

Russ McBride

AI, Strategy, and Entrepreneurship

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Profile

Russ McBride is a business scholar whose work connects artificial intelligence, strategic judgment, entrepreneurship, and social ontology. His AI work spans three decades - from research on machine intelligence and the 1998 Can Computers Think? argument maps to current work on large language models, AI evaluation, and the use of AI in entrepreneurship and business scholarship.

His entrepreneurship research asks how people create new economic possibilities by designing agreements, rights, duties, permissions, authority, access, control, and other social structures. The work draws on philosophy, cognitive science, organization theory, software development, and hands-on venture creation.

Research at a glance

AI and Strategic Judgment

What contemporary AI systems can and cannot do in reasoning, prediction, strategic analysis, innovation, and organizational decision-making - and where human judgment remains essential.

Entrepreneurship and Deontic Engineering

How entrepreneurs create resources, strategic freedom, and new economic possibilities by constructing agreements, roles, rights, obligations, access, and forms of participation.

Social Ontology and Organizations

How collective recognition and deontic structures make firms, resources, opportunities, authority, and coordinated economic action possible.

Three signature contributions

1998	Can Computers Think? Co-authored seven large-format argument maps and an accompanying handbook synthesizing the foundational debate over machine intelligence.
2025	AI-intensive entrepreneurship course. Redesigned and taught Introduction to Entrepreneurship with contemporary AI tools as the working environment across research, venture development, communication, and execution.
2026	Mean Articulation Machines, Strategy Science. Analyzes where large language models offer genuine strategic leverage and where their architecture remains poorly matched to the task.

AI and technology trajectory

1995-1998	Artificial Intelligence Researcher, Lexington Institute.
1998	Co-authored Can Computers Think? - seven argument maps and a handbook on the machine-intelligence debate.
1999-2012	Taught Artificial Intelligence at SUPINFO International University, France.
2006-2013	Founded Psyex Software & Consulting; also worked as a programmer in UC Berkeley Information Technology from 2007-2012.
2019-2022	Published work on forms of AI, prediction, and the implications of AI for governance and financial markets.
2025-2026	AI-intensive entrepreneurship teaching, LLM talks, Mean Articulation Machines, and current work on AI evaluation, model deployment, agents, and research workflows.

Selected scholarship

Artificial intelligence, cognition, and strategic judgment

McBride, R. (2026). "Mean