Minds and Machines: PHIL 250 Syllabus

Spring 2020
Instructor: Matthew Smithdeal

General Information

Description

It has often been suggested that the mind is (like) a machine, but the precise nature of this assertion is often unclear. Are we supposed to take this claim literally? Is it a metaphor? We will begin by examining several ways in which we might understand this claim according to philosophers and cognitive scientists. This assertion is often predicated on an understanding of the mind as atomistic, disconnected from the world, and perfectly rational (in other words, the mind is conceived of as perfectly *masculine*). Accordingly, we will analyze ways in which this conception of the mind is problematic and the many ways in which the mind is very much not like a machine.

There are no prerequisites for this course and no prior experience with philosophy will be assumed.

Expectations and Goals

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have:

- Engaged critically with texts
- Seen both mainstream/Western, and non-traditional, feminist takes on core issues/questions within philosophy
- Developed the ability to construct an argument and defend a thesis
- Grasped philosophical concepts
- Done philosophy!

Course Materials

Required Text

No textbook is required. All readings will be provided online via course reserve.

Course Schedule

Mind as Machine

Unit 1 – Computationalism and Machine Functionalism (Weeks 1&2)

January 7 – Introductions & Background

January 9 -- Andy Clark, *Mindware: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Cognitive Science*, 2nd Edition (2014) "Appendix 1: Some Backdrop: Dualism, Behaviorism, Functionalism, and Beyond"

January 14 -- Andy Clark, *Mindware: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Cognitive Science*, 2nd Edition (2014) Ch. 1 "Meat Machines: Mindware as Software"

Last Day to Submit Unit 1 Response Paper

January 16 -- Discussion

Unit 2 – Rationality (Weeks 3&4)

January 21 -- Keith Frankish (2010). Dual-process and dual-system theories of reasoning. Philosophy Compass 5 (10):914-926.

January 23 -- Stephen P. Stich (1985). Could man be an irrational animal? Synthese, pp. 15-35.

January 28 -- Heikes, D. K. (2009). Let's be Reasonable: Feminism and Rationality. Southwest Philosophy Review, 25(1), 127-134.

Last Day to Submit Unit 2 Response Paper

January 30 -- Discussion

Unit 3 – A. I. Ethics (Weeks 5&6)

February 4 -- Anderson, Susan Leigh (2008). Asimov's "three laws of robotics" and machine metaethics. AI and Society 22 (4):477-493.

February 6 – Schwitzgebel: Designing AI with Rights, Consciousness, Self-Respect, and Freedom

Last Day to Submit Unit 3 Response Paper

February 11 -- In-class Revision Workshop

February 13 -- Discussion

Mind as Non-Machine

Unit 4 – Consciousness/Hard Problem (Weeks 7&8)

February 25 -- Drayson, Zoe (2015). The Philosophy of Phenomenal Consciousness, in S. Miller (ed.), *The Constitution of Phenomenal Consciousness*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins; pp.273-292

Revised Essay Due

February 27 – Drayson Continued

March 3 – Allen, Colin & Trestman, Michael (2017). Animal Consciousness, in Schneider & Velmans (2nd ed), *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness;* pp. 63-76

Last Day to Submit Unit 4 Response Paper

March 5 -- Discussion

Unit 5 – Embodied/Extended Cognition (Weeks 9&10)

March 10 – The Extended Mind, Andy Clark and David Chalmers

Final Project Proposal Due

March 12 -- Andy Clark - What is Extended Mind? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kc-TdMjuJRU

March 17 -- https://aeon.co/essays/feminists-never-bought-the-idea-of-a-mind-set-free-from-its-body

Last Day to Submit Unit 5 Response Paper

March 19 -- Discussion

Unit 6 – The Self/Personal Identity (Weeks 11, 12, & 13)

March 24 -- Daniel C. Dennett (1978). Where am I? In Brainstorms. MIT Press.

March 26 – Dennett Continued

March 31 – Church, Jennifer (1997). Ownership and the Body in Meyers, D. (1997). *Feminists Rethink the Self*. New York; pp. 85-103

Last Day to Submit Unit 6 Response Paper

April 2 -- Discussion

April 7 – Final Wrap Up

Assessment

All essays shall be submitted in paper form in class AND uploaded to canvas.

Every student will be required to complete the following:

- Read the assigned readings *before class* and participate in class (25% of final grade)
  - Participation exercises will be administered occasionally via TopHat.
  - You will be split into small groups and collaboratively annotate each reading/video via CLAS *starting in week 3.*
  - For each reading/video, you are expected to (at minimum): make **3** substantial marginal comments (these can be asking for clarification, noting something important, raising an objection, etc.) and substantially respond to **1** marginal comment.
    - Annotations are due the day the reading/video is assigned by the time class starts.
    - You will either get full credit for completing it or no credit.
    - Due to the nature of the assignment, late submissions will not be accepted.

- Complete **6** short response papers (20%)
  - You are required to complete **one** 1-2-page response paper **per unit** for units 2-6, but you are free to choose whichever reading/video from that unit you'd like to respond to. One additional response paper can be chosen from any unit.
  - Papers should be a response to one reading/video, not several.
  - ***Response papers are due on or before the day the reading/video is assigned.***
  - Due to the nature of the assignment, late submissions are not accepted; however, if you must miss class, you may submit your assignment on canvas and submit your paper copy the next class.
  - You may submit more than 6, if you'd like additional feedback on your writing/ideas
    - If you complete more than 6, I will take the average of the grades on all of your essays. In other words, each individual essay will be worth a smaller percentage of the overall 20%.

- Revise one essay (20%)
  - Each student will choose one reading response essay to revise and upload to ComPAIR on Canvas by **February 11th**
  - Students will be assigned a group to workshop that essay in class for participation credit
  - Each student will then submit a revised, 3-4-page essay. **Due: February 25th**

- Complete a final project with a written and oral component (35% -- 15% from the oral component, 15% from the written component, and 5% from the proposal)
  - Students will be required to submit a final project proposal
    - **Due: March 10th** (You may submit it early to receive feedback earlier)
    - On **one page maximum,** provide:
      - Your name + your group member names, if you have any
      - Your working title (does not need to be your final title)

        - 250 words on what you'll be doing (options below)
        - A list of **(minimum 2)** texts that you'll use to ground your work and explanation of how you'll use those texts
    - Only one proposal needs to be submitted per group. Each group member will receive the same grade.
- Each student may choose from one of the following three options:
    1. Single authored 5-page essay + final 10-minute one-on-one oral exam
    2. Single authored 5-page essay + final 5-10-minute class presentation
    3. Group authored essay/philosophical dialogue/script + 10-minute live or recorded performance of script/dialogue, podcast, etc
        a. Written essays will be due at the start of the final exam period **TBD**
        b. Presentations and one-on-one examinations will be scheduled during the final exam period **TBD**