

4 MAXIMS COURSE. DSGN 160, WQ 2022

DON NORMAN¹

DSGN 160. Special Topics in Design: 4 Maxims to Change the World

A seminar course on my new book: Norman, D. (2022, submitted for publication). *Four Maxims to Change the World*. The book's 6 parts are available as PDFs on the Canvas website.

My goal is that this will be an exciting course, showing how design can be a powerful tool to change the world. I greatly expand the range of topics that design can cover and add value. I start with economics and politics. I cover how the models used by economists do not represent people's real behavior. I suggest several new models designed to present economic and other data in a way that people can understand and use.

I also approach the topic of sustainability, how current design and manufacturing processes are leading causes of the many problems that face the world today.

How can designers help reverse the current destruction of the planet? By becoming 21st-century designers, using design skills coupled with an understanding of economics, ecology, business models, politics, and the behavior of people.

The book analyzes the state of the world today and discusses the causes, impact, and role that design has played in creating the current state. Here, I am referring to design that has been done for thousands of years, long before the profession existed.

The solution? I propose Four Maxims, two of which suggest what actions need to be done, two that discuss the difficulties that will be faced in doing them.

THE COURSE

This is an advanced seminar. Rather than lectures, we will have discussions, led by student groups. The book has F parts (6 parts) which we will cover in sequence. Everyone will be expected to read each section prior to the class discussions so that there is no need to present the material in the book during class. Instead, the groups assigned the section will critique the material. (So be prepared to take a short 5-minute quiz on the material at the start of each Part.)

The word "critique" means to provide a detailed analysis and assessment of the material. Highlight the important insights. Discuss items that are missing. Reveal material that is confusing, ambiguous, incomplete, or simply wrong. Make suggestions.

The class will discuss the material and the critique. Active critique is an excellent way to learn. Moreover, it is my intention that I, the instructor and author of the book, will also learn. After the call is finished, I will revise the book using your critiques as a guide (giving credit to the class discussions).

The course ends with one or more class projects. One I would like to see is a website, where readers of the book can turn to learn more about each topic, find papers and writings as well as case studies of places that are putting some of the recommendations into practice. Each section of the website will give full credit to those who contributed. All contributions

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will give full credit to the people who helped develop it. Group work is encouraged. Project presentation end the quarter.

Prerequisites: Upper-Division OR Graduate standing, AND Consent of the instructor

Getting Permission to Take the Class

How do you get permission to take the class? Please fill out the Google Form (URL is below). (There is no need to write me: Google informs me whenever a new form arrives.)

It is a simple form. It has two basic questions:

1. Your name, email address, and status at UCSD.
2. A short explanation of your interest:
 - Say why you wish to take the course, what you hope to learn, and any special skills or knowledge you might bring to the topics. (E.g., courses taken outside of the design curriculum that will be useful.)

I will try to respond very quickly, but the holiday break may delay me a bit).

Don Norman

<https://forms.gle/9biXqax2Vn8MAms98>

ASSIGNMENTS

The purpose of the assignments is to guarantee that all students take an active role in the class. Each assignment is also intended to be a learning experience.

Six 5-minute quizzes:

There will be a short, 5-minute quiz at the start of each Part of the course, the purpose being to ensure that everyone has read the material: Grade? S or U. (Two Us and you have to see me and talk about it.)

Group Presentations of the 6 Parts of the Text

Every student will join one of the 6 groups. Each group has several days for its presentation, with much of the time spent leading class discussion (see the schedule). During presentations, all group members will present material. Afterward, each group must turn in a paper that summarizes the critique, including items learned during the discussion.

Final, Group Projects

Each student will take part in a class project. These do not have to be the same as the presentation groups: there may be more or less than 6, and they can cover somewhat different (but related) material. Each project must credit the role of each student.

Written Assignments

Each group will prepare a short summary of their findings 10 days after they finish their class presentation (10 days = 1 week plus a weekend).

Similarly, there will be a written presentation by the groups for the final Group project.

