Purpose: Discuss the “information design” (affordances and feedback) of everyday objects.

Advance preparation: Bring to class an interesting example of a complex, unfamiliar, and/or unusual everyday object. Don’t bring in a high-tech object like a computer or cell phone - bring a low-tech or no-tech object (good examples are the spoon and doorknob we talked about in class). The object should be a positive or negative (or both) example of the principles of affordances (what perceptible information it presents that indicates what it is, what it does, and how to use it) and feedback (what perceptible information it presents as it’s being used to help the user know what’s going on). Photographs are OK if the object can’t be brought to class, but physical objects are better.

Group work:
1. In groups of 3-4, do a “show & tell” with each object. If it’s an unfamiliar object to the group, let the group look at it, pick it up, try to use it, etc. before describing what it does or how it works.

2. Discuss each object in terms of affordances (what perceptible information it presents that indicates what it is, what it does, and how to use it) and feedback (what perceptible information it presents as it’s being used to help the user know what’s going on).

3. Pick one object that you want to present to the class.

Deliverables: Each group will do an informal presentation on its findings. Be sure to sign the sheet indicating that you were present and participated.

One extra credit point will go to two students who bring in the best examples! Dr. Bowman will select one of the students, and the class will vote on the other.