Welcome to my class

Introduction to

Artificial Intelligence

Hi guys,

Just want to get in touch with you before our class starts. This way you should be able to decide right now if this is the right class for you to take. This class will be a little different from many other courses. As you know, this class is a BLENDED course that means that it will combine in-class sessions with some work you will have to do independently online. PLEASE, NOTE that THIS IS NOT an ON-LINE COURSE. Definitely, I want to see you in my class each week. Also keep in mind that teaching a course in a blended mode with a reduced number of class sessions does not decrease the course and curriculum requirements. Yes, the class time in this course will be reduced but some activities will move from a classroom to your room. You will have to spend more time for your on-line and independent study. The good thing is that you can do it at home, work or even at the beach if those locations help you to boost your performance. So you will have more flexibility in organizing your work in time and space.

As I hate to see your red eyes at a quarter end, another thing, which I am planning to try in this class is a more even distribution of your workload over the whole quarter. Please, download the "Schedule" document from mycourses and see how it will be done. I am planning to have a class session every week, usually on Monday with Wednesday time reserved for online and other activities with some possible exeptions, e.g. I want to have classes on both Monday and Wednesday in week 1. An example of such activities will be quizzes, which I want to schedule online during out class time on Wednesday. There will be NO FINALS in this class but we will have four online quizzes with the first one coming very early in week 2. You will have to complete your first assignment within your first week too. I am trying to shift more of your project work from the quarter end also. Your course project will be divided into two parts with the first part being the main one, which will require your major contribution. I want you to finish your whole project by week 8.

In this class you will have to combine different activities: reading and researching, writing assignments and project reports, programming and software design, taking the tests and making presentations. You will have to combine some of them every week, from week 1 till week 10 but I am planning the following time distribution of your major activities (again, I do not mean that you will have to do nothing else in a particular week).

Week 1 – Reading, I mean a lot of reading, please, see below
Week 1-2 – Writing and researching
Weeks 1 – 3 – Preparing and making a presentation (only one presentation according to your group schedule) for the debate
Weeks 2-8 – Project work, mainly weeks 5 -7
Weeks 2-8 – Participating in online discussions
Weeks 2-8 – taking online tests (see the schedule)
Weeks 2-9 – Research with your presentations scheduled over weeks 8 - 9
Week 11 – NO finals

I have already placed a lot of materials on mycourses, which will become our main communication media in this course. You are very welcome to look at them even before the course begins. In particular, I strongly encourage you to start reading topic 2: Singularity and AI future development. This topic includes reading the "Singularity" report that was published in IEEE Spectrum, June 2008 issue. I have uploaded this report to mycourses to make it available to everyone. Alternatively, you may get it, along with webinars and other VERY interesting materials from IEEE website at http://spectrum.ieee.org/static/singularity. I do recommend you to go there, at least to have a look at the webcasts and videos. BTW, it will be the topic of our first debate and test.

Another unconventional feature of this class that I have already mentioned is debates. Here two teams debate a specified topic and compete against each other. Each student should pick up one debate topic and enroll himself into a corresponding group. To enroll yourself, you have to go to the Groups section on mycourses and then choose Debates. If you need help in learning how to use mycourses, please, contact online learning unit (online.rit.edu). Please, see the list of topics in the Debates document on mycourses. As soon as you select one, please, enroll yourself. Enrollment is already open and on "first-come, first-served" basis. There can be no more than two students per group. If you see already two names in a particular group, please, choose another one. I want to have the first debate on Wednesday, week 1. I really appreciate if you volunteer to prepare it by this time and enroll yourself into group 1 or 2. If this is not possible, we will have to reschedule it to week 2.

In my teaching I will be closely following the textbook "Artificial Intelligence. A systems approach" by M. Tim Jones, Jones and Bartlett Publishers. It has a CD with a lot of good materials there too. However, if you already have got another AI book, for example by Luger or Russell and Norvig, probably you do not have to invest in this one.

Have great well-deserved vacations!

See you in my class next week.

Leon Reznik