Esther Y. Kang, Ph.D.

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Education

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in design
Carnegie Mellon University | Pittsburgh, PA (US)
2020 – 2024
Advisory Committee: Jonathan Chapman, Ph.D. (Chair), Sarah E. Fox, Ph.D., and Noah Theriault, Ph.D.
Title: *Sediments of Design: Reimagining the Temporal Dimension of Place-based Design in the US*
Funded doctoral student
Teaching Fellowship Award

Master of Arts (MA) in social design
2015 - 2016
Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) | Baltimore, MD (US)
Title: *Community Development and Human Centered Design in Baltimore*
Social Design Scholarship

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) with concentrations in art theory and photography
2007 - 2010
School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) | Chicago, IL (US)
Title: *Untitled* (multimedia installation on the politics of language)
Merit Scholarship & Transfer Student Scholarship
Transferred from Pasadena City College & Art Center College's Night Program

Academic Positions

2024 — Present
University of Wisconsin Madison | School of Human Ecology
Assistant Professor (tenure-track)
Design Studies Department & Civil Society and Community Studies Department

2020 – 2024
Carnegie Mellon University | College of Fine Art
Teaching Fellow (non-tenure)
Design Department

2022 – 2024
New York University | Tandon School of Engineering
Adjunct Assistant Professor (non-tenure)
Technology, Culture and Society Department

2019 – 2020
School of Visual Arts | Design for Social Innovation
Thesis Advisor (non-tenure)

2018 – 2019
Pratt Institute

Visiting Assistant Professor (non-tenure)
Graduate Communication Design Department

2018 – 2020
New York University | Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
Adjunct Assistant Professor (non-tenure)
Public Administration & Nonprofit Management Graduate Program

Awards & Recognition

Selected to be a Part of the Summer 2024 Cohort
Chicago Designs: Teaching Community-based Histories | A summer workshop for educators '24

Nominated for a Diversity Award
"Patchwork: The Hidden, Human Labor of AI Integration within Essential Work." CSCW '23

DIS Best Paper Honorable Mention Award
"Stories from the Frontline: Recuperating Essential Worker Accounts of AI Integration." DIS '22

Route Fifty Navigator Award
State Leadership Award with collaborators, 2020

Teaching Fellowship Award
Carnegie Mellon University, 2020 – 2024

NextGen10 Awardee
CSQ Magazine, 2019

40 Under 40 Awardee
CSQ Magazine, 2019

Hack-a-thon Finalist
Social Innovation Fest in Washington DC, 2015

Social Design Scholarship
Maryland Institute College of Art, 2015 - 2016

Merit Scholarship
School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2007 - 2010

Publications

Journal Article
Esther Y. Kang. 2024. *Legible for Whom? Decentering the Dichotomy of Center and Periphery.* Diseña, (25)
Essay.1.https://doi.org/10.7764/disena.25.Essay.1

Conference Paper
Esther Y. Kang. 2025. *Micro-politics of Participatory Design: Managing Tradeoffs in Collaborative Work.* (working title) Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW). *Forthcoming.*

Sarah E. Fox, Samantha Shorey, **Esther Y. Kang**, Dominique Montiel Valle, and Estefania Rodriguez. 2023. Patchwork: The Hidden, Human Labor of AI Integration within Essential Work. In Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW '23). **Nominated for a Diversity Award.**

Esther Y. Kang and Sarah E. Fox. 2022. Stories from the Frontline: Recuperating Essential Worker Accounts of AI Integration. In Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS '22). Association for Computing

Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 58–70. https://doi.org/10.1145/3532106.3533564. **Best Paper Honorable Mention.**

Kang, E. 2021. Reverberations at the Edges: Politics of Designed Im/materiality. In Proceedings of Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD10) 2021 Symposium. November 6, 2021.

Book Chapter
Kang, E. 2025. *The Politics of Place-based Design: An Inquiry into a Worldbuilding Practice.*
Urban Humanities 2: An (Un)Volume on Place, Pedagogy, and Practice. MIT Press (Pending). *Accepted. Forthcoming Fall 2025.*

Textbook
Pontis, Sheila, and Michael Babwahsingh. *Information Design Unbound: Key Concepts and Skills for Making Sense in a Changing World*. UK, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023.
Contributor of a case study to this textbook

Workshops & Presentations

Conference Presentation
Kang. E. 2023. Developing a Critical and Sensitive Design Ethos: Detaching from Market Logic. For Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (HASTAC), Pratt Institute (New York City)

Kang. E. 2023. Designerly Ways of Knowing. For the Inaugural Urban Humanities (Un)conference. The University of Arizona (Tucson, AZ).

Invited Workshops
Kang. E. 2025. TANF & Design Policy. Two-day Workshop for Undergrad, Grad, and Doctoral Students. UW-Madison's School of Human Ecology. Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) Dept.

Invited Talks
Kang. E. 2025. Critical Memory Work: Re-tooling Design Methods to Re-remember. UCLA's Department of Information Studies. *User Experience and Library & Information Science* speaker series.

Kang. E. 2022. Ethic of Imagination. HmntyCntrd Critical UX.

Kang. E. 2022. Transdisciplinary Design Assembly. Parsons at the New School.

Kang. E. 2020. Women in Politics Fostering Digital Inclusion. UN Commission on the Status of Women & The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's NY Office

Selected Professional Experience

Principal & Owner of studio e.y.k. | 2016 – Present
Projects focused on bringing participatory practices to historically hierarchical spaces and practices, such as policy-making, urban planning, technology development, and service design

Designer-in-Residence (Inaugural One-Year Resident) | Jan. 2016 - Dec. 2016
White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through the US Office of Public Engagement under the Obama Administration
In-house creative strategist who supported projects across federal agencies and regional networks

Design Researcher & Strategist | 2015 – 2016
Center for Social Design at Maryland Institute College of Art
Developed place-based, equity-centered strategies for community-based organizations in Baltimore

Manager, Program and Organizational Development | 2011 - 2015
The Durfee Foundation
Managed a $2 million portfolio for a site-specific family foundation

Selected Professional Projects

Internal Innovation Incubator at Vera Institute of Justice | 2022 | **NYC**
Strategy Consultant | Worked directly with the leadership team of the Innovation Team to develop a research-informed blueprint for the next stage of this incubator.

R&D for digital service at New Jersey State's Office of Innovation | 2020 | **Trenton, NJ**
Research Lead for Phase One & Two | Cross-agency, multidisciplinary effort to develop a public, digital service that addressed the issue of unemployment at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research integrated design research, academic research, and research-driven content & engineering methodology.

Outcomes-driven Budgeting at Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities | 2017 - 2019 | **NYC + others**
Human Centered Design Lead for Two Mayoral Teams | Coached Mayoral staff on qualitative approaches to understanding residents' experiences related to either local housing or education as well as ways it can complement existing quantitative practices

R&D for code enforcement process at NY State Attorney General's Office | 2018 - 2019 | **NY + 10 cities**
Research & Process Lead for Phase One and Two | Part of leadership to lead the development of a process map that distills twelve code enforcement processes across the state of NY and co-led two Mayoral staff's effort to reframe and qualitatively assess existing code enforcement processes. The objective was to outline how each city can develop a new code enforcement strategy that is created within an equity-centered framework.

Research on the constituent correspondence process at OpenGov Fdn | 2017 - 2018 | **Washington DC**
Senior Research Assistant | Worked on the first design research project at the Congressional Level. This project aimed to distill the input, process, and potential output of the ways Congressional offices (in DC and district offices) integrate (or don't) the opinions, experiences, and feedback from their constituents. This work was part of laying the groundwork to developing the Congressional Digital Service.

Academic Service

Co-Chair, Junior Faculty of Color Network (Cross Campus)
UW-Madison (2024 – Present)

University Academic Review (UAR), Board Member
Carnegie Mellon University (2020 – 2024)

University Disciplinary Committee (UDC), Board Member
Carnegie Mellon University (2020 – 2024)

Ryan Award for Meritorious Teaching
Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation
Carnegie Mellon University (2023)

Teaching Fellows Program, Advisor
School of Design, PhD Program
Carnegie Mellon University (2022)

Teaching Innovation Award Committee
Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation

Carnegie Mellon University (2022)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee
School of Design, PhD Program
Carnegie Mellon University (2020 – 2021)

Peer Reviewing
Cumulus International conference, 2024
Diseña Peer-review International Journal, 2024
DIS Design for Interactive Systems International Conference, 2024
CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2024
DISCERN, International Journal for Design for Social Change, Sustainable Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 2023
DIS Design for Interactive Systems International Conference, 2023
OzCHI (Australia Computer-Human Interaction) 2023
HASTAC, Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory, 2023
International Associations of Societies of Design Research 2023

Community Leadership
Mentor, NEW Inc, 2021 – 2023
Grant Panelist, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 2021
Grant Panelist, The Strange Foundation, 2020
Community Grant Committee Member, The Korean American Community Foundation, 2020
Board Member, Restorative Justice NYC, 2018 – 2019
Grant Panelist, Maryland (MD) Legislative District 46, Delegate Robbyn Lewis. 2017
Grant Panelist, The Durfee Foundation, 2012 - 2015
Co-Chair, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP), Los Angeles Chapter, 2012 - 2015
Founder, EPIP LA's Mentorship Program, 2012 - 2015
Judge, University of Southern California Annual Nonprofit Challenge, 2014
Advisory Council Member, Youth Speak Collective, 2012 - 2014

Teaching Assignments
Undergraduate & Graduate | Primary Advisor on Record
Independent Study for Undergraduate Senior Capstone Project (51499)
School of Design (CMU)
Fall 2023

MFA Design for Social Innovation Thesis l & ll
Design for Social Innovation (SVA)
Fall 2019 & Spring 2020

Undergraduate | Primary Instructor on Record
Design Studies: Place (51175)
School of Design (CMU)
Fall 2023

Undergraduate | Co-instructor on Record
Design Studies: Place (51175)
School of Design (CMU)
co-taught with Fas Lebbie
Fall 2022

Design Studies: Cultures (51279)
School of Design (CMU)
co-taught with Tricia Douglas
Spring 2022 & Fall 2022

Design Studies: Place (51175)
School of Design (CMU)
co-taught with Sofía Bosch Gómez & Charlee Brodsky
Fall 2021

Design Studies: Cultures (51279)
School of Design (CMU)
co-taught with Marysol Ortega Pallanez & Hajira Qazi
Spring 2021

Graduate | Primary Instructor on Record
Pre-thesis & Research Methods for Master's students (DM-GY 9963)
Tandon School of Engineering & Integrated Design and Media (NYU)
Spring 2024, Spring 2023 & Spring 2022

Design's Reverberations: Ripple Effects of Innovative Ideas (51419 & 51619)
School of Design (CMU)
Designed, Developed, and Taught Graduate-level Elective Course
Fall 2022

Design Thinking: A Creative Approach to Problem Solving (PADM-GP 2145)
Wagner Graduate School of Public Service (NYU)
Summer 2020, Spring 2020, Spring 2019 & Summer 2018

Undergraduate | Primary Teaching Assistant on Record
Electric Media and Culture
Professor Mina Cheon, PhD
Department of First Year Experience
Fall 2015

Invited Guest Lectures
Design Concepts for Mission-based Enterprises (Master's and PhD students)
UW-Madison School of Human Ecology. Civil Society and Community Studies Dept.
Fall 2024. Instructor: Mary Beth Collins, JD

Model Minorities?: Race, Rhetoric, and Identity in Asian America (Department of English)
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Spring 2024, Instructor: Sarah Hae-In Idzik, PhD

Design Principles & Practice (Master's students)
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Fall 2023, Instructor: Bruce Hanington

City Lab Talks
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Spring 2023, Instructor: Rayne Laborde Ruiz

Reformers, Revolutionaries, and Revanchists: Histories of Social Movements
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Fall 2022, Instructor: Noah Theriault, PhD

Research Methods in Design and Media (PhD students)
Northeastern University, Fall 2022, Instructor: Michael Mages, PhD

Design Minds, Master's Seminar; Module on Design and Social Justice
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Fall 2021, Instructor: Jonathan Chapman, PhD

Vision & Change (Master's Students)
Politecnico di Milano (Italy), Fall 2021, Instructor: Brian Joseph Press

Strategy & Management in Public Organizations (Master's Students)
Colin Powell School for Civic & Global Leadership at City College of New York. Fall 2021.
Instructor: Betsy MacLean

Design Minds, Master's Seminar; Module on Design and Social Justice
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Fall 2020, Instructor: Jonathan Chapman, PhD

Master's Year One Seminar; Module on Critical Race and Design
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Fall 2020, Instructor: Molly Wright Steenson, PhD

User Research for UX – Design
UC Berkeley Extension School, Fall 2020, Instructor: Sarah Fathallah

Research Assistant Experience

Graduate Research Assistant at Tech Solidarity Lab **(NSF Funded Project. Grant # 2037348)**
Human Computer Interaction Institute. Carnegie Mellon University. (primary)
Department of Communications. University of Texas, Austin. (secondary) 2021 – 2022
"Transformation of Essential Work: Managing the Introduction of AI in Response to COVID-19"
PI: Sarah E. Fox, PhD. Co-PI: Samantha Shorey, PhD.

Selected Training

Future Faculty Program (2020 – 2024)
Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation

Asian American Women Leaders Training (2021)
Hyeon-Ju Rho Coaching & Consulting (Los Angeles, CA)
Awarded a Scholarship

Fundamentals of Effective Grantmaking (2011)
Southern California Grantmakers (SCG)

Professional Memberships

Design Research Society (DRS)
American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA)
National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD)
Society for Social Studies of Science (4S)

Press

Office of NY Attorney General Letitia James Press Release; WENY News; WIVB News;
WIRED Magazine; Government Technology