Instructions:

1. Please write your name on the cover of your answer booklets now, before you begin in earnest. Thank you.

2. As you proceed, label each answer in your answer booklets with the appropriate ‘Qn’. Thanks.

3. Answer only five of your choosing from the following list of nine essay questions. If you are in contention for an A-with-distinction, and aspire to it, you must answer Q3. In addition, everyone must answer Q9. Again, label each answer with the appropriate ‘Qn’. The length of each of your five essays is up to you (of course each would be at least one page), but budget your time wisely, so that you can answer five questions cogently. Clarity and power of argumentation is key; mere length of answer isn’t valuable.

The Questions:

Q1 Recall the BBS article “Darwin’s Mistake: . . .” by — abbreviating again, as we’ve done — PHP. Of the commentaries that follow the main paper by PHP that generally affirm the main claim of PHP, or PHP’s argument for that claim, (i) select and clearly announce the one you find most powerful, (ii) summarize that commentary (one paragraph) and what PHP say in response (one more paragraph), and (iii) offer and defend your own view on the commentary.

Q2 What would Nicholson Baker likely say about Goodstein’s Theorem and whether or not the theorem (which as you’ll recall is an instance of $g^*$) provides an example of something that distinguishes human from nonhuman animals? Make sure that in answering this question you refer as appropriate to his essay (“The Wrong Answer,” linked from our syllabus and readily findable online at any rate). Now give your own verdict as to whether Baker is right or wrong.
Q3 You show The Liar Paradox (LP) to a friend of yours with paper and pen at Starbucks. He asks why anyone would ever carefully study such things. You reply that one reason is that sometimes such study makes possible historic discoveries in rational thought. He demands an example. You reply: “Well, Gödel’s first incompleteness theorem, as a matter of fact.” He says: “Hmm. I’m not familiar with that theorem. Can you give me the basic idea, using a parallel of what you’ve just written out in front of me here about LP?” Deliver on this request now, in your booklet. (If you are going for an A-with-distinction, it’s required that you answer Q3, and that you at least try to specifically answer, as part of your answer to current question Q3, the A+ question that appears in our last slide deck.)

Q4 Rini gave a guest lecture on whether or not a computing machine can reach the level of human-level story generation. Take a position of either Yes or No on this question, and then defend your position with an argument that takes account of one or more of the readings for Rini’s lecture.

Q5 Bringsjord has argued that the domain-independent, abstract reasoning power of humans, contrary to what Darwin maintained, is simply not seen in nonhuman animals, at all. (Recall the analysis and argumentation in question, and the citations of Darwin; see the deck. Recall specifically the karkooking problem, and our reference to/discussion of quantifiers and recursion.) Darwin was specifically taken to task, as you will hopefully recall, for ascribing reasoning ability to dogs that isn’t fundamentally different than the reasoning ability we have. Imagine that Darwin pays a visit to our class, and has been fully apprised of our coverage and discussion of him. Put yourself in Darwin’s shoes, and write a response on his behalf in which he defends his views.

Q6 Assuming the identity of Pascal, imagine that you have taken in the coverage of Pascal’s Wager as presented in class, and that you have specifically appeared in front of the class as Pascal for discussion of his argument in support of wagering that God exists (and acting accordingly). One student raises a hand and you/Pascal call upon this student; “Yes?” you/he says. The student says: “Do you welcome that in Bringsjord’s version of your wager, the St Petersburg Paradox appears to no longer be an objection to your argument?” Answer for Pascal, and briefly justify the answer.

Q7 Do you think a computing machine (perhaps embodied in a robot) can in principle reason in productive and informative ways about infinitary concepts and structures? Defend your answer, and in doing so make reference to both the infinitized seriated cup challenge and Goodstein’s Theorem.

Q8 Present a proposed solution to The Paradox of Proust, and defend it against at least one strong objection.

Q9 S Bringsjord’s main claim in this class is of course the conjunction $\mathcal{R} \land \mathcal{H}$. Now that things have drawn to a close, are you currently inclined to accept this conjunction, reject it, or are you agnostic? After announcing your overall position explicitly, present the most powerful objection to your position that you can imagine, in the form of a clear argument — and then defend your overall position by refuting this argument.