University of Toronto, Department of Computer Science
CSC 2501/485F—Computational Linguistics, Fall 2015

Reading assignment 1

Due date: On CDF by 13:10, Wednesday 23 September 2015.
Late write-ups will not be accepted without a valid excuse.
This assignment is worth 5% of your final grade.

What to read

Alan Turing, "Computing machinery and intelligence", *Mind*, 59, 1950, 433–460.

Reading guide: Read sections 1–2; you can skip sections 3–5. In section 6, look at subsections (1)–(3) and (7)–(9), but don't use them in your argument; consider subsections (4)–(6) carefully. Look at section 7, and give it some thought, especially from the second paragraph on page 458 (starting "The idea of a learning machine") through to the end.

What to write

Consider the question "Could a machine ever use and understand language the way people do?", and write a *brief* summary of the arguments on both sides of the question, from your perspective as an adult in 2015 of the common era. How could we resolve the question?

Some points to consider:

- Turing was asking a related but different question: "Could a machine think?".

- A lot has been learned since 1950 about what machines can and can't do. The research fields of artificial intelligence and machine learning have had many successes and failures.

General requirements: Your write-up should be typed, using 12-point font and 1.5-line spacing; it should fit on one side of a piece of paper. Submit one copy before the beginning of class, and keep a copy available for yourself, e.g., on your Android or Windows tablet, to use during the class discussion.