

# Power, privilege and equity: Designing and building services and products

Training course

by Clara Greo and Sonia Turcotte

## About the course

Institutional and systematic oppression exists in the UK and manifests in the services which we design and deliver to users. As people who create and deliver services and products, it's our responsibility to understand how our power and privilege impacts our work and the services we create, and to try to do better.

In this course, we will explore:

- our own privileges
- how power manifests in services
- how power and privilege plays out in the way we work (our practice and methods)
- how the decisions we make determine who has power, and how we might change this

## Format

In a face to face format, this course takes 1 day. In a remote / online format, we have 2 versions of the course. The version for UCD practitioners (designers and researchers) takes 8 hours - 4 x 2 hour sessions with some homework between

sessions, which could be run over 2 days or 4 days. The version for senior leaders takes 6 hours - 3 x 2 hour sessions.

The course can have 15-20 people attendees each time it is run.

The course is relevant for anyone who plays a role in creating online or offline services or products.

No experience or knowledge is required. We will ask you to bring a piece of work with you to the course.

We have a [code of conduct](#) for the course, and we prioritise making the course safe and inclusive for everyone. The course addresses many different types of oppression, examples of oppression are discussed in the course and people may share their own thoughts and experiences - some participants may find these things traumatic or triggering. In the first session we will discuss examples of oppression in the UK based in homophobia, racism, sexism and gender discrimination and ableism.

We created this course when Sonia and Clara worked together in government at GDS in 2019. It was initially created for designers, and has been expanded for other disciplines and industries. We have run the course several times face to face and remotely, as well as in shorter formats for conferences and workshops.

## Course contents

- Introduction
  - framing the course
  - definitions
  - examples
- Our own privileges
  - an exercise
- How power manifests in services
  - examples and discussion
- Paradigms
  - exercises and discussion inside and outside paradigms
- Locating power, oppression and paradigms in the things we make
  - example, discussion and exercise about shifting the power

- How our decisions determine who has power, and how we might change this
  - locating power, oppression and paradigms in how we work – our practices and methods
  - exercise about re-evaluating our process to shift power

## Contact

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# Learning objectives for the course

After attending this course, we aim for people to:

- Work in a more equitable way and deliver more equitable products
- Be aware of their own power and how power informs, shapes and is expressed in the work we do
- Think critically about equity and justice in public services
- Educate themselves and others about the impact of power and privilege in our work
- Change the way power is distributed in their teams and the products they build
- Identify, create and use tools to embed more equitable practices in their work

# Definitions we use in the course

**Bias:** preconceived opinions and emotions held about individuals or groups, that could be positive or negative

**Prejudice:** a prejudgment based on inadequate knowledge, often relying on stereotypes

**Power:** the ability to affect an outcome

**Prejudice:** what happens when prejudices are acted on in the real world. Without power, prejudice has no effect

**Structural or systemic oppression:** the weight of discrimination on people's lives, when it is supported or legitimised by the state, institutions, laws, customs or culture

**Paradigms:** broadly a set of concepts, thought patterns, theories, beliefs or standards that are commonly accepted. For example, christianity, heteronormativity, white supremacy and the gender binary.

## Resources

Design alone is not going to solve systematic oppression and structural racism. Here are some other things you must do.

Educate yourselves

Amplify without centering yourself

Donate

Collect and call in the people in your life

Work out what hard work you should do next and do it

Guide to Allyship:

<https://guidetoallyship.com/>

[The characteristics of white supremacy culture](#)

### Reading – books

*Design Justice*

by Sasha Constanza-Chock

*Designs for the Pluriverse*

by Arturo Escobar

*Public and collaborative: exploring the intersection of design, social innovation and public policy.*

by DESIS Network

*Decolonizing Methodologies*

by Linda Tuhiwai Smith

*Race After Technology*

Ruha Benjamin

*Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*

by Reni Eddo-Lodge

*Feminism, Interrupted*

by Lola Olufemi

*What White People Can Do Next*

by Emma Dabiri

*So You Want to Talk About Race*

by Ijeoma Oluo

*The Wretched Of The Earth*

by Frantz Fanon

*Beyond Sticky Notes*

By Kelly Ann Mckercher

## **Reading – articles**

*The Imperial Code, Or, What if I Told You It's the Colonial Matrix of Power?* (July 26 2016)

Matthew Kiem

*The Hidden Privilege in Design* (October 23 2018)

Hareem Mannan

*Trans-inclusive Design.* (9 May 2019)

Erin White

Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race. (30 May 2017)

Reni Eddo-Lodge

Xenodesignerly Ways of Knowing (14 March 2019)

Johanna Schmeer

It's Time to Define What "Good" Means in Our Industry (14 March 2019)

George Aye

Design Thinking is a Rebrand for White Supremacy (2 March 2020)

Darin Buzon

A brief history of how racism manifests itself in design and how we can learn from it (4 June 2020)

Amrutha Pal

The characteristics of white supremacy culture - From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

How to begin designing for diversity (18 September 2019)

By Project inkblot

## **Watching and listening:**

Intersectionality matters! podcast:

<https://www.aapf.org/imkc-podcast-episodes>

About Race podcast:

<https://www.aboutracepodcast.com/>

13th (Ava DuVernay)

Documentary on Netflix

How to Break into the Elite (Amol Rajan)

Documentary on BBC

If Beale Street Could Talk (Barry Jenkins)  
Movie

Selma (Ava DuVernay)  
Movie

[Where are the black designers conference](#)

## **Resources from Sonia and Clara's work at NHS Digital in 2021**

[Weeknotes](#)

[A collection of toolkits](#), frameworks and guides for working on equity and inclusion

Consequence scanning [workshop template](#) and [slide deck](#)