

FYSM 1210B: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND A.I.
“Minds and Machines”
Course Outline
Winter 2021

Class Information

Dates: Mondays and Wednesdays

Time: 11:35 am - 12:55 pm

Location: N/A

Course prerequisites: N/A

Instructor Information

Instructor: Josh Redstone

E-mail: josh.redstone@carleton.ca

Course Description

Have you ever wondered what the mind is? Have you ever asked yourself: “Is my mind something immaterial and mysterious? Or, is it just a very complex machine, like a computer?” Philosophers have been fascinated by the mind since antiquity. Thinkers like Plato and Aristotle argued that thinking, perceiving, and acting is the job of a *rational soul*. In modern times, however, philosophers began to explore another possibility. They wondered whether the human being – and by extension, the mind – is a kind of *natural machine*. In this seminar, you will gain an understanding of the mind by considering classic philosophical works on the nature of minds and machines.

Our inquiry will start with ancient conceptions of the soul: an immaterial entity that is essentially *you*. We will then proceed to read the work of some modern materialist thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and Julien Offray de la Mettrie, who argued that the human being – and by extension the mind – is just a natural machine. We will also encounter thinkers whose position lies between these two, like René Descartes, who believed the body was an intricate machine controlled by the soul. As our survey reaches the 20th century, we will examine the works of figures like Alan Turing, Hilary Putnam, John Searle, and Daniel Dennett, who approached the mind with the tools of philosophy in addition to those of computer science, neuroscience, and psychology. Throughout the seminar, questions intimately tied to the discussion about minds and machines will punctuate our search: can machines have free will? Is consciousness necessary for agency? What is special about artificial intelligence?

Required Text

There is no textbook for this class. Readings and other materials will be made available on cuLearn prior to my lectures.

Accessing Course Resources

Important course materials are found on cuLearn (<https://carleton.ca/culearn/>). Such materials include this course outline, lecture schedule, readings, PowerPoint slides or notes that accompany the lectures, and other supplementary materials that may be made available throughout the class. You will also find the discussion forums, which you will use to participate in the virtual discussion groups for this class.

Evaluation

Grade Item	Percent of Final Grade	Tentative Due Date
Participation (cuLearn discussion boards)	10%	(see below)
Reading Response 1	7.5%	Feb 3
Reading Response 2	7.5%	Feb 24
Term Paper Topic Proposal	20%	Mar 10
Special Topics Suggestion	2.5%	Mar 15
Reading Response 3	7.5%	Mar 24
Final Term Paper	45%	Apr 27
TOTAL	100%	---

Lecture Schedule: Note, this schedule may be subject to minor adjustments.

Date	Lecture Topic & Readings
Week 1 Jan 11 & 13	Introduction and Course Outline; What is the Mind? Readings: "They're made out of meat!" (Bisson 1991)
Week 2 Jan 18 & 20	Plato on the Soul I & II Readings: Plato's <i>Meno</i> and <i>Pheado</i>
Week 3 Jan 25 & 27	Aristotle on the Soul I & II Readings: Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> (Books I-III)
Week 4 Feb 1 & 3	Descartes on Reason and the Mind I & II Readings: Descartes <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> <i>Reading Response 1 Due</i> (Feb 3)
Week 5 Feb 8 & 9	Hobbes on Reason and the Mind I & II Readings: Hobbes's <i>Leviathan</i> (Books I-VI)
Winter Break Feb 15 & 17	No classes!
Week 6 Feb 22 & 24	La Mettrie on The Human Being I & II Readings: La Mettrie's <i>L'Homme Machine</i> <i>Reading Response 2 Due</i> (Feb 24)
Week 7 Mar 1 & 3	How to Write an Essay; Essay Workshop Readings: None
Week 8 Mar 8 & 10	Turing Machines; The Turing Test Readings: "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (Turing 1950) <i>Term Paper Topic Proposal Due</i> (Mar 10)
Week 9 Mar 15 & 17	Machine Functionalism I & II Readings: "Minds and Machines" (Putnam 1960) <i>Special Topics Suggestions Due</i> (Mar 15)
Week 10 Mar 22 & 24	Passing the Turing Test? I & II Readings: "ELIZA – a computer program for the study of natural language communication between man and machine" (Weizenbaum 1966); "Minds, Brains and Programs" (Searle 1980) <i>Reading Response 3 Due</i> (Mar 24)
Week 11 Mar 29 & 31	Can Thinking Machines Experience Things? I & II Readings: "Why you can't make a computer that feels pain" (Dennett 1978)
Week 12 Apr 5 & 7	Special Topics Readings: TDB
Week 13 Apr 12	Course Conclusion Readings: TBD

Lectures

Lectures will be posted to my YouTube channel on Mondays and Wednesdays. You can access the channel, and the video lectures, via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBOvpBTtLsP7MMiqOZO67Dq>

You can view the lectures on your own time, but I highly recommend watching each lecture before the next one is uploaded so that you do not fall behind. Lectures will explain and clarify important ideas contained in our readings.

