

INSTRUCTOR:  
DIMITER KIRILOV  
HOWARD  
UNIVERSITY

# INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

055.72  
055.73

Come learn what happens when you put souls, robots, and morality together.

Learn from human and AI instructors:

- How to use machines to think about what is human
- What prompt engineering is and how it can help you land a job
- Whether AIs think and feel and if they will take your jobs

Gain a competitive edge by mastering AI-assisted research and writing.

Weekly format: 2 days of instruction, 2 days for reading, 1 day for discussion. Final project: write an AI-assisted argumentative paper on a topic completely of your choice.



## Ghost in the Machine

- To use well, you must understand well
- Learn from the source about how AIs work: how they are built and trained.
- And whether they have souls!

01



## Prompt Engineering

- To use AIs effectively, give effective instructions
- Learn about prompt engineering--the study of how to command AIs to do your bidding.
- And learn if they understand you, or just fake it that they do

02



## Writing with AI

- To write with reason, you must know reason
- Learn what the structure of **every** good argument paper is and how to prompt engineer AIs to write one
- And write a paper on what **you** want!

03



## The Ethics of AI

- To use rightly, you must know what is right
- Learn about the ethical issues surrounding the AI's takeover of the world.
- And whether when you yell at your computer you hurt its feelings

04



(202)806-6811

dimiter.kirilov@howard.edu

**Introduction to Philosophy**  
**PHIL 055.72 (9:10-10:00)**  
**PHIL 055.73 (10:10-11:00)**  
Summer 2024  
Online

- **Instructor**

Dimiter Kirilov

Office: virtual

Office Hours: TR 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM -- must schedule an appointment for in-person meeting.

Email:

[dimiter.i.kirilov@gmail.com](mailto:dimiter.i.kirilov@gmail.com)

- **Course description**

Come learn what happens when you put souls, robots, and morality together. **Learn from human and AI instructors:**

- How to use machines to think about what is human
- What prompt engineering is and how it can help you land a job
- Whether AIs think and feel and if they will take your jobs

Gain a competitive edge by mastering AI-assisted research and writing.

-Weekly format: 2 days of instruction, 2 days for reading, 1 day for discussion.

-Final project: write an AI-assisted argumentative paper on a topic **completely** of your choice.

-Exams: 2 **take home** exams (2-3 days to complete, you can save your answers and continue later, 2 tries, highest grade counts)

-Students juggling work with this course will be accommodated.

- **Prerequisites**

The course is designed for students who have little or no knowledge/background in logic or philosophy. Accordingly, the course will begin by introducing students to basic concepts and to the basic principles of reasoning that are used to distinguish between good and bad reasoning. Students will acquire the ability to express their ideas clearly and concisely, enlarge their capacity to understand the relationship between premises and conclusions, and increase their skill in determining when arguments succeed or fail to establish their conclusions.

- **Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week**

Students are expected to devote about 3 hours of learning time **per week** distributed as follows:

- a) 2 hours reading the assigned reading for the week
- b) 1 hour analyzing the reading

- **Course textbook**

None. All material will be provided by the instructor

- **Canvas**

- a) Anyone enrolled in the class should automatically have access to this site. On this site you will find the course syllabus, slide lectures, reading assignments, assignment submission tools, and discussion boards.

- **Learning objectives and outcomes**

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- a) Grasp some of the basic problems raised by the philosophy about the mind, knowledge, and ethics
- b) Explain and critically evaluate contemporary theories of mental phenomena, knowledge, and ethics
- c) Conduct independent research into the philosophy and science of the mind, knowledge, and ethics
- d) Write a well thought-out, college level philosophy paper that presents and critically analyzes a position about the philosophical issues raised by some mental phenomenon and contains an original and well-reasoned argument about the position.

- **Email**

- a) Students are responsible for checking emails frequently. Students are responsible for making sure that the email address on file with HU is their primary one
- b) Please make sure that your full name appears somewhere in each message (preferably at the end of the message).

