

Philosophical Aspects of Cognitive Science (01:730:360)
Crosslisted as: Advanced Topics II, Philosophical Aspects of Cog Sci (01:185:412:03)
Spring 2022, Prof. Pietroski
MW 2:00-3:20 pm (Murray 208)
<https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/161935/>

Contact Information

My email address: paul.pietroski@rutgers.edu
My office address: 528 Gateway Building (5th floor), Dept. of Philosophy, 106 Somerset St.
Office Hours: TBA, but tentatively...Mondays 12:30-1:30, Wednesdays 11-12, or by appt.
Any announcements about the class will be made via the course website.

Short Course Description

The broad goal is to illustrate some foundational issues in cognitive science by focusing on some specific questions that quickly arise if one tries to study the spoken or signed languages that human children naturally acquire. What are these languages, and what is it to acquire one? In what sense, or senses, are these languages distinctly human? What kinds of cognitive resources do children need to acquire such languages? Noam Chomsky's early work in linguistics will figure prominently in the course, as will Alan Turing's notion of computation. But we will also be reading work by other cognitive scientists and philosophers, including Randy Gallistel, Plato, and David Lewis.

Required Reading

a series of articles/essays that will be made available via the course website

Course Requirements and Grading

- (a) Two three-page essays in response to topics announced on Wednesdays, starting Jan. 26
 - the first essay will be rewritten in light of comments
 - each version of the first essay (original and rewrite) is worth 10% of your final grade
 - the second essay is worth 20% of your final grade
 - you must submit your first essay by **Feb. 16** and your second essay by **March 9**
 - rewrites of the first essay are due on **March 9**
- (b) a take-home exam worth 30% of your final grade
 - the exam will be **distributed on April 11 and due April 18**
 - it will be like a final exam in terms of length and the kinds of questions asked
- (c) a final project (e.g., a term paper) worth 30% of your final grade
 - Details and examples of possible projects will be discussed in class
 - You will need to clear the general topic with me by **April 20**
 - By **April 27**, you must submit a two-page plan that describes the central question you want to address and includes an outline of the project you are working on
 - Due Date: the day before our scheduled exam slot; but if we get an early slot,
I may extend that deadline, depending on when grades are due
- (d) late work will be penalized one full grade (e.g., 'B' to 'C') per calendar day
- (e) regular attendance and participation can help your final grade as extra credit (1-2 points).