

# PHIL 329: Minds and Machines

Course Syllabus, Summer 2009

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## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of cognitive science. We will critically examine a range of contemporary debates in the philosophy of cognitive science, including debates about whether the mind is made up of several special-purpose 'modules', whether knowledge of language is innate, whether consciousness can be given a reductive explanation, and so on.

## Meetings

Classes will be held Mondays through Thursdays, 10.30-12.30pm, in Room 102 of the Cook-Douglass Lecture Hall. Office hours will be held on Tuesdays, 1.00-2.30pm, in my office (Room 011, Davison Hall).

## Prerequisite

I will assume that you have some prior experience reading, writing and analyzing philosophical arguments. A course or two in philosophy should suffice. Courses in any of the sub-discipline of cognitive science (e.g. psychology, linguistics) will prove useful, but are not required.

## Course Materials

The textbook for the course is "Contemporary Debates in Cognitive Science" by Rob Stainton (2006, Blackwell). Additional readings will be made available as PDFs via the 'Resources' section of the Sakai site.

## Assessment

Your grade will be made up as follows:

- 25% Weekly comments and course participation:** You are expected to take an active part in class discussions, both in class and on the Sakai discussion board. Specifically, you are required to post *at least* two entries to the discussion board each week, one by Monday and the other by Thursday (feel free to post more if you like!). Entries may be either questions or comments about the readings, or replies to other entries. Entries about logistical matters don't count!
- 75% Three position papers (25% each):** You are required to select three of the seven debates discussed in class, and write a short (~5-6 page) paper on each. Your papers should argue for or against a given position in the debate, by presenting what you take to be the most convincing arguments for/against that position. You should consider potential replies to those arguments, and evaluate whether they are successful. Drafts of your papers are due on the dates listed in the schedule below. I will give comments on drafts submitted by these dates. Final copies of all three papers are due on the last day of class (**Thursday, July 2**). Papers will not be accepted after this date.

Additional instructions:

- Begin your papers with the sentence "The purpose of this paper is to argue...".
- Email electronic copies of your papers to [amorgan@philosophy.rutgers.edu](mailto:amorgan@philosophy.rutgers.edu)
- Do not include any identifying information in your document *except* your student ID number.

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following scale (subject to change at my discretion):

A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
100-90%	89-87%	86-80%	79%-77%	76%-70%	69-60%	59-0%

## Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's work or ideas. It is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated in this class. If you are unclear about what plagiarism is, or what the possible repercussions are, please familiarize yourself with the Rutgers Policy on Academic Integrity, available online here:

<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>

If you find this course overly challenging, please contact the instructor.

## Tentative Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC & READINGS	ASSESSMENT
1	5/26	<u>Introduction</u> - van gelder	
		<u>Modularity</u> - ch.1	
		- ch.2	
2	6/01	- ch.3	
		<u>Language Nativism</u> - ch.4	
		- ch.5	
		- ch.6	
3	6/08	<u>Rationality</u> - ch.7	Draft 1 due
		- ch.8	
		- ?	
		<u>Systematicity</u> - ch. 9	
4	6/15	- ch. 10	
		- ?	
		<u>Consciousness</u> - ch. 11	Draft 2 due
		- ch. 12	
5	6/22	- ?	
		<u>Externalism</u> - ch. 13	
		- ch. 14	
		- ?	
6	6/29	<u>Accuracy</u> - ch. 15	Draft 3 due
		- ch. 16	
		- ?	
		- ?	Final copies due