

Trolling the bot: Human-machine performances and the metapragmatics of AI

Professor Rodney Jones (University of Reading)

In this presentation I will focus on how humans talk to machines. More specifically, I am interested in how people talk about talking to machines—the meta-pragmatics of human-computer interaction—and its implications for how we think about language, how we think about intelligence, and how we think about our own humanity. Not surprisingly, when people interact with “intelligent” agents, such as chatbots, they often engage in verbal provocations, sometimes playfully and sometimes maliciously, as a way to test the limits of the agent’s “intelligence” or apparent “humanness”. An important function of such exchanges is to aid people in developing pragmatic parameters and inferential processes for conversing with machines, what I have previously called algorithmic pragmatics. Recently, it has become popular to share these provocative exchanges with others over social media in the form of metapragmatic artifacts, such as screenshots of conversations with chatbots or videos of embodied interactions with voice activated AI assistants. As with non-public performances of provocative human-machine conversations, one of the key functions of these public performances is to “test” what the chatbot can do and establish its “(non)humanness” through attempting to provoke inappropriate, humorous, or biased responses. As metapragmatic artifacts, these performances facilitate collective engagements with algorithmic pragmatics that feed into larger societal imaginaries, not just about artificial intelligence, but also about what it means to produce “appropriate” language and what it means to be human. At the same time, they often serve other purposes as well, such as aids for the performance of social identities or group affiliation or as tools to promote particular ideologies or political agendas.





The event will be chaired by Prof. Christoph Hafner,
Associate Professor, Department of English

Speaker

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Details

-  **11 OCT 2023 (Wed.)**
-  **17:00 - 18:30 HKT**
-  **To be conducted via hybrid mode
(Zoom and In-person)**
-  **Li Dak Sum Yip Yio Chin A Bldg
Room No.1400**



To register, please visit:
<https://inf.ooo/g/4YMPR8AYW9A>

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