- **Grading:**

- a) Your total course grade will be determined based on the following:
  - i) Participation via online discussion forums 10%
  - ii) Mid-term exam 30% (posted on 06/07 and due on 06/10)
  - iii) Final paper 30% (due 06/24)
  - iv) Final exam 30% (posted on 06/20 and due 06/24)

- **Participation:**

- a) Participation is 10% of your overall grade
- b) I expect that each week a student makes at least two contributions and responses to other students' contributions. To get 100% for your participation grade you need 4 contributions + responses

- c) Discussion during lecture and on the course website will help you and your classmates to understand the material better and relate it with issues not covered in class. It will also train a skill that you will be learning this semester--to present and critically analyze arguments.
- d) Students who have anxiety of speaking during class should contact the instructor in the first week of the course. They will be offered to write a paper in lieu of class participation. The instructor will provide the paper assignment. If the students do not contact the instructor within the first 2 days, then they are responsible for their participation grade as measured via class participation.
- e) Students with 4 or above contributions and responses may be bumped up, if their course grade is borderline
- f) For the asynchronous discussion forums:
  - i) The types of postings on the discussion forum should be of three types: questions about the material, answers to another student question, and responses to another student's answer to your question. You are supposed to do the first two for each forum.
  - ii) To answer another student's question, always look for a question without an answer. Only if there aren't such can you go and answer an answered question.
  - iii) The class-day after each discussion forum you should go and read the answer(s) to your questions and state whether they answered your question or not
- g) To get 100% (an A) for your participation grade you need to:
  - i) Ask questions for clarification of an issue that elucidates the material;
  - ii) Give answers to another student's question that fully address the question; and
  - iii) Give responses to an answer that explain why the answer was/wasn't good
- h) Warning: you will get credit based on the insight, relevance, and frequency of your participation.
- i) You can receive a maximum of two participation points per meeting with me during office hours
- j) Rubric for the discussion forums:

|                     |  |   |  |
|---------------------|--|---|--|
| Completeness: 2 pts | 2 pts: A question, answer, and response to an answer have been submitted   | 1 pts: One of the following is missing: question, answer, and response to an answer have been submitted   | 0 pts: More than one of the following is missing: question, answer, and response to an answer have been submitted                          |
| Clarity: 3 pts      | 3-2 pts: Clear question, answer, and response to answer that does not confuse the reader about what the writer was trying to say | 2-1 pts: Some of the postings (question, answer, and response to answer) take a bit of effort on the reader's part to determine what the writer was trying to say | 1-0 pts: Confusing postings (question, answer, and response to answer) where the reader cannot determine what the writer was trying to say |
| Content: 5          | 5-4 pts: The question  | 3-2 pts: One of the following   | 1-0 pts: More than one of the  |

|     |  |  |  |
|-----|--|--|--|
| pts | asks for clarification of an issue that elucidates the material; the answer addresses fully the question; the response to an answer explain why the answer was/wasn't good | problems is present: the question asks for clarification of an issue that does not elucidate the material; the answer does not address fully the question; the response to an answer does not explain why the answer was/wasn't good | following problems is present: the question asks for clarification of an issue that does not elucidate the material; the answer does not address fully the question; the response to an answer does not explain why the answer was/wasn't good |
|-----|--|--|--|

- **Exams:**

- a) The midterm exam is 30% of your overall grade
- b) The midterm exam is posted on 06/07 and due on 06/10
- c) The midterm exam will test your comprehension of material presented in the readings, lectures, and HW assignments
- d) The midterm exam will contain about 20 true/false and multiple choice questions
- e) The final exam is 30% of your overall grade
- f) The final exam is posted on 06/20 and due on 06/24
- g) The final exam will test your comprehension of material presented in the readings, lectures, HW assignments, and prior exams
- h) The final exam will contain about 20 true/false and multiple choice questions
- i) Rubric for the exams:

