Fall 2018 - Philosophy Department Course Offering

PHIL4000A/PHIL5000A

Title: The Mental Life of Some Machines

Instructor: Prof. Victor Rodych

Day/Time: TR 13:40 - 14:55

Prerequisite(s): One course (3.0 credit hours) in Philosophy

What is a machine? Can a machine think? The best chess *players* on Earth are computers that can crush Magnus Carlsen, the current World Champion (for humans!). Some think that this is clearly a strong argument for the conclusion that machines can think! But is it? Cognitive Science and its many disciplines—Psychology, Neuroscience, Computer Science, Philosophy of Mind, Information Theory, Biology and Biochemistry, *et al*.—have sought to explain human beings, their mental events and contents and behaviour, in a variety of ways. Is, for instance, the input-output approach of Behaviorism and mature Psychology the right approach? Can we fully understand human minds and behaviour in terms of stimuli and behaviour, and schedules of reinforcement? Or must Neuroscience make substantial advances before there is any hope of explaining human beings and their intentions, imaginings, reasoning, and actions? And however these questions are answered, where does this leave the digital computer on which all International Chess Grandmasters rely to prepare for and analyze their games?! Maybe the answer is that since *we are* (organic) *machines*, inorganic machines *must* be able to have minds! But in that case the matter of minds doesn't really matter. This course will examine the work of philosophers, psychologists, and others working in the field in an attempt to answer these and related questions.

For more information contact: Prof. Victor Rodych (rodych@uleth.ca)