PHIL 138: PHILOSOPHY OF AI

In Workflow

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Approval Path

1. 2026-08-28T20:42:51Z
   Brandon Carey (brandon.carey): Approved for PHIL Committee Chair
2. 2026-08-28T20:57:13Z
   Russell DiSilvestro (rdisilv): Approved for PHIL Chair
3. 2026-10-07T19:23:43Z
   Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland): Rollback to Initiator
4. 2026-10-13T21:46:56Z
   Brandon Carey (brandon.carey): Approved for PHIL Committee Chair
5. 2026-10-13T23:06:47Z
   Russell DiSilvestro (rdisilv): Approved for PHIL Chair
6. 2026-10-13T23:35:13Z
   Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland): Approved for ALS College Committee Chair
7. 2026-10-13T23:48:03Z
   Matt Schmidtlein (schmidmc): Approved for ALS Dean

New Course Proposal

Date Submitted: 2026-10-13T21:44:52Z

Viewing: PHIL 138 : Philosophy of AI

Last edit: 2026-10-13T21:44:50Z

Changes proposed by: Brandon Carey (205073704)

Contact(s):

Name (First Last)	Email	Phone 999-999-9999
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Catalog Title:
Philosophy of AI

Class Schedule Title:
Philosophy of AI

Academic Group: (College)
ALS - Arts & Letters

Academic Organization: (Department)
Philosophy

Will this course be offered through the College of Continuing Education (CCE)?
No

Catalog Year Effective:
Fall 2027 (2027/2028 Catalog)

Subject Area: (prefix)
PHIL - Philosophy

Catalog Number: (course number)
138

Course ID: (For administrative use only.)
TBD

Units:
3

Is the ONLY purpose of this change to update the term typically offered or the enforcement of existing requisites at registration?
No

In what term(s) will this course typically be offered?
Fall, Spring

Does this course require a room for its final exam?
Yes, final exam requires a room

Does this course replace an existing experimental course?
No

This course complies with the credit hour policy:
Yes

Justification for course proposal:
PHIL 138 is a core requirement for the proposed minor in Ethics of AI examining the philosophical foundations and implications of artificial intelligence. Through philosophy of mind, epistemology, philosophy of language, metaphysics, and theories of rationality, students analyze the assumptions and limitations of models of AI, assess the evidential significance of contemporary AI research, and investigate what artificial intelligence reveals about intelligence, cognition, reasoning, knowledge, consciousness, agency, and mind. The course thus serves a cornerstone of the new minor, as well as expanding Philosophy's offering in GE Area 5. Due to the timeliness and relevance of the subject matter, we expect significant demand from both Philosophy students and students from other disciplines seeking an upper division course in area 5.

Course Description: (Not to exceed 90 words and language should conform to catalog copy.)
Can machines think, understand, know, create, or become conscious? This course examines the philosophical significance of artificial intelligence for questions about mind, language, knowledge, science, agency, and reality. Topics may include computation, neural networks, large language models, machine reasoning, artificial agency, consciousness, and what AI reveals about human intelligence.

Are one or more field trips required with this course?
No

Fee Course?
No

Is this course designated as Service Learning?
No

Is this course designated as Curricular Community Engaged Learning?
No

Does this course require safety training?
No

Does this course require personal protective equipment (PPE)?
No

Does this course have prerequisites?
No

Does this course have corequisites?
No

Graded:
Letter

Approval required for enrollment?
No Approval Required

Course Component(s) and Classification(s):
Lecture

Lecture Classification
CS#02 - Lecture/Discussion (K-factor=1WTU per unit)
Lecture Units
3

Is this a paired course?
No

Is this course crosslisted?
No

Can this course be repeated for credit?
No

Can the course be taken for credit more than once during the same term?
No

Description of the Expected Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies:

List the Expected Learning Outcomes and their accompanying Assessment Strategies (e.g., portfolios, examinations, performances, pre-and post-tests, conferences with students, student papers). Click the plus sign to add a new row.

	Expected Learning Outcome	Assessment Strategies
1	Explain important concepts and models relevant to the philosophy of artificial intelligence, including computation, symbolic AI, neural networks, large language models, computational theories of cognition, and artificial agents.	Reading-discussion quizzes
2	Identify the assumptions, evidence, and limitations of scientific and philosophical models of intelligence, cognition, language, reasoning, consciousness, and agency.	Midterm and final exams
3	Critically evaluate major philosophical positions and arguments concerning whether artificial systems can think, understand, reason, know, possess mental states, exercise agency, or be conscious.	Midterm and final exams
4	Evaluate empirical evidence about artificial intelligence and use philosophical reasoning to assess what that evidence supports concerning intelligence, understanding, reasoning, knowledge, consciousness, and agency.	Reading-discussion quizzes
5	Analyze what artificial intelligence and its historical development reveal about scientific and philosophical theories of human cognition, intelligence, language, knowledge, and mind.	Final Exam

Attach a list of the required/recommended course readings and activities:
Phil 138 Philosophy of AI.docx

For whom is this course being developed?
Majors in the Dept
Majors of other Depts
Minors in the Dept
General Education
Other

Is this course required in a degree program (major, minor, graduate degree, certificate?)

Yes

Has a corresponding Program Change been submitted to Workflow?

Yes

Identify the program(s) in which this course is required:

Programs:
Minor in Ethics of AI

Does the proposed change or addition cause a significant increase in the use of College or University resources (lab room, computer)?

No

Will there be any departments affected by this proposed course?

No

I/we as the author(s) of this course proposal agree to provide a new or updated accessibility checklist to the Dean's office prior to the semester when this course is taught utilizing the changes proposed here.

