



PHL101: Introduction to Philosophy

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Office hours: 10:10-11:10 M/W, or by
appointment
Class time: 8:30-9:50 M/W
Class location: Berkey Hall 118

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the philosophical field of metaphysics, philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence, and technosocial philosophy. The questions we will focus on are: “what does it mean to say we are thinking beings?”, “could a machine think?”, “what is the nature of human identity?”, and “can we demarcate artificial from natural forms of intelligence?”

Alan Turing (1912-1954) made an incredible and unequalled contribution to the history of computing, computer science, artificial intelligence, developmental biology, and the mathematical theory of computability. This course investigates both the background questions which make his contributions significant as well as the contemporary consequences of these. Course materials and discussions will be robustly multidisciplinary. This approach will bring together the insight and knowledge from disparate disciplines in an attempt to more fully understand and engage with current conceptual issues in computing, philosophy, and actively investigate how these conceptual issues impact sociological, psychological and biological notions of being human, cyborg, or bio-machine hybrid.

AIMS OF THE COURSE

The course requires students to practice reading philosophical articles, journal articles in science and technology, artificial intelligence, and computing. Students are required to respond to these readings in a clear and concise manner through writing and class discussion. This course is beneficial for a wide range of majors. This course may be especially beneficial for students preparing for careers in psychology, computer science, mathematics, political science, and sociology. This course will develop your analytic skills by improving your ability to identify arguments and critically discussing the complex and exciting issues now just beginning to be discussed in current technological, sociological and psychological debates. As such, it will be valuable for any field of research including policy studies, social and scientific research, psychology, or those interested in philosophy, technology and society.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has two core sets of aims. First, it seeks to introduce students to current issues in AI, biotechnology, and the history and philosophy of these and to begin critical reflection about these issues. Second, it aims to provide students with tools from philosophy useful for the development, defence, criticism, and extension of particular debates. Thus, when confronted with challenges in the future, students will have a basic framework for sound, reflective engagement.

Contributing to an undergraduate degree, this course has these aims:

1. Encourage philosophical reflection about current scientific research
2. Improve knowledge of main schools of philosophy
3. Refine student's ability to express and defend theoretical views
4. Refine student's ability to relate schools of philosophy to current scientific
5. Research-led learning that will improve student's ability to think clearly and write concise, well-focused analytic essays.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify philosophical dimensions of events in current scientific research
2. Identify key points in those main philosophical schools of thought
3. Identify and present a justified position regarding current scientific research
4. Prepare succinct and detailed arguments

As a philosophy-oriented course, it also seeks to develop general skills in analytical thinking and clear critical argumentation. By the end of the course, students also should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the basic skills of a philosopher: follow, assess, analyze and develop philosophical arguments,
2. Appropriately and critically utilize ethical theories, and apply these to a wide range of practical, real-life situations
3. Articulate the basic philosophical dimensions to problems engaged in this course
4. Identify basic principles of philosophy
5. Combine mastery of these above skills to novel case studies and conceptual problems.

ASSESSMENT

There are 4 different types of assessment for this course:

To pass this course **ALL** of these must be completed:

1. Contributing to class discussion. Regular and competent class participation in seminar discussions: 5%
2. In-class group assignments. Each class period, I will assign a small set of questions or a project that you will work on with a small group of classmates in the classroom. Each project requires that you will have already read the assigned readings for that day. Make sure you understand the articles and chapters before coming in. Make sure to take notes so that you know: What is the article about?, what are the main points?, what problems did you have in understanding the article?, and what conceptual/ philosophical problems do you think are raised by the article? These in-class group assignments may be collected at the end of class: 30%
3. Midterm Essay exam: 30%
4. Final Essay: The Final Essay will be 1000 words. Advice on the Final Essay will be distributed later in the course: 35%

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS AND READINGS

SESSION STRUCTURE

Students must attend every class, Monday and Wednesday each week. It is a requirement of the course that students attend class having read and reflected on relevant sections of the required readings and are prepared to actively participate in the seminar discussions.