1. Each wrong answer on the multiple choice questions diminishes your grade by 2 pts.

- **Final paper:**

- a) The final paper is 30% of your overall grade
- b) The final paper is due on 06/24
- c) The paper must be around 1200 words.
- d) You will receive the paper assignment on 06/10
- e) You will be tasked with:
  - i) Picking a position on one of the topics discussed and stating it as your thesis;
  - ii) Presenting an introduction where you outline the issue you will examine, your position on it, and how you plan to explore the issue
  - iii) Presenting an argument for your thesis (could be one that has been discussed in class) (around 300

words);

- iv) Presenting a considered objection to your argument (could be one that has been discussed in class) (around 300 words);
- v) Presenting a response to the considered objection (could be one that has been discussed in class) (around 300 words); and
- vi) Presenting a conclusion where you outline what you have done in the paper, directions for future research, outstanding problems, and implications

f) Rubric for the paper:

**i) Introduction: 5 points max**

5-4 points for well-stated introduction (you motivate a problem and explain how you plan to solve it in the paper (i.e. provide a roadmap for the paper: main argument, considered objection, and conclusion))

3-2 points for weak motivation of the problem, confusing solution, and unclear roadmap

1-0 points for very confusing weak motivation of the problem or lack of such, confusing solution, or lack of such, and unclear roadmap, or lack of such

**ii) Conclusion: 5 points max**

5-4 points for well-stated conclusion (you summarize what you have done in the paper and a clear and relevant presentation of at least one of the following: implications of your solution, directions for future research, and outstanding problems)

3-2 points for weak summary of what you have done in the paper and an unclear and/or not very relevant presentation of at least one of the following: implications of your solution, directions for future research, and outstanding problems

1-0 points for very confusing or lacking summary of what you have done in the paper and a very confusing or missing presentation of implications of your solution, directions for future research, and outstanding problems

**iii) Exposition: 15 points max**

15-14 points for excellent exposition where the arguments, objections, and rebuttals are presented clearly and charitably without misrepresentation or omission of key elements

13-11 points for a decent exposition, but where the arguments, objections, or rebuttals are a bit oversimplified and key elements are missing

10-8 points for an exposition where some of the arguments, objections, or rebuttals are misrepresented or very oversimplified

7-0 points a very poor exposition where most of the arguments, objections, or rebuttals are misrepresented

**iv) Persuasiveness of Argument: 8 points max**

8-7 points for a persuasive argument that justifies the conclusion

6-5 points for an argument that does a decent job at justifying the conclusion, but has some obvious problems (false premises or invalid inferences)

4-3 points for a weak argument with glaring problems

2-0 points for no argument

**v) Relevance and Research: 7 points max**

7-6 points touching upon the appropriate sources, providing a relevant argument with respect to the thesis, presenting a relevant objection to the argument, and presenting a relevant rebuttal to the objection

5-4 points for touching upon the appropriate sources and providing some relevant arguments, objections, and rebuttals, but not addressing important arguments, objections or rebuttals

3-2 points for touching upon some appropriate sources but not providing the relevant arguments, objections, and rebuttals

1-0 points for not touching upon any of the relevant sources and not providing arguments, objections, and rebuttals relevant to the thesis

• **Class policies**

- a) You are expected to read all the lectures and the reading materials, complete and submit all the assignments on time, and participate in the class discussions. **You will not be able to pass the course if you have failed to complete one of the assignments for the course.**
- b) I expect you to come to class prepared, meaning that you have read the assigned reading material and given lots of thought about it. Reading philosophy is a very challenging task. You will often have to read the material more than once to understand the presented argument. And this cannot be done overnight.
- c) **Late work:** there will be a penalty of 1/3 letter grade (e.g. from A to an A-) for each *calendar* day late. The penalty will be waived in the case of religious holidays (students should notify the instructor during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance) and documented medical or family emergencies.
- d) **Make-up exams:** permitted in the case of religious holidays (requires notification *at least* a week in advance) and documented medical or family emergencies.
- e) There will be no opportunities for extra credit.
- f) It is your responsibility to submit your work on time. If you are finishing a paper at the last minute, and

something goes wrong—the internet connection doesn't work, your printer suddenly stopped printing, you run out of the printer toner, or whatever—that's one way a paper can end up being late. "My internet didn't work," "something went wrong with my printer," etc., will not count. Please plan ahead and submit your work on time.