I/we agree

University Learning Goals

Undergraduate Learning Goals:

Competence in the disciplines
Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
Intellectual and practical skills
Personal and social responsibility
Integrative learning

Is this course required as part of a teaching credential program, a single subject, or multiple subject waiver program (e.g., Liberal Studies, Biology) or other school personnel preparation program (e.g., School of Nursing)?

No

Is this a General Education (GE) or Graduation Requirement (GR) course or is it being considered for GE/GR?

Is this a General Education (GE) course or is it being considered for GE?

Yes

In which GE area(s) does this apply?

5A. Physical Science

Which GE objective(s) does this course satisfy?

Read, write, and understand relatively complex and sophisticated English prose.
Construct a non-fallacious verbal argument, recognize fallacious arguments, and follow the verbal arguments of others.
Find and use common information resources, engage in specialized library research, use computers and seek out appropriate expert opinion and advice.
Use mathematical ideas to accomplish a variety of tasks.
Gain a general understanding of current theory, concepts, knowledge, and scientific methods pertaining to the nature of the physical universe, ecosystems, and life on this planet.
Develop an acquaintance and understanding of cultures and major dynamic social institutions which affect one's life.
Possess a significant and useful understanding of peoples from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds, including women and ethnic and other minority groups who have been the objects of prejudice and adverse discrimination within our society.

Attach Course Syllabus with Detailed Outline of Weekly Topics:

Phil 138 Philosophy of AI.docx

Syllabi must include: GE area outcomes listed verbatim; catalog description of the course; prerequisites, if any; student learning objectives; assignments; texts; reading lists; materials; grading system; exams and other methods of evaluation.

Will more than one section of this course be offered?

No

General Education - Area 5A: Physical Science

Section 1.

"Indicate in written statements how the course meets the following criteria for Area 5A. Relate the statements to the course syllabus and outline. Be as succinct as possible.

General Criteria:

Is an introductory course with no college level prerequisites.

There are no college level prerequisites.

Emphasizes general principles and concepts having a broad range of application and is not restricted to specialized topics.

It covers a broad range of concepts, principles, and concepts in Philosophy, Computer Science, and Artificial Intelligence.

Introduces students to one or more of the disciplines whose purpose is to acquire knowledge of the physical universe.

It studies the nature of artificial intelligence technology systems.

Specific Criteria:

A student will be able to explain and apply core ideas and models concerning physical systems and mechanisms, citing critical observations, underlying assumptions and limitations.

Cite critical observations, assumptions and limitations to explain and apply important ideas and models in science, mathematics, or computer science through study of Symbolic AI, connectionism, neural networks, LLMs, computationalism, cognitive models, theories of consciousness, machine reasoning

A student will be able to describe how scientists create explanations of natural phenomena based on the systematic collection of empirical evidence subjected to rigorous testing and/or experimentation.

Students will recognize evidence-based conclusions and form reasoned opinions about science-related matters through study of evidence for AI reasoning, representation, consciousness, creativity, knowledge and agency; distinguishing empirical results from theoretical interpretation

A student will be able to access and evaluate scientific information, including interpreting tables, graphs and equations.

through the study of the design and implementation of artificial intelligence systems.

A student will be able to recognize evidence-based conclusions and form reasoned opinions about science-related matters of personal, public, and ethical concern.

Students will study evidence based analyses of artificial intelligence systems and form reasoned opinions about artificial intelligence systems and their impact on personal, public, and ethical concerns.

Includes a writing component described on course syllabus

l) If course is lower division, formal and/or informal writing assignments encouraging students to think through course concepts using at least one of the following: periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, periodic formal writing assignments, periodic journals, reading logs, other. Writing in lower division courses need not be graded, but must, at a minimum, be evaluated for clarity and proper handling of terms, phrases, and concepts related to the course.

2) If course is upper division, a minimum of 1500 words of formal, graded writing. [Preferably there should be more than one formal writing assignment and each writing assignment (e.g. periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, a research/term paper etc.) should be due in stages throughout the semester to allow the writer to revise after receiving feedback from the instructor. Include an indication of how writing is to be evaluated and entered into course grade determination.]

Midterm exam, final exam, and formal writing assignments.

Section 2.

If you would like, you may provide further information that might help the G.E. Course Review Committee understand how this course meets these criteria and/or the G.E. Program Objectives found in the CSUS Policy Manual, General Education Program, Section I.B.

Artificial intelligence systems are products of intersecting scientific, mathematical, computational, and philosophical traditions, including computer science, cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, mathematics, and philosophy. PHIL 138 contributes to scientific literacy by examining important models of artificial intelligence, the evidence used to evaluate them, their underlying assumptions and limitations, and their implications for scientific theories of intelligence and cognition.
Students examine AI as both a scientific and philosophical phenomenon. They learn to distinguish empirical findings from theoretical and philosophical interpretations; evaluate evidence concerning reasoning, representation, intelligence, consciousness, and agency; identify assumptions and limitations of computational models; and examine historical and philosophical perspectives on artificial

intelligence and cognitive science. The course therefore develops the ability to evaluate science-related claims and to reason critically about what contemporary artificial intelligence does in service especially of LOs 1, 3, and 4 in area 5A.

Reviewer Comments:

Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland) (Wed, 07 Oct 2026 19:23:43 GMT): Rollback: Thanks for proposal. The committee has the following comments: Syllabus hard to follow. Assessments need to be diversified for each ELO (and then also reflect those changes on the syllabus). Assessment strategies on proposal should be narrowed down, no need to explain what the assignments will do.

Key: 15590