Remember that class participation in seminar discussions (10%) and work on in-class group assignments (30%) make up a substantial portion of your grade.

READING MATERIALS

Required reading for this course:

- Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett *The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self and Soul*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., (2000).
- E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). These will introduce you to the main philosophical problems that we will be discussing. Throughout the course, I will direct you to specific readings in this survey that will help you understand some of the issues raised in the topical papers we read in more detail.
- Other required readings will be assigned and available through D2L as either PDFs or web links/URLs. These are the topical papers that focus on the Turing test, what is thinking, cyborgs, biomachine-hybrids, and whether or not the mind is a computer.

Another good source for a wide range of introductory articles is Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/> These articles also list key texts in their bibliographies.



SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

PART I. MINDS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

(28 August)

Welcome and Introduction

Required reading:

- Jorge Luis Borges (1962) "Borges and I." In *The Mind's I*.
- E. J. Lowe (2002) "Introduction: the Nature of Metaphysics" in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

LABOR DAY HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES—MONDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER

(4 September)

Required reading:

- Harold J. Morowitz (1980) “Rediscovering the Mind” In *The Mind’s I*.

UNIT 1. THE MIND AS COMPUTER

(9 September)

Required reading:

- Alan Turing, (1950) “Computing machinery and intelligence”, In *The Mind’s I*.

(11 September)

Required reading:

- Douglas Hofstadter (1981) “The Turing Test: a coffeehouse conversation.” In *The Mind’s I*.

(16 September)

Required reading:

- E. J. Lowe (2002) “Chapter 2: Identity over Time and Change of Composition” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

(18 September)

- Daniel Dennett (1978) “Where am I”. In *The Mind’s I*.

Recommended reading:

- E. J. Lowe (2002) Chapter 3: “Qualitative Change and the Doctrine of Temporal Parts” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

UNIT 2. SEARLE’S CHINESE ROOM ARGUMENT

(23 September)

Required reading:

- John Searle (1980) “Minds, Brains and Programs”, In *The Mind’s I*.

(25 September)

Required reading:

- Patricia Churchland and Paul Churchland (1990) “Could a Machine Think?” *Scientific American* 262, 1, Jan, available on D2L

UNIT 3. ESSENTIALISM AND IDENTITY

(30 September)

Required reading:

- John Searle (2011) “Watson Doesn’t know it Won on Jeopardy!” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 23. Available through D2L.
- E. J. Lowe (2002) “Chapter 5: Necessity and Identity” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

(2 October)

Required reading:

- E.J. Lowe (2002) “Chapter 6: Essentialism” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

***** MIDTERM EXAM—MONDAY, 7 OCTOBER *****

UNIT 4. MENTAL IMAGERY

(9 October)

Required reading:

- Michael Tarr “Mental Rotation” *MIT Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, available on D2L
- Zenon Pylyshyn (2003) “Return of the mental image: are there picture in the head?” available on D2L

CLASS CANCELLED—MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER

(16 October)

Required reading:

- Stephen Kosslyn et al (2003) “Mental Imagery: Against the Nihilistic Hypothesis” available on D2L
- Zenon Pylyshyn (2003) “Explaining Mental Imagery: Now you see it, Now you don’t: Reply to Kosslyn, et al.”, available on D2L

PART II. SYMBOLS

UNIT 5. CAUSALITY

(21 October)

Required reading:

- Thomas Nagel (1974) “What is it like to be a Bat?” In *The Mind’s I*.

(23 October)

Required reading:

- Andy Clark (1995) “I am John’s Brain” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2,2 : 144-148. Available on D2L.
- Andy Clark and David Chalmers (1998) “The Extended Mind”, *Analysis* 58: 7-19. Reprinted in P. Grim, (ed) (2000) *The Philosopher’s Annual* vol XXI-1998, 59-74. Also available on D2L

UNIT 6. BIOLOGICAL AND BIOSEMIOTIC CAUSALITY

(28 October)

Required reading:

- Richard Dawkins (1976) “Selfish Genes and Selfish Memes” excerpt from *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press. In *The Mind’s I*.

