

# MINDS, MACHINES, PERSONS/Phil 329

## RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

### SPRING 2019

#### INSTRUCTOR

Wes Skolits (Wes.Skolits@Rutgers.edu)

#### MEETING TIMES

Mondays/Wednesdays  
05:35-06:55 @ RAB 207

#### OFFICE HOURS

By appointment, or 4-5pm on Wednesdays at Barnes and Noble.

#### COURSE TEXTS

Readings to be provided on Sakai or via email.

Recommended: Tim Crane, *The Mechanical Mind*

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course we will examine fundamental issues at the intersection of philosophy of mind, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence. We will consider the following questions: Can we attribute minds to computers? Is the mind just the “software” of the brain? Can computers become conscious? What is the nature of mental states, and how can they represent the external world? If we are living in a computer simulation, what can we know about the external world?

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the main positions in the philosophy of cognitive science/AI
2. To evaluate the arguments for the main positions in this area
3. To write a substantial, argumentative paper in philosophy.

#### EVALUATION:

Main Paper(s) 30%

Exams: 40%

Weekly Quizzes 20%

Attendance 10%

> 90.00 A  
88.00 - 89.00 B+  
83.00 - 87.99 B  
80.00 - 82.99 C+  
70.00 - 79.99 C  
60.00 - 69.99 D  
<= 59.99 F

## PAPER

There will be one main paper of 10 pages, which is due **May 10th.**

## QUIZZES

There will be quizzes on the readings, which will take place weekly.

## EXAMS

There will be two exams worth 20% each, a midterm and a final (not cumulative). These will be essay based and will require to provide and analyze arguments discussed in the readings.

## COURSE SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

### INTRO: HOW TO DO PHILOSOPHY

Jan 23: Intro and Syllabus

Jan 28: Jim Pryor's "Philosophical Terms and Methods" (available at [www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html));

Coffman's "Finding, Clarifying, and Evaluating Arguments" (available at <http://web.utk.edu/~ecoffma1/FCEA.pdf>)

### UNIT 1: CONSCIOUSNESS AND AI

Jan 30: Bowden, *Artificial Intelligence: It's Nature and Future*, Chapters 1 and 2

Feb 4: Nagel, "What It's like to be a bat," (carry over to next week)

Feb 6: Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness,"

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is not a contract, and the schedule is subject to change per the instructor's discretion.

(optional: “Moving Forward on the Problem of Consciousness”)

Feb 11: FILM: Ex Machina

Feb 13: Kim, “Machine Functionalism,” (Chapter 4)

Feb 18: Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs”

Feb 20: SEP, “The Chinese Room Argument”

Feb 25: Block, “Troubles with Functionalism”

Feb 27: Chalmers, “A Computational Foundation for the Study of Cognition”

## UNIT 2: MENTAL CONTENT

Mar 4: Kim, Chapter 8, “Mental Content”

Mar 6: Egan, “How to think about Content”

Mar 11: McLaughlin, ‘Computationalism, Connectionism, and the Philosophy of Mind’

Mar 13: Churchland, “Eliminativism and Propositional Attitudes”

## SPRING BREAK: MARCH 16-24

Mar 25: Hutto and Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism*, Chapters 1&2

## UNIT 3: THE SINGULARITY AND MIND UPLOADING

Mar 27: FILM: “Her”

Apr 1: Chalmers, “Singularity: a Philosophical Analysis” (section 1-7, only to page 33)

Apr 3: Ionut Isac, “Several Arguments For and Against Superintelligence/“Singularity”

Apr 8: Chalmers, “Mind-uploading: a Philosophical Analysis”

Apr 10: Chalmers, “Integration into a Post-Singularity World” from “The Singularity: a Philosophical Analysis” (section 8 - end)

Apr 15: FILM: The Matrix/Chalmers, “The Matrix as Metaphysics” (discuss next week)

Apr 17: Bostrom, “Are you living in a computer simulation?”

Apr 22: Chalmers, “The Virtual and the Real”

Apr 24: Chalmers, “Structuralism as a Response to Skepticism”

#### UNIT 4: NEW DIRECTIONS IN COGNITIVE SCIENCE: ARISTOTELIAN APPROACHES

Apr 29: Stedman, “Aristotle and Modern Cognitive Science: An Analysis of Similarities and Differences”

May 1: De Haan, “Hylomorphism and the New Mechanist Philosophy in Biology, Neuroscience, and Psychology”

May 6: Madden, “Is a Thomistic Theory of Intentionality Consistent with Physicalism?”

#### **May 10th Paper Due**

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY

“Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.”

– Attendance is expected and will be taken each class. You are allowed to miss 1 class during the semester without penalty. Any further unexcused absences will result in point and/or grade deductions, 5 points per absence.

– Excused absences will be at the discretion of the instructor. Things like medical problems, family emergencies, and religious observances are good reasons.

Schedule conflicts and forgetfulness are not

– Students are responsible for all missed work, regardless of the reason for absence.

It is also the absentee’s responsibility to get all missing notes or materials. All assignments will be turned in in class. It is the absentee’s responsibility to make

other arrangements.

– This policy will take effect at the end of add/drop deadline.

## STUDENT WELLNESS

### Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e> Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/) CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

[www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/) The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181. Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/> The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

### Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/> Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

## HELPFUL PHILOSOPHY RESOURCES

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind: <http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/>

David Chalmers' bibliography of Philosophy of Mind: <http://consc.net/biblio.html>