

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21
Philosophy 2037F: Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence

Fall 2020

Weekly *Asynchronous* Lecture

Weekly *Synchronous* Tutorials F 12:30-1:30

All meetings ONLINE

Zoom office hours: Wednesday 12:30-2:30, and by appointment

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DESCRIPTION

Will robots take all our jobs? Will humans become cyborgs? As we rely more and more on machines and other new technologies, they are changing how we interact with the world and one another. In this course we will consider the impact of artificial intelligence on our current lives, and on our future. It has been said that “Philosophy will be the key that unlocks artificial intelligence”—presumably for the better. On the other hand, the Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom has warned that advances in superintelligence may soon make humans obsolete. Who should we believe? This course will address these and other issues by first considering some traditional questions in philosophy of mind—e.g., Can a robot think? What is the Turing Test? Can machines ever be conscious?— before turning to a consideration of some of the ethical and social implications of this new technology.

TEXTS

Cunningham, J., Hilliaer, S. & O’Reardon, D. eds. (2014). *Introducing Philosophy: Questions and Readings*. Toronto: Edmund Montgomery Publications.

Coeckelbergh, M. (2020). *AI Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Reserve readings as assigned.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with some of the philosophical challenges posed by advances in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). By the end of the course, students will have a better understanding of the nature and scope of AI and the metaphysical, ethical and social implications of various forms and applications of AI. Students will also be in a position to take more advanced courses in a number of different areas of philosophy, including but not limited to, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Technology, Philosophy of Mind, and Ethics.

REQUIREMENTS

- Regular Attendance (you will lose 1% of the final grade for every Tutorial missed without accommodation)
- Class participation
- 4 Online quizzes (5% each)
- 2 short papers (15% paper 1; 25% paper 2)
- Midterm exam (15%); Final exam (25%) (online format TBD)

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/proceduresappeals.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.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

LATE WORK

Work turned in late without academic accommodation will have 5% of the final score deducted for each day it is late. Missed tests/quizzes without academic accommodation will receive a zero.

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

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change with sufficient notice)

Students will be expected to watch the uploaded lectures weekly, keep up with the readings, and attend the online Tutorial sections. Optionally, you may attend the weekly open office hours (12:30-2:30 Wednesday) to ask questions. If you need a 1 on 1 meeting, please email me to schedule it.

Week 1: Course Introduction, Basic Philosophy of AI

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 1-3

Week 2: Basic History of AI

Readings: Introducing Philosophy (IP) Ch 1 (pp. 3-18); AI Ethics Ch 1-3; Bostrom “When machines outsmart humans” <https://nickbostrom.com/2050/outsmart.html>

Sep 18: First Tutorial: Philosophy Skills 1

Readings: Introducing Philosophy (IP) pp. 183-185

Week 3: Basic Metaphysics

Readings: IP Ch 2 (pp. 19-32); pp. 35-48

Before Wednesday at 12:30: Take online quiz 1

Sep 25: Second Tutorial

Readings: IP Ch 6 (pp. 128-137); pp. 186-191

Week 4: Theory of Computation

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 5-6; Hillis *The Pattern on the Stone* pp. vii-38.

Before Wednesday at 12:30: Take online quiz 2

Oct 2: Third Tutorial

Readings: None; review theory of computation

Week 5: Basic Epistemology

Readings: IP Ch 7-8 (pp. 148-182)

Before Wednesday at 12:30: Take online quiz 3

Oct 9: Fourth Tutorial

Readings: Turing, “Computing machinery and intelligence” sections 1, 2 & 6

Week 6: Basic Ethics

Readings: IP Ch. 10-11 (pp. 195-212; 239-254; 283-295 only)

Before Class: Take online quiz 4

Oct 16: Fifth Tutorial: Philosophy Skills 2

Readings: IP pp. 296-325

Week 7: Introduction to Theories of Justice

Readings: IP Ch 14 (pp. 390-421)

Oct 23: Sixth Tutorial: Philosophy Skills 3

Readings: IP pp. 422-428

Week 8: MID-TERM EXAM

Readings: None

Oct 30: Seventh Tutorial: Philosophy Skills 3: **writing your first paper!**

Readings: None

Week 9: READING WEEK

Week 10: AI and the Law

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 4; Schwitzgebel & Garza “Designing AI with rights, consciousness, self-respect and freedom” <http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~eschwitz/SchwitzPapers/AIRights2-180604.pdf>

Nov 13: Eighth Tutorial FIRST PAPER DUE

Readings: Rini “Raising good robots” <https://aeon.co/essays/creating-robots-capable-of-moral-reasoning-is-like-parenting>

Week 11: AI and Labour

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 9; Danaher “Will life be worth living in a world without work? Technological unemployment and the meaning of life”

Nov 20: Ninth Tutorial

Readings: Walsh, “Will robots bring about the end of work?” <https://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2017/oct/01/will-robots-bring-about-the-end-of-work>

Week 12: AI and Equality

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 7-8; Burkell, “The Challenges of Algorithmic Bias”; Pasquale, *The Black Box Society* ch 2.

Nov 27: Tenth Tutorial

Readings: “Ontario Basic Income Pilot” <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-basic-income-pilot>
Harris, “How technology hijacks people’s minds” <http://www.tristanharris.com/essays/>

Week 13: The Future of AI

Readings: AI Ethics Ch 10-11; Dennett “The practical requirements for making a conscious robot”

Week 14: Wrap up and final logistics

Dec 9: FINAL PAPER DUE

CLASSES END DEC 9– NO ASSIGNMENTS CAN BE ACCEPTED AFTER THAT DAY