- g) Also, the fact that you "need" a certain grade is not a reason for giving it to you. I will give you an 'A' only if you earn an 'A'; if you earn a 'C' and "need" a 'B', it is not my concern. The integrity of the grading process, the course and, indeed, HU depends on instructors and students understanding this distinction. If you need help, let me know. I'll do what I can within reason, and dealing with problems early can help a lot.
- h) **Failure to complete an assignment will result in your receiving no points (a zero) for that assignment. You cannot pass the class without submitting all the required assignments.**
- i) **If you wish to contest your grade on a paper or exam, you must do so within *one week* of that assignment's being graded and made available to you.**
- j) You will be evaluated based on the *quality* of your work and not on the effort exerted. Some assignments will test comprehension; others will test your ability to present ideas clearly, or critically analyze an argument and demonstrate reflection. Some students may need to work much harder than other students to get the same grade. Nevertheless, I grade the work and not the student.
- k) **Decorum:** it should go without saying that the proper level of decorum is expected in class. Attention should be paid to whoever is speaking. Listening to music, reading newspapers, and using your phones and/or computers for anything but note-taking during lectures do not create a good impression of you and may hurt your chances of getting a boost of your grade if it is on a borderline. Cynicisms and inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.
- l) **University Policy on Religious Holidays:** Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

- **Academic integrity**

1. I personally support the HU Code of Academic Integrity. It states:

"Howard University is a community of scholars composed of faculty and students both of whom must hold the pursuit of learning and search for truth in the highest regard. Such regard requires adherence to the goal of unquestionable integrity and honesty in the discharge of teaching and learning responsibilities. Such regard allows no place for academic dishonesty. To better assure the realization of this goal any student enrolled for study at the University may be disciplined for the academic infractions defined below."

2. For the elaboration of the code, see: <http://www.howard.edu/policy/academic/student-conduct.htm>
3. I take incidents of academic dishonesty very seriously. I will forward to the office of judicial programs any cases of it that come to my attention.

- **Student grievances**



If you wish to contest your grade on an exam, you must do so within *two days* of that assignment's being graded and made available to you.

- **Support for students outside the classroom:**

- a) **Disabled student services (DSS):**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disabled student services office via phone (202-238-2420), email ([eh Heath@howard.edu](mailto:eh Heath@howard.edu)), or in person at Howard Center Suite 725, 2225 Georgia Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20059 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/DisabledStudents.htm>

- b) **University counseling center (UCC):**

Phone **202-806-6870**.

The Howard University Counseling Service (HUCS) offers assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- Crisis and emergency mental health consultations;
- Confidential assessment, counseling services, and referrals;
- <http://www.howard.edu/services/counseling/nav%20links/default1.html>

- **Schedule**

(Readings might be altered as the course progresses. If there are any changes, they will be announced in class.)

|                   |  |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|--|
|                   | <b>0. Introduction</b>                 |  |  |
| W1, Mon,<br>05/20 | 0.1. Introduction to course            | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Course syllabus                | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the syllabus                                 |
|                   | <b>1. Arguments</b>                    |  |  |
| W1, Tue,<br>05/21 | Reading day                            | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Lecture on deductive arguments | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : "Deductive arguments" |
| W1, Wed,<br>05/22 | 1.1. Discussion on deductive Arguments |  |  |
| W1, Thu,<br>05/23 | Reading day                            | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Lecture on inductive arguments | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : "Inductive arguments" |

