

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Course Outline**

**Natural and Artificial Minds**

<b>Instructor: David Bourget</b> <b>Office hours Tuesdays 9:30 (Zoom on OWL)</b> <b>Contact: <a href="https://www.dbourget.com">https://www.dbourget.com</a></b>
--

**DESCRIPTION**

Recent advances in artificial intelligence bring into focus a longstanding question in philosophy of mind: what does it take for something to think or be intelligent? In this seminar, we will ask whether modern AI should inform our understanding of this question and the classic arguments surrounding it. We will also explore recent takes on the question that challenge the “strong AI” program on the grounds that consciousness is central to thought.

**TEXTS**

We will read some classics by authors such as Block, Searle, and Chalmers; some introductory AI literature; and works defending or arguing against the phenomenal intentionality research program.

**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should:

- be able to explain and evaluate the main philosophical arguments and positions discussed in this course both orally and in writing;
- be able to appreciate the relevance of the topics discussed in this course to philosophy in general and bring to bear considerations in philosophy of mind to other topics;
- have acquired and/or improved upon general skills useful for critically engaging with philosophical ideas as well as other pursuits: skills involved in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments, skills involved in effective oral and written communication, and skill involved in fruitful engagement with peers.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Weekly responses (10%).

- Participation (5%).
- Final paper OR exam (85%). You can choose between submitting a paper or doing a take-home exam (you cannot do both).
  - **Exam option:** This is take-home exam that you write from home or elsewhere with access to your books and notes. Collaboration is not permitted. The questions will be long answer questions asking you to write mini-essays. The exam will take place shortly after the end of classes.
  - **Paper option:** The word limit is 4500 words and **the topic and outline must be approved by me** in advance. You need to submit an outline some time before the paper is due and get my green light before you write the paper. As a general rule, I will not allow papers that are not squarely about the assigned readings. The paper must be submitted on OWL by 23:59 on the day of our last class. Extensions can be granted for various reasons.
- **Use of AI to assist in writing responses, essays, or exams is not permitted.** The instructor reserves the right to test students through oral examination in case there is doubt about use of AI. Students who cannot explain and defend their views will get a failing grade.

### **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.