

Philosophy of Technology: Other Minds

Instructors

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Course Site

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Overview

The fundamental question of this course is whether, and under what conditions, it makes sense to attribute minds to technological artefacts. The approach we take is to consider this question in light of much more general questions about both the nature of mind, and the extent of mental phenomena in the universe. Our hope is that by considering these general questions, the more specific questions about the minds of technological artefacts will become more tractable. The hypothesis the course explores is that the unclarities we face when considering whether, for example, current forms of artificial intelligence have minds trace back to more general unclarities about what it is to have a mind in the first place.

Assessment

- 10% Class notes.
 - Every week, one or two students are responsible for taking notes on the discussion in class. The notes should accurately summarise the main ideas and arguments discussed in class, and provide full citations for any sources referred to in the discussion. These are the only students permitted to use a computer in class. Notes should be entered [here](#).
- 15% Class participation.
- 15% Forum participation.

- Due 11:59pm Monday before each class.
- At least 5 forum posts.
- Each post must refer to 1 reading and answer the following questions:
 - Choose 1 news item, SF story, other text, film, game or any other cultural object that is relevant to the reading. How is it relevant?
 - What is one question or comment about the reading?
- 20% Oral exam.
- Essay
 - 15% Proposal: thesis, outline, sources.
 - 25% Final submission

Readings

Human and Other Minds

Week 1 (1 February): The Mark of the Mental

- Bayne, Tim. 2021. *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction*, Routledge, New York. Chapter 1, pp. 6–23.

Week 2 (8 February): Other Minds, Inside and Out

- Nagel, Thomas. 1974. “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”, in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4, October, pp. 435–450.
- Luke Roelofs, “No Such Thing as Too Many Minds”, in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming.
- Lawrence Lek, [Black Cloud](#) 黑云, 2021.

Animal Minds

Week 3 (15 February): Animal Minds

- Kristin Andrews, “Mind” in Lori Gruen (Ed), *Critical Terms for Animal Studies*, University of Chicago Press, pp. 234–250.
- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2009, Chapter 1: Apes on a Plane, pp. 1–32.

Week 4 (22 February): Octos and Bees

- Peter Godfrey-Smith, “On Being an Octopus”, in *Boston Review*, May/June 2013, pp. 46-50. <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/peter-godfrey-smith-being-octopus/>
- Lars Chittka, *The Mind of a Bee*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2022, Introduction, pp 1–16 and Chapter 11: Do Bees Have Consciousness, pp 188–210.

Plants & Fungi Minds

Week 5 (1 March): Plant Minds

- Miguel Segundo-Ortin and Paco Calvo, "Consciousness and Cognition in Plants", in *WIREs Cognitive Science*, Volume 13, Issue 2, March/April 2022. URI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1578>
- Natasha Myers, "Conversations on Plant Sensing: Notes from the Field", in *NatureCulture*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 35-66.

Week 6 (8 March): Visit from [Mileece](#)

- Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Futures*, Random House, New York, Extracts [[Library](#)]

Artificial Minds

Week 7 (15 March): Artificial Intelligence

- N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2017, Chapter 1. [[Library](#)]
- Yann LeCun and Gary Marcus, "Does AI Need More Innate Machinery?". URI: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=vdWPQ6iAkT4>

Week 8 (22 March): Large Language Models

- Murray Shanahan, "Talking About Large Language Models", 11 December 2022. URI: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2212.03551>
- David Chalmers, "Could a Large Language Model be Conscious?", 36th Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems, 28 November 2022. URI: <https://nips.cc/virtual/2022/invited-talk/55867>

Week 9 (29 March): Oral Exam

Qingming Break (3-7 April)

Alien Minds

Week 10 (12 April)

- Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*, [1961] 2011. Translated by Bill Johnston.
- Andrei Tarkovsky, [Solaris](#), 1972.

Week 11 (19 April): Visit from [Bogna Konior](#)

- Cirkovic, M. 2018 *The Great Silence: The Science and Philosophy of Fermi's Paradox*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Chapter 1: The Many Faces of Fermi's Paradox, pp 30-71.
- Christopher Cowie, "Arguing About Extraterrestrial Intelligence", in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume 73, Issue 1, January 2023, pp. 64–83.

Cosmic Minds

Week 12 (26 April): Intelligent Matter

- Philip Goff, *Galileo's Error: Foundations for a New Science of Consciousness*, 2019, Chapter 4: How to Solve the Problem of Consciousness, pp. 111–182.
- Graham Parkes, "The Awareness of Rock: East-Asian Understandings and Implications", in David Skrbina (Ed), *Mind that Abides: Panpsychism in the New Millennium*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 325-340.

Week 13 (3 May): Spinoza

- Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order*, Translated by Michael Silverthorne and Matthew J. Kisner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, [1677] 2018 §1–15. URI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107706972>
- Nadler, Steven. 2006. Spinoza's *Ethics*: An Introduction, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3: On God: Substance pp. 52-84. URI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815737>

Conclusion

Week 14 (10 May): Artificial Intelligence Reconsidered