

Critical Theory and Interaction Design

Edited by Jeffrey Bardzell, Shaowen Bardzell and Mark Blythe

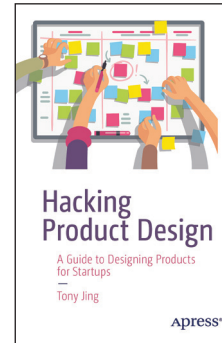
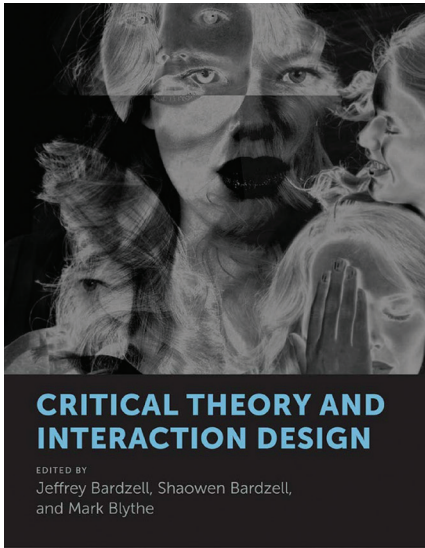
Hardcover, 840 pages, \$90
Published by The MIT Press
mitpress.mit.edu

The term *critical theory* refers to a collection of schools of philosophy in academia that can and do get applied to many things—from these emerged important ideas such as feminism and postcolonialism. In *Critical Theory and Interaction Design*, editors Jeffrey Bardzell, Shaowen Bardzell and Mark Blythe have assembled 40 essays from an array of philosophers—from Umberto Eco to Slavoj Žižek—that apply critical theory to interaction design.

I'll be honest: This book is not an easy read. It is not a particularly light read, either, nor is it, at 840 pages, particularly light. It is going to make you, brave interaction designer, question yourself. Are your creations truly making a difference? *Critical Theory and Interaction Design* will just as likely bruise your motivation to work on valueless apps as it will bruise your foot if you drop it.

But hear me out: this book is a *necessary* read. While many essays do not relate to interaction design directly, there are several that excellently bridge the gap between concept and application. For example, in “Performing Interaction Design with Judith Butler,” Ann Light, who is a professor at Northumbria University’s School of Design, writes on how, after reading Butler’s theories on gender construction, she better understands why users might reject narrow definitions of gender embedded in computer operations. How can you improve your approach to solving the world’s problems not only from a technological standpoint, but also from a philosophical standpoint? Critical

theory will only help you design more effectively.
—Michael Coyne



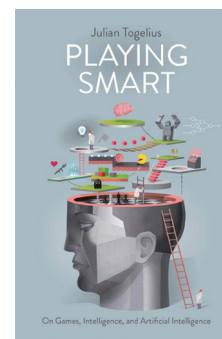
Hacking Product Design

A Guide to Designing Products for Startups
By Tony Jing

The world of tech startups can seem like a strange factory

pumping out ever sleeker products. In *Hacking Product Design: A Guide to Designing Products for Startups*, product designer and Medium writer Tony Jing guides readers on a tour of the general inner workings of tech companies both big and small. Written in an efficient manner befitting a book with the word *hacking* in its title, this guide highlights the soft skills that can help designers succeed in the industry, unveiling how to work with engineers, design in the context of culture, evaluate a new product and more. *116 pages, softcover, \$32.99, Apress.*

—Michelle Yee



Playing Smart

On Games, Intelligence, and Artificial Intelligence
By Julian Togelius

Are games the future of artificial intelligence (AI)? Is AI the future of games? Can

games and AI for games help us understand intelligence? Yes, yes and yes, argues Julian Togelius in *Playing Smart*. Writing for an audience that does not have master’s degrees in computer science, he simplifies such basics as how neural networks and evolutionary algorithms work so readers can grasp the importance of AI for game design, and vice versa. Perhaps the most fascinating question Togelius broaches is: What is intelligence, and thus, artificial intelligence? Long after the last page, this question will linger, along with a strong urge to play games and learn. *192 pages, hardcover, \$21.95, The MIT Press.* —Esther Oh