PIAZZA DISCUSSION

<https://piazza.com/ucsd/winter2022/dsgn160>

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXTBOOK

The world is in a mess. Climate change? Yes, absolutely, but that is a symptom, not the cause. The main difficulty is believing that the earth's resources are infinite so that we can freely take them from the ground and then, during manufacture and use, discharge waste materials into the waterways and atmosphere. People have been doing this for thousands of years, starting long before the profession of design existed, unwittingly leading to many of today's crises. But even these are symptoms of the economic practices that reward short-term vision and use measures such as the GDP that rewards spending, even when the spending pollutes the earth. These beliefs, policies, behaviors, and actions are all the result of well-meaning but inappropriate design.

But if it is design that got us into today's mess, perhaps it is design that can get us out, though not the way design is conceived of and practiced today. We need a new form of design, one that understands and can work with the vast variety of issues, people, politicians, and business people across the world. Yes, it is a design problem, but not what people usually think of when they think of design. Appropriate design needs to start with the recognition that each person is a component in the complex system that we call the world, comprising all living things, the earth, land, sea, and sky, where each component impacts the others. For humankind to exist, the system must be sustainable, resilient, repeatable. Today, it is none of these.

In this book I address the two fundamental drivers of the ailments that I described in the opening paragraph:

- A. Design Maxim 1: The way economic measures encourage and support the harmful impacts of commerce and manufacturing. I recommend several alternative measures that provide more meaningful ways to guide commerce, measures that emphasize quality of life and the sustainability of the world.
- B. Design Maxim 2: The destruction of our environment is a result of the way we conceive, make, sell, and discard products, resulting in today's age of waste, harmful to the planet, harmful to all living things.

These two items, if addressed, would automatically yield huge improvements in a wide range of areas. Changing the measures of what people care about - the quality of life - would change the reward systems in companies and governments, as well as different policies of governments and internationally. Changing our manufacturing processes from the linear Take-Make-Use-Discard cycle to the circular economy of Repair-Upgrade-Reuse would have major impact on the degradation of the lands, waters, and air of the planet, enhancing the health and well-being of all living things, and reducing the factors that are driving climate change. Changing these two major items will thereby enable change in all of the others.

Many people, organizations, and books have addressed similar issues, suggesting numerous essential strategies. However, their major focus has been either the technological approaches or the policy changes that will help us change our ways. Both of these approaches are essential. My focus is different: it is on the human side, prioritizing the impact upon people, their ways of living, and the quality of their lives. Without this, we may not gain the support of the people of the world, and without that support, we will not be able to change policies or implement technological solutions.

I suggest that the design profession is well-situated to help lead the change. Why? Because modern design is a way of thinking, of addressing major societal issues. Moreover, design

can be thought of as a bridge between technology and people. Designers can assist communities in developing systems that serve their needs and capabilities. This has to be done as a collaborative effort where the designers act as mentors and facilitators for the people we serve.

How can we accomplish this? I present four design maxims, the first two state what needs to be done, and the last two address the challenges that will be encountered in doing them:

Design Maxim 1: Measure the Things People Care About and Understand--Quality of Life, not Economics

Design Maxim 2: Move from the Age of Waste to Societal Resilience and Sustainability.

Design Maxim 3: Many Things Must Change, Especially the Beliefs and Behaviors that Disrupt Societal, Health, and Ecological Systems

Design Maxim 4: Changes Must Be Collaborative, Designed With and By the Communities

Week	Dates	Tu	Th	Topic
1	Jan 4	Intro	A	Intro to course
2	Jan 11	A	A	Presentations & Discussion
3	Jan 18	B	B	Presentations & Discussion
4	Jan 25	C	C	Presentations & Discussion
5	Feb 1	D	D	Presentations & Discussion
6	Feb 8	E	E	Presentations & Discussion
7	Feb 15	F	F	Presentations & Discussion
8	Feb 22	Discussion Project Intro	Project Proposals	Project is a critique (Suggests. Reading Lists? Website? Illustrations?)
9	Mar 1	Project Discussion	Project Progress report	Presentations & Discussion
10	Mar 8	Project Presentation	Discussion Post Mortem	Presentations & Discussion