

FYSM 1210-B: Minds and Machines
Course Outline
Fall 2021

Class Information

Dates: Mondays and Wednesdays

Time: 7:35 pm – 8:55 pm

Location: UC 182

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, like a soul or spirit? Or is my mind just a very complex machine, like a computer?” If you have, you’re not alone – philosophers have been fascinated by the mind since antiquity. Thinkers like Plato and Aristotle argued that thinking, perceiving, and acting is due to the *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 others 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 Brightspace prior to my lectures.

Accessing Course Resources

Important course materials are found on Brightspace. These materials include this course outline, our lecture schedule, readings, PowerPoint slides or notes that accompany the lectures, and other supplementary materials that may be made available throughout the class.

Evaluation

Grade Item	Percent of Final Grade	Due Date
Attendance and Participation	10%	---
Reading Response 1	7.5%	Oct 1
Reading Response 2	7.5%	Oct 22
Special Topics Suggestion	2.5%	Nov 1
Term Paper Topic Proposal	20%	Nov 12
Reading Response 3	7.5%	Nov 26
Final Term Paper	45%	Dec 23
TOTAL	100%	---

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

Date	Lecture Topic & Readings
Week 1 Sep 8	Introduction and Course Outline - What is the Mind? Readings: "They're made out of meat!" (Bisson 1991)
Week 2 Sep 13 & 15	Plato on the Soul I Readings: Plato's <i>Meno</i>
Week 3 Sep 20 & 22	Plato on the Soul II Readings: Plato's <i>Phaedo</i>
Week 4 Sep 27 & 29	Aristotle on the Soul Readings: Selections from <i>De Anima</i> (Books I-III) <i>Reading Response 1 Due</i> (Oct 1)
Week 5 Oct 4 & 6	Descartes on Reason and the Mind I Readings: <i>Meditations</i> I & II
Week 6 Oct 11	Descartes on Reason and the Mind II Readings: selections from <i>Discourses on the Method</i>
Week 7 Oct 18 & 20	Thomas Hobbes and the Clockwork Universe Readings: <i>Leviathan</i> Part One, Chs. I-V <i>Reading Response 2 Due</i> (Oct 22)
Week 8 Oct 25-29	Fall Study Break (No Classes)
Week 9 Nov 1 & 3	How to Write an Essay & Essay Workshop <i>Special Topics Suggestion Due</i> (Nov 1)
Week 10 Nov 8 & 10	La Mettrie on The Human Being Readings: La Mettrie's <i>L'Homme Machine</i> (Machine Man) <i>Term Paper Topic Proposal Due</i> (Nov 12)
Week 11 Nov 15 & 17	Turing Machines and the Turing Test Readings: "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (Turing 1950)
Week 12 Nov 22 & 24	Passing the Turing Test 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> (Nov 26)
Week 13 Nov 29 & Dec 1	Machine Functionalism Readings: "Minds and Machines" (Putnam 1960)
Week 14 Dec 6, 8 & 10	Special Topics & Course Conclusion Readings: TBD

Lectures

Lectures will be held from 7:35 – 8:55 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. Lectures will be held in the University Centre, room 182. Since we are meeting in person for this class, please make sure that you review Carleton University's policies on vaccinations, masks and social distancing for the fall semester.

Office Hours

Due to concerns related to Covid-19, office hours will be held virtually using my Discord Server (<https://discord.gg/NbrGNuD>). Office hours will be held by appointment/as needed. To schedule an appointment, you'll first need to download the Discord app, set up your account, and join my server using the above hyperlink.

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.

Attendance & Participation

Regular participation is expected in this seminar. I will be taking attendance at the beginning of each class. Your attendance throughout the semester will count toward 10% of your final grade. I also encourage everyone to participate during the seminar by asking questions, offering your thoughts, or engaging in group discussions (to be led by myself).

Readings & Reading Responses

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 reading the readings themselves*. See the Lecture Schedule (above) and our course module on Brightspace for a list of readings for this class.

In this course you will complete *THREE* reading responses, each worth 7.5% of your final grade. Each response should be approx. 400-500 words in length, and any works or ideas referenced must be properly cited. Your task is *to identify an interesting idea from one of the lectures and critically engage with it*. I will provide direction on how to choose an idea for your response, how you should approach critical analysis, and how to cite sources properly during the first lecture. Each of the three reading responses is to be submitted electronically in .doc format on Brightspace by 11:59 pm on each of the due dates given above.

Special Topics

Our third-last and second-last classes (December 6 & 8) 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 – about one paragraph containing your suggested topic and why it would be interesting/how it relates to the class – via the submission portal on Brightspace by 11:59 pm on November 1 (.doc format only). 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 (November 1). Our next class (November 3) will be an essay workshop where students can 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 November 12 and is worth 20% of your final grade. Submit your proposal on Brightspace in .doc format.

Term Paper

Your term paper, which serves as the final take-home examination for this class, is to be handed in via cuLearn by December 23 at 11:59 pm (i.e. the last day of the exam period). It is worth 45% of your final grade. The paper is to be approx. 1250-1500 words long and should deal with an idea or concept from this class that interests you. It must be submitted electronically on Brightspace in .doc format. 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 2021-22)

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:

Sept. 8	Classes start.
Sept. 22	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 11	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 25-29	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 26	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 10	Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term 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 term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 11-23	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 10	Classes begin.
Jan. 24	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. 21	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 22-25	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 29	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. 12	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Classes follow a Friday schedule. 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.
Apr. 13	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 14-28	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 28	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