My Robot, My Frenemy

Syllabus

A summary of the course objectives, content, policies, and schedule.

Instructor: Dr. Durell Bouchard
Office Hours: by appointment or open door
Office: Trexler 365-C
E-Mail: bouchard@roanoke.edu
Phone: 375-4901

Course Objectives

Today there are autonomous self-driving cars on our roads. There are artificial intelligence programs that buy and sell billions of dollars of stocks every day. There are robots that vacuum our floors and mow our lawns. As we develop robots with greater capabilities, we are creating robots that are more free of human oversight. Is it possible to create robots with the ability to recognize right and wrong and to choose actions that will not harm people and themselves? In the not-so-distant future there will be robots are behaviorally indistinguishable from humans. What rights should these synthetic intelligences be afforded? In this course students will answer these questions by exploring the ethical and moral issues of the robots we have and the robots that will be.

Intended Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course the successful student will be able to

1. formulate and evaluate arguments about ethical positions.
2. describe connections between the course topic and broader traditions of critical reflections on the good life.
3. give an effective oral presentation.
4. write a paper with a clear thesis, cogent argumentation, effective organization, and a minimum of sentence-level errors.

Course Content

Texts:

You Look Like a Thing and I Love You: How Artificial Intelligence Works and Why It's Making the World a Weirder Place, by Janelle Shane, Voracious, 2019.

Our Final Invention, by James Barrat, Griffin, 2015.

Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relationships, by David Levy, Harper Perennial, 2008.

EasyWriter (7th Edition), by Andrea A. Lunsford, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Oral Presentations: You will learn how to prepare and will deliver two formal oral presentations with slides. The midterm presentation will connect the topics of robots and ethics to a fictional robot. The final presentation will be a presentation of your final project. Presentations will be evaluated by your peers for content and clarity.

Project: You will have a project where you will create a fictional ethical conundrum for a robot and write a paper that analyzes the implied ethical positions. The paper for the final project will have two drafts; the first of which will be evaluated by your peers for content and clarity.

Participation: You are expected to attend class, participate in group activities, and engage in class discussions.

Assignments: In addition to regular reading assignments, you will also have short reading reflection assignments both to ensure you are keeping up with the assigned reading and to facilitate discussion during class. The reading reflection assignments are due before class. Late assignments will receive no credit.

Grading: Course grades are assigned based on the following weights and scale:

Grade Weights: participation…15% midterm presentation…12% final project…3%
assignments……60% final presentation…….15%

Grade Scale:								
93-100	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	below 60	F

Course Policies

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is vital to your success in this course; material covered during missed sessions is the responsibility of the student. Conversations held in class illuminate the published class materials and are subject to evaluation on the final exam. If you anticipate being unable to attend class, email me before class to be excused.

Make-up Policy: Everyone is expected to give their presentations at the scheduled time. If you have an excused absence, email me to arrange for a make-up. Unexcused absences will result in receiving no credit for missed presentations.

Late Assignment Policy: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are to be turned in before the start of class on the due date. If you anticipate being unable to meet a deadline, email me before the deadline to request an extension. Unexcused late work will receive no credit.

Academic Integrity: It is accepted that you have read and understood the standards for academic integrity at Roanoke College. All tests and exams are to be the work of the individual student. You are encouraged to get help from the instructor if you need help with any aspect of the course, including programs and assignments. Student assistants, tutors, and classmates may help you understand course concepts but may not show you how to do any particular aspect of an assignment. Students may discuss work and help each other out, but in all cases, the work you turn in must be your own. Copying someone else's work or turning in someone else's work is NEVER allowed. Using someone else's work or ideas as your own is plagiarism and an academic integrity offense. Examples of academic integrity violations include copying a program or part of a program (even one line) from someone else, writing code for someone else, telling someone else how to solve a problem or having someone tell you how to solve a problem. Discussion among students about programming projects should be limited to general concepts, not specific aspects of how to complete the work.

Electronic Devices: All cell phones must be silenced and stored out of sight during class. The use of any electronic device during a test or quiz is prohibited. This includes cell phones, personal media players, personal digital assistants, and laptops. Any use of such a device during a test or quiz will be considered a breach of academic integrity.

Writing Center: The Writing Center @ Roanoke College, located on the Lower Level of Fintel Library, offers tutorials focused on writing projects and oral presentations for students working in any field. Writers and presenters at all levels of competence may visit the Writing Center at any point in their process—including brainstorming, drafting, organizing, editing, or polishing presentation skills—to talk with trained peer tutors in informal, one-on-one sessions. The Writing Center is open Sunday through Thursday from 4 to 9 pm. Simply stop in, or schedule an appointment by going to www.roanoke.edu/writingcenter, where our staff members and workshops are also posted. Questions? Email writingcenter@roanoke.edu or call 375-4949. Like our Facebook page for hours and event updates!

Accessible Education Services: Accessible Education Services (AES) is located in the Goode-Pasfield Center for Learning and Teaching in Fintel Library. AES provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. To register for services, students must self-identify to AES, complete the registration process, and provide current documentation of a disability along with recommendations from the qualified specialist. Please contact Laura Leonard, Assistant Director of Academic Services for Accessible Education, at 540-375-2247 or by e-mail at aes@roanoke.edu to schedule an appointment. If you have registered with AES in the past and would like to receive academic accommodations for this semester, please contact Laura Leonard at your earliest convenience to schedule an appointment.

Diversity: I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability – and other

visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Preferred Name/Pronoun: I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Course Schedule

This course expects you to spend at least 12 hours of work each week inside and outside of class.

Week	Topic
1	What is a Robot?
2	Presentation Skills
3	Programming a Robot
4	Artificial Intelligence
5-6	Ethics
6-7	Midterm Project
8-9	Artificial General Intelligence
10-11	Love and Sex
12-13	Final Project