As the currency through which planning and development are mobilized becomes increasingly data-based and scripted through algorithms and formulas, it is imperative for designers to develop new approaches, tools and techniques through which to apprehend the city and work on urban questions. A core capacity for future designers is a deep literacy in the means to operate within the data-rich environments of the contemporary city - both to recognize and visualize existing patterns and to develop proposals for alternate futures. This capacity is particularly important for those who wish to work on the city in alignment with community interests, and as design innovators. In this course, we will couple the scripting of data visualization with the scripting of new cultural narratives for design.

This course will introduce students to contemporary thinking around urban equity and access from the perspective of the design disciplines. In parallel we will develop technology based capacities through range of tools including the use GIS mapping tools to develop novel thick cartographies. These artifacts, layered descriptions of a world that exists as well as a world that is in a state of becoming, will be the creative focus of the course across the duration of the term. Learning structured within the classroom will be enhanced by GIS workshops, expert engagement, and extracurricular community engagement.

We will work with specific focus in the city of Detroit through two frameworks: around challenges of social equity through the lens of Urban Accessibility to Food, Health and Learning, and around the challenges of resource sustainability and material flows through the lens of the Food Water Energy Nexus. Term projects will be developed in collaborative teams through a combination of cartography and writing work that aims to unpack and problematize specific challenges and articulate possibilities for design intervention.