|                   |   |  |   |
|-------------------|---|--|---|
|                   |   | Lecture on abductive arguments   | 2. Read the assigned reading : “Abductive arguments”  |
| W1, Fri,<br>05/24 | 1.2. Discussion on inductive and abductive arguments                                      |  |   |
|                   | <b>2. Theories of mind</b>  |  |   |
| W2, Mon,<br>05/27 | <b>Memorial Day: No Class</b>   |  |   |
| W2, Tue,<br>05/28 | Reading day   | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Descartes’ 6th Meditation (on Blackboard); “Substance dualism” lecture slides                                      | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : Descartes’ 6th Meditation; “5 Substance dualism” lecture slides  |
| W2, Wed,<br>05/29 | 2.1. Discussion on the nature of the mind: Conceivability argument; The Mind-body problem |  |   |
| W2, Thu,<br>05/30 | Reading day   | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Jackson’s “Epiphenomenal Qualia.”  | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : Jackson’s “Epiphenomenal Qualia”; “6 Property dualism” lecture slides  |
| W2, Fri,<br>05/31 | 2.2. Discussion on the nature of the mind: Knowledge argument; Epiphenomenalism           |  |   |
| W3, Mon,<br>06/03 | 2.3. Discussion on identity theory and functionalism: multiple-realizability problem      |  |   |
| W3, Tue,<br>06/04 | Reading day   | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Turing’s “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”; Lecture on Functionalism; Searle’s “Minds, Brains, and Programs.” | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : Turing’s “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”; “7 Functionalism” lecture slides; Searle’s “Minds, Brains, and Programs.” |
| W3, Wed,<br>06/05 | 2.4. Discussion on functionalism: Turing-machines and Searle’s Chinese Room               |  |   |

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|-------------------|---|---|--|
| W3, Thu,<br>06/06 | Wrap-up and review                                    | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Review sheet for the Midterm exam   | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the review sheet for the Midterm exam and look over the lectures<br>2. Prepare questions about the review sheet and ask them in class  |
| W3, Fri,<br>06/07 | <b>Midterm exam</b>                                   |   | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Take the Midterm exam   |
|                   | <b>Paper assignment</b>                               |   |  |
| W4, Mon,<br>06/10 | Paper assignment                                      | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Paper assignment  | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the paper assignment lecture   |
|                   | <b>3. Chat-GPT</b>                                    |   |  |
| W4, Tue,<br>06/11 | Reading day   | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br><a href="#">Philosophers On GPT-3 (updated with replies by GPT-3)   Daily Nous</a> ; <a href="#">Philosophers on Next-Generation Large Language Models   Daily Nous</a> ; <a href="#">ChatGPT: Did Big Tech Set Up the World for an AI Bias Disaster? - HBS Working Knowledge</a> | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the assigned reading : <a href="#">Philosophers On GPT-3 (updated with replies by GPT-3)   Daily Nous</a> ; <a href="#">Philosophers on Next-Generation Large Language Models   Daily Nous</a> ; <a href="#">ChatGPT: Did Big Tech Set Up the World for an AI Bias Disaster? - HBS Working Knowledge</a> |
| W4, Wed,<br>06/12 | 3.1. Discussion on ChatGPT: architecture and training |   |  |
| W4, Thu,<br>06/13 | Reading day   | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br><a href="#">What Is ChatGPT Doing ... and Why Does It Work?—Stephen Wolfram Writings</a>  |  |

|                   |  |   |   |
|-------------------|--|---|---|
| W4, Fri,<br>06/14 | 3.1. Discussion on ChatGPT: flaws and ways to fix them |   |   |
|                   | <b>4. Final</b>  |   |   |
| W5, Mon,<br>06/17 | Discussion: recap                                      |   |   |
| W5, Tue,<br>06/18 | TBA  |   |   |
| W5, Wed,<br>06/19 | <b>Review</b>  | <b>Assigned reading:</b><br>Review sheet for the Final exam | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Read the review sheet for the Final exam and look over the lectures<br>2. Prepare questions about the review sheet and ask them in class |
| W5, Thu,<br>06/20 | <b>Final exam</b>                                      |   | <b>Activities:</b><br>1. Take the Final exam<br>2. Tool for submitting the Final paper is open  |