730 Philosophy 329 Sect 01 Minds, Machines and Persons

Instructor: Sidney Felder, e-mail: sf30@panix.com
Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, Fall 2021. Tu & Th 5:00-6:20

In this class, we will explore the range of ideas implicit in the following questions. What are the essential features of the mental? What is the relationship between mental states and physical (“brain”) states? Between mind and behavioral and more general causal patterns? What conditions need to be satisfied in order to justify the attribution of thought, belief, consciousness, and personhood to something? What does it mean for something to realize a computational process, and is the classification of something as a machine or exclusively computational process consistent with its identification as a mind or person? Under what conditions, and to what extent, can the artificer determine the properties of her artifact? What characteristics constitute personal identity? What does it mean to be the same person over time?

Weeks 1 and 2  The Nature of the Mental
    Rene Descartes  Meditations (Meditations 1 and 2)
    Bertrand Russell  The Analysis of Mind (chapters I and IV)

Weeks 3, 4, 5, 6, 7  The “Mind-Body” Problem and “The Problem of Other Minds”
    J.J.C. Smart  Sensations and Brain Processes
    D.M. Armstrong  The Causal Theory of Mind
    Norman Malcolm  Knowledge of Other Minds
    A.J. Ayer  The Private Language Argument
    P.F. Strawson  Persons
    Edward Bellamy  To Whom This May Come

Weeks 7, 8, 9, 10, 11  Machines and Thought
    Alan Turing  Computing Machinery and Intelligence
    John Searle  Minds, Brains and Programs
    Samuel Butler  Erewhon (Darwin Among the Machines chs. 23-25)
    Olaf Stapledon  Last And First Men (ch.XI, sections 1 and 2)
    Isaac Asimov  I, Robot (“Reason”, “Runaround”)
    Hilary Putnam  Robots: Machines or Artificially Created Life?

Weeks 11, 12, 13, 14  Personal Identity
    H.G. Wells  The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham
    John Locke  An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (ch. XXVII Identity and Diversity)
    Thomas Reid  Of Memory (chapters 4 & 6)
    David Hume  Treatise of Human Nature (Book I, Part IV, Section 6)
    Bernard Williams  The Self and the Future
    Daniel Dennett  Where Am I?
    Derek Parfit  Personal Identity

There will be a take-home exam, to be submitted by e-mail to sf30@panix.com either in PDF or text format before the end of the Finals Period. Final grade will be determined by quality of both written work and class participation.