Writing Assignment #2: Physical Symbol Systems and the Chinese Room

IDST-010-06

Draft Due: Monday, 17 November 2014, 9 A.M.

Final Version Due: Friday, 21 November 2014, 5 P.M.

Harnad (1990) discussed physical symbol systems (Newell & Simon, 1976) and the Chinese Room (Searle, 1980). For this writing assignment, read Newell and Simon (1976) and Searle (1980), and argue for or against the Physical Symbol System Hypothesis. Feel free to include in your discussion material from other sources.

To structure your writing, use the following template from Graff and Birkenstein (20014, p. 9):

> In recent discussions of _____, a controversial issue has been whether _____. On the one hand, some argue that _____. From this perspective, _____. On the other hand, however, others argue that _____. In the words of _____, one of this view's main proponents, "_____." According to this view, _____. In sum, then, the issue is whether _____ or _____.
>
> My own view is that _____. Though I concede that _____, I still maintain that _____. For example, _____. Although some might object that _____, I would reply that _____. The issue is important because _____.

You can not change the structure or the words of the template, but you can use more than one sentence in an underlined area provided that the additional sentences fit with the existing structure. In your draft and final versions, set the words of the template in boldface type, and write the word count between the body and bibliography. The word count for this assignment is 650 words. Finally, make sure you read and follow the instructions in "Guidelines for Short Papers," which you can find in the Materials section of the class Web page. To make expectations clear, I will use the rubric at the end of this document for grading

The papers for this assignment are papers from the reading list. They may prove challenging to read because they were written for an audience with much more developed backgrounds in philosophy and in artificial intelligence than we have. Nonetheless, I know that you will be able to understand the articles well enough to complete the writing assignment. Furthermore, when you come across something that you do not understand, then you are free to do your own research, and I encourage you to bring questions and insights into the class or onto the discussion board for discussion.

Submission of your final version for grading will consist of four events, the first two of which are optional: submission of a draft, my review, class discussion, and submission of the final version. If you would like my feedback on a draft of your paper, you must upload it to Blackboard before 9 A.M. on Monday, November 17. Because of the timing of the submission of the draft and the class discussion, I will not accept late submissions. Since this step is optional, there are no points.

During class on Tuesday, November 18, we will hold a class discussion. I will expect everyone to present the crux of their argument and respond to questions or concerns.

With the benefit of my feedback and the class discussion, you will have a few days to edit and refine your paper. You must upload the final version of your paper to Blackboard before 5 P.M. on Friday, November 21.

References

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (20014). *"They say/I say": The moves that matter in academic writing* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Harnad, S. (1990). The symbol grounding problem. *Physica D: Nonlinear Phenomena*, *42*(1), 335–346.

Newell, A., & Simon, H. A. (1976). Computer science as empirical enquiry: Symbols and search. *Communications of the ACM*, *19*(3), 113–126.

Searle, J. (1980). Minds, brains, and programs. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *3*(3), 417–457.

Rubric

Content

Rating:	Inadequate				Adequate				Outstanding	
	1	3	5	7	10	12	15	18	19	20
[18, 20]	Clear statement of the thesis. Sound logical argument. Marshals strong evidence from sources in support of thesis. Cites meaningful examples drawn from the works cited. Considers potential objections to or weaknesses of argument.									
[13, 18)	Clear statement of the thesis. Mostly sound logical argument. Marshals strong evidence from sources in support of thesis. Cites meaningful examples drawn from the works cited.									
[7, 12)	Weakly stated thesis. Unsound logical argument. Marshals some evidence from sources in support of thesis. Cites weak examples drawn from the works cited.									
[1, 6)	Poorly stated thesis. Statements of opinion with little or no evidence. Marshals unconvincing or little from sources evidence in support of thesis. Cites poor examples drawn from the works cited.									

Organization

Rating:	Inadequate		Adequate		Outstanding
	1	2	3	4	5
[4, 5)	Strong organization. Strong introduction and conclusion. Clear flow and transitions between elements. Strong cohesion among elements. Appropriate length or word count.				
[3, 4)	Weak organization. Weak introduction or conclusion. Weak flow and transitions between elements. Missing or unnecessary elements. Inappropriate length or word count.				
[1, 2)	Poor organization. Poor introduction or conclusion. Poor flow and transitions between elements. Missing or unnecessary elements. Inappropriate length or word count.				

Style

Rating:	Inadequate		Adequate		Outstanding
	1	2	3	4	5
[4, 5)	Written in clear formal language. Easily understood sentences. Appropriate use of direct quotes to support argument. Paper written in student's own words. Varied sentence structure.				
[3, 4)	Written mostly in clear formal language. Some use of slang, ambiguous words, or phrases. Mostly appropriate use of direct quotes to support argument. Paper mostly written in student's own words.				
[1, 2)	Written in informal language. Overuse of direct quotes. Overuse of slang, ambiguous words, or phrases.				

Sources

Rating:	Inadequate		Adequate		Outstanding
	1	2	3	4	5
[4, 5)	Authoritative sources. Sources appropriate for the thesis. Appropriate number of sources for assignment. Proper use of citation in text. Proper format for bibliography.				
[3, 4)	Mostly authoritative sources. Sources mostly appropriate for the thesis. Inappropriate number of sources for assignment. Problems citations in text. Problems with bibliography format.				
[1, 2)	Reliance on unauthoritative sources. Inappropriate sources for thesis. Too few sources for assignment. Inappropriate use of citation. Inappropriate bibliography format.				