(30 October)

Required reading:

- Jesper Hoffmeyer, (2007) “Semiotic Scaffolding of Living Systems” (Chapter 6) from M. Barbieri (ed) *Introduction to Biosemiotics*, 149-166. Available as a PDF through D2L.

PART III. MACHINES

UNIT 7. CYBORGS AND BIO-MACHINE HYBRIDS

(4 November)

Required reading:

- Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181. Available on D2L.

(6 November)

Required reading:

- Jim Johnson, (aka Bruno Latour) (1988) “Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer” *Social Problems*, 35:3, Special Issue: The Sociology of Science and Technology, pp. 298-310. Available on D2L.

*Essay advice will be distributed

(11 November)

Required reading:

- E.J. Lowe (2002) “Chapter 11: Event causation and Agent causation” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

Recommended reading:

- E.J. Lowe (2002) “Chapter 12: Actions and Events” in *A Survey of Metaphysics*

CLASS CANCELLED—WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER

CLASS CANCELLED—MONDAY, 18 NOVEMBER

(20 November)

Required reading:

- Harding, S. (1995) "Strong Objectivity": A Response to the New Objectivity Question. *Synthese* 104 (3): 331-349. Available on D2L.

UNIT 8. NEURO-PROSTHETICS AND RESPECT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

(25 November)

Required reading:

- Joel Anderson (2007) “Neuro-Prosthetics, the Extended Mind, and Respect for Persons with Disability”. To appear in *Ethische, rechtliche und soziale Aspekte des Neuro-Enhancements*, ed. Bettina Schöne-Seifert et. al. (Paderborn: Mentis-Verlag). Available on D2L.

(27 November)

Review session

(2 December)

Required reading:

- Thomas Douglas (2013) Enhancement, Biomedical. *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. Available on D2L.

Recommended reading:

- Thomas Douglas, R. Powell, and J. Savulescu (2013) Is the Creation of Artificial Life Morally Significant?, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 44(4.B):688-696. Available on D2L.

*****FINAL ESSAY DUE WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER *****
*****UPLOAD TO D2L*****

Attendance

Your participation in class discussions contributes significantly to your overall grade. Obviously, you can only participate in class discussions if you regularly attend class. Therefore, if you have more than 6 absences this semester you will drop one letter grade as you will fail to adequately complete one element of the class due to non-attendance and inadequate participation in class discussions.

Submission of Coursework

Essay papers must be submitted on time. There will be no extensions given. In order to pass this course all coursework must be completed. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a "0.0".

General Evaluation Criteria*

Essay exams and papers will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria.

- a) *Clarity and precision* The central claims of the paper should be stated precisely and presented in a manner that another student who was interested in the topic, but not enrolled in the course, could understand. Frequent spelling and grammatical errors are distracting, and will lower your grade. Clear and concise prose is of the utmost importance. The more people that read your work and think that it makes sense, the more likely it does make sense. Remember: I am reading what you write very closely and with a critical eye. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be careful!
- b) *Depth and Persuasiveness* I ask: How deep (i.e., how insightful) are the central claims of the paper, and how persuasive are the arguments given in support of them? Your arguments should at the very least provide plausible support for their conclusions. Also, the arguments should be consistent with one another. Important concepts and terms should be clarified. Generally, the deeper the paper's central claims, and the stronger their support, the better the paper.
- c) *Breadth of knowledge* Have you made good use of the relevant concepts, distinctions, and arguments **that have been included in the assigned readings or that were brought out in classroom discussion**? For example, where one of your central claims clearly contradicts a thesis in one of the reading assignments you should explain what is wrong with the opposing position. (*adopted from M. McKeon, Spring 2009)

4 Point Scale to Percentage Conversion Key.

Your final grade will be converted to 4-point scale as follows:

4.0	=	92–100%
3.5	=	87–91%
3.0	=	80–86%
2.5	=	75–79%
2.0	=	70–74%
1.5	=	65–69%
1.0	=	50–64%
0.0	=	0–49%

The Meaning of Grades**

4.0 =excellent work

“4.0” assignments are of exceptionally high quality. They are innovative, adding something to the topic. They are accurate, clear, organized, use compelling reasoning, and possess a spark of innovation/creativity. They show depth of thought and the writing is polished.

