

# PHIL 221: History and Philosophy of Science

Topic for Winter Semester, 2021: History and Philosophy of Cognitive Science

## Course description

Cognitive science developed in the 1950s out of confluence of ideas in various disciplines. Its central theoretical commitment, however, is that the mind is a kind of machine—a computational device. Elaborations of this idea led to the “computer model of the mind” (though theorists differ about the kind of computer the mind is). The purposes of this course are (a) to explore some of the seminal intellectual events in the establishment of cognitive science; (b) to outline the computer model of the mind; (c) to survey the “cognitive” approach to contemporary questions in the sciences of the mind; and (d) to consider some of the philosophical challenges to the cognitive paradigm.

## Objectives

On successful completion of this unit, students will (a) understand some of the central concepts of cognitive science; and (b) have developed skills in careful reading and expository writing.

## Assessment

The work for the course includes:

- (a) three one-hour exams; the *best* two of three grades will count for 60% of the final grade; and
- (b) a short essay that will count for 40% of the final grade.

## Course commitments

This course is made up of three short online lectures and one question period each week.

## Format

All of the lectures will be pre-recorded and available on MyCourses. A live question period will be held on zoom on Mondays from 12:35–1:25.

## Instructor Contact Details

*Ian Gold*  
ian.gold@mcgill.ca  
Office hours TBA

## Inclusivity

As the instructors of this course we endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

## Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/for](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/for) more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/)).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.