Office Hours

Office hours will be held virtually using my Discord Server (<https://discord.gg/NbrGNuD>). Office hours will be held by appointment/as needed. Please don't be shy! I encourage everyone to request an appointment for a virtual meeting at any time if they have any questions or concerns.

Readings & Participation

Even though this class is being delivered virtually, you are expected to keep up with the readings assigned for this class. My lectures will help make the readings more accessible, *but they are no substitute for the readings themselves*. See the Lecture Schedule (below) and cuLearn for a list of our readings for this class.

Under normal circumstances we would meet in person to discuss the material. However, due to COVID-19, you'll be required to engage with one another on the discussion boards on cuLearn. Starting in week 3, each of you is expected to offer some engagement with the material, myself, or with one another on cuLearn's message boards. This engagement might include: asking me questions about the material; making remarks about things you find interesting; discussing or debating ideas with one another; etc. We will do this for each lecture from week 3 until the week of our Special Topics lectures. Each weekly post is worth 1% of your grade for this class, for a total of 10%. I will further explain what I expect to see in terms of discussion during our first lecture.

Reading Responses

In this course you will complete *THREE* reading responses, each worth 7.5% of your grade. Each response should be approx. 300-400 words in length, and any works or ideas referenced must be properly cited. For these responses, your task is to identify an interesting idea from one of the lectures and *engage* with it. I will provide some direction regarding how to choose an idea for your response, and how to cite sources properly, during the first lecture. Due dates for each response are given above.

Special Topics

Our third-last and second-last classes (April 5 & 7) will be Special Topics lectures. Students will suggest possible topics of interest related to this class that they'd like me to lecture on. The class will vote on the possible topics, and I will design a lecture for each of the two most popular topics. Each student must submit their suggestion via the submission portal on cuLearn by 11:59 pm on March 15. Your suggestion is worth up to 2.5% of your final grade (easy marks!).

Term Paper Topic Proposal

In this class you will be required to write a term paper. I will deliver a lecture on how to write a research essay (March 1). I will hold a live session via my Discord server (March 3) where

students can drop in and ask me questions about essay writing, topic selection, and conducting research. Your topic proposal should be 500-600 words in length, and it should identify the topic of your term paper, your thesis statement and/or research question, and a rough outline of your intended paper. The proposal is due at 11:59 pm on March 10 and is worth 20% of your final grade.

Term Paper

Your term paper, which serves as the final take-home examination for this class, is to be handed in via cuLearn by April 27 at 11:59 pm (last day of the exam period). It is worth 45% of your final grade. The paper is to be approx. 1500-2000 words long and should deal with an idea or concept from this class that interests you. I will discuss how to select a topic and how to write a proper paper before the papers are due, and I will provide detailed feedback on your essay topic proposals (see above), so I expect that the essays will be clearly and concisely written, be well-researched, and will cite sources properly. I encourage students to contact me if they have any questions about this assignment at any time.

Assignment Deferral Policy

Students who are unable to complete a test or an assignment may ask for a deferral only under two conditions: *illness or bereavement*. Should you miss a test for these reasons, you must contact me by email within 24 hours of missing the test/assignment due date to request a deferral and arrange to provide me with the appropriate documentation (e.g. doctor's note, etc.).

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence, which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor (me). The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They range from a mark of zero for the plagiarized work to a final grade of "F" for the course, and even suspension from all studies or expulsion from the University.

Grading System

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 B = 73-76 C - = 60-62

A = 85-89 B - = 70-72 D+ = 57-59

A - = 80-84 C+ = 67-69 D = 53-56

B+ = 77-79 C = 63-66 D - = 50-52

F Failure. No academic credit

DEF Official deferral (see "Petitions to Defer")

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term.

Further details can be found on the next page.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2020-21)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Jan. 11	Classes begin.
Jan. 25	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 31	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 2	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 14	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i>
Apr. 15	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 16-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735