

Phil 3180

First essay topics.

Papers should be no longer than 1,000 words, double spaced with normal margins. They are **due in class** (at the beginning of class) on **February 8th**. An electronic copy should be emailed to me on the same day (please write "3180 paper" in the subject line of your email).

Papers will be graded according to three criteria. First, how clearly does the author express the ideas and arguments under consideration. Be careful not to rely on jargon. It is okay to use technical terms as long as you to explain what they mean (in your own words). Short clear sentences are preferable to long convoluted ones. Examples are often helpful. Second, how well does the author respond to the argument(s) under consideration. Your responses should address the argument under consideration. Ideally they will be sensible and creative. Finally, does the author consider potential replies to his or her response? If you agree with the focal argument, how might someone disagree with you. If you are taking on the focal argument, how might the author of that argument respond to your objections.? How would you in turn reply to those responses? Such philosophical back-and-forth makes for an engaging paper.

I do not encourage you to do any background reading. For these topics there is an immense amount of material available, not all of it good. There is a danger that you will waste your time searching when you could be thinking and refining your ideas.

1. Hubert Dreyfus argues that human intelligence involves a certain type of "know how" that cannot, in principle, be realized by a classical computational system. In your paper, first provide an interpretation of what you think Dreyfus is talking about – what sorts of human abilities does Dreyfus equate with intelligence? Second, in your own words, explain why someone might hold such a view. Specifically, what are the properties of classical computational systems that supposedly prohibit them from being intelligent? Finally, discuss whether you agree with Dreyfus that human thought is not a form of computation.
2. John Searle argues that no matter how closely a computer simulates an intelligent person it could never be intelligent. To what extent do you think that Searle's argument depends on the specific kind of computational architecture in question? For instance, could a PDP network or some other kind of computing system potentially avoid Searle's Chinese room objection.