Poverty Law Center

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 5 by Friday at 5pm
Timeline Research by Monday at 5pm
Week 6

11. INSTITUTIONAL SILENCING – Tues Feb 11

Texts for this class
Read: *An Interactive Guide To Ambiguous Grammar* (2015) by Vijith Assar
Watch and read: *Cook County inmates transported to Navy Pier for visit with their kids at Children’s Museum* (2019) by Chuck Goudie and Barb Markoff

Assignments before next class
Design Project Strategic Goals and Learning Goals by Wednesday at 5pm

12. RESILIENCE, EMPATHY, HEALING – Thurs Feb 13

Texts for this class
Read: *The Case for Reparations* (2014) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 6 by Friday at 5pm
Innovation Challenge 3 by Monday at 5pm
Week 7

**DESIGN TEAM MEETINGS – Tues Feb 18**

**Texts for this class**

**Assignments before next class**
Design Project Team Contract by Wednesday at 5pm

**DESIGN TEAM MEETINGS – Thurs Feb 20**

**Texts for this class**
Read: *Prototyping 101* (2017) by Nick Babich

**Assignments before next class**
Journal Entry for Week 7 by Friday at 5pm
Timeline Research by Monday at 5pm
Week 8

13. DESIGN ON THE GROUND – Tues Feb 25

Texts for this class
Browse the website of Sex Workers Outreach Project (2020)
Watch: Black Parents Explain How to Deal with the Police (2017) by Cut
Read: When Mental Health Experts, Not Police, Are The First Responders (2018) by Zusha Elinson
Browse the website of White Bird Clinic's Cahoots Program

Assignments before next class
Design Project LOI by Wednesday at 5pm

14. DESIGN & MOTIVATION – Thurs Feb 27

Texts for this class
Watch: Conflict (2015) by Nick Fitzhugh
Read: The Son (2017) the testimony of Michael Bauer
Browse, explore, and watch videos on the website for It Gets Better

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 8 by Friday at 5pm
Innovation Challenge 4 by Monday at 5pm
Week 9

15. SUSTAINABILITY & ETHICS – Tues March 3

Texts for this class
Explore and browse the various articles and resources on the Nonprofit Sustainability page of the National Council of Nonprofits
Read: Ethics and Nonprofits (2009) by Deborah L. Rhode & Amanda K. Packel

Assignments before next class
Continue to work on your Design Project

16. FICTION AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE – Thurs March 5

Texts for this class
Read: Hand-Holding and Dice (2017) by Rachel Asher
Watch: Meet My Rapist (2013) by Jessie Kahnweiler
Read: Laughing About Rape (2014), an interview with Jessie Kahnweiler by Danny M. Cohen

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 9 by Friday at 5pm
Innovation Challenge 5 by Monday at 5pm
Week 10

17. CONCLUSIONS – Tues March 10

Texts for this class
Read: This Has Been the Best Year Ever (2019) by Nicholas Kristof
Read: Human Rights Are Animal Rights (2017) by Peter Tatchell
Read: Building an Ethical Career (2020) by Maryam Kouchaki and Isaac H. Smith

Assignments before next class
Prepare for Design Expo and Design Proposal

DESIGN TEAM MEETINGS – Thurs March 12

Assignments before next class
Journal Entry for Week 10 by Friday at 5pm
Timeline Reflection by Monday at 5pm

Week 11

18. DESIGN EXPO – Monday March 16, 3pm-5pm

FINAL PAPERS
Design Proposal by Thursday at 5pm
Final Individual Course Reflection by email to Andrene, Anya, and Danny by Friday at 5pm