3.0= good work

“3.0” assignments meet the expectations of the assignment and are accurate, clear and organized. They contain good reasoning and although they do not have any significant problems, they do not add anything to the topic.

2.0= acceptable work that has significant problems

“2.0” assignments contain inaccuracies or significant problems with reasoning, organization, or quality of writing.

1.0 work has serious problems and is unacceptable as college-level work.

0.0 is normally reserved for work that is not turned in, is borderline unintelligible, or has little or no relevance to the assignment. (**adopted from Hedrick 2010)

Classroom Courtesy

Be nice. Respect yourself and each other. I want you to be bold, argumentative, and challenging—but in an open-minded and thoughtful way. You will disagree with each other. Being respectful doesn’t mean you have to agree with each other, it just means you are willing to listen to each other.

Please arrive to class on time. All mobile phones must be turned off during class time (this includes discussion sessions unless explicitly allowed by me). Do not text, use your phones, iPods or MP3 players in class. If you do so you will be asked to leave.

MSU Email Communication

All communication will be through your MSU email. Please refer to Student Rights and Responsibility (<https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/index.html>) .

Course Management System: *Desire to Learn*

Syllabus, reading materials, PowerPoints, and announcements are available on Desire to Learn. All papers completed for the course will be uploaded to *Desire to Learn* site for this class. It is your responsibility to understand how to use *Desire to Learn*. Help is available at: http://learndat.tech.msu.edu/communicate_guide/ and instructions for technical assistance for *Desire to Learn* at: <https://d2l.msu.edu> or 355.2345 or 1-800-500-1554

Academic Honesty

Do not cheat. Do not plagiarize.

Submitting another’s work as your own—either in part or in whole.

Penalty for plagiarism is a zero on the assignment and the student will receive an F for the course.

Turnitin Statement from MSU

“Consistent with MSU’s efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain

integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a "similarity score." The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool. Students should submit papers to Turnitin Dropboxes without identifying information included in the paper (e.g., name or student number), the system will automatically show this information to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin."

Reminders of Relevant University Policies

Please be aware that MSU prohibits the commercialization of course notes and materials. MSU prohibits students from commercializing their notes of lectures and University-provided class materials without the written consent of the instructor.

Disability Accommodation Requests

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Notification of Changes, Inclement Weather Policy, and Emergency Procedures

The schedule of reading is the plan for the course. However, changes may need to be made and so it is tentative and subject to change. Any changes or modifications to the course schedule/syllabus will be announce ahead of time in class. Emergency Procedures: If there is an emergency or there is inclement weather, or other related cancellations, we will follow University policy. Any additional necessary changes to will be posted to D2L.

Related Student Organizations or Clubs, if Applicable	http://studentlife.msu.edu/about-student-life
Learning Resources Center:	355.2363 or http://lrc.msu.edu/
Office of Supportive Services:	353.5210 or http://www.oss.msu.edu
The Writing Center:	http://writing.msu.edu
Libraries:	432.6123 or www.lib.msu.edu/
MSU IT Service Desk:	Help Desk: 432.6200 or www.tech.msu.edu/support/
Office of the Ombudsperson:	353.8830 or www.msu.edu/unit/ombud
Olin Student Health Center:	http://olin.msu.edu/
MSU Counseling Center:	www.counseling.msu.edu
MSU Psychological Clinic:	355.9564
English Language Center:	www.elc.msu.edu

Community Groups (Adult Students, International Students, Persons with Disabilities, LGBT, Family Resource Center, Veterans, The Women's Resource Center) see *Student Handbook and Resource Guide*: <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/information-and-services/services-for-community-groups>