

Seminar #2

Title: The Psychology of Everyday Actions

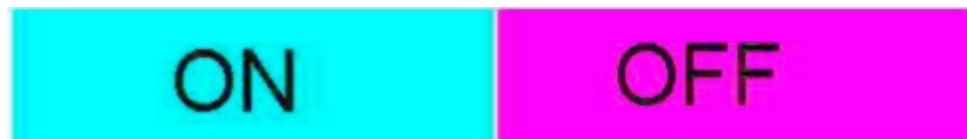
Week of Jan. 27 2020

Introduction

This topic deals with some of the basic principles of problem solving. Some of the traps and pitfalls we experience in our environment and in our faulty reasoning perpetuate improper response. In order to overcome these situations we must be aware of the design we propose for objects and be conscious of the messages design sends to the users.

Summary

Norman makes a good case for the need to be aware of our own state of mental models as we interact with the environment. **Learned Helplessness** and **Taught Helplessness** are two examples of how our state of mind can hinder the usage of objects. Other situations arise when the design of the object imposes artificial **Gulfs** or a mismatch between user and object. Norman goes on to state that the **7 stages of action** outline the process, in which a user must go through, to complete intended goals. He then goes on to propose we ask 7 basic design questions which target the 7 stages of action. These would then address the problems we find in everyday design.



Which State is this system in?

Objective

Be prepared to discuss some case studies regarding the design of objects and the errors which arose with the interaction, based on the readings. Come prepared with your own cases which will be used as discussion topics for the seminar group. How do the readings relate to the design of an object or artifact? Can Norman's discussion on the topics covered in the reading help resolve or at least identify why errors were made? If you were to address each of the 7 stages of action with relation to the design, could problems within the design be avoided.

Readings

Chapter two "[The Psychology of Everyday Actions](#)" of Donald A. Norman's "[The Design of Everyday Things](#)".

Seminar Preparation



Identify a software artifact which you interact with on a regular basis. The interaction is the result of forming *intentions* to accomplish *goals*. Using the reading as support for your argument, discuss the pitfalls in the design. How can one "**use the seven stages to ask design questions**", Figure 2.7, to improve the artifact? Will a simple redesign satisfy the criteria expressed in the Gulf of Execution and the Gulf of Evaluation? Be sure to suggest improvements if warranted.

Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What are the Gulfs?
- Describe the cognitive cycle when one interacts with an artifact.
- Describe Taught Helplessness.
- Describe Learned Helplessness.
- Why do we blame the wrong cause?

Marking

Marks will be awarded for presentation, preparation and participation in the discussion which exhibit emulsion into the subject matter. Students who do not come prepared can expect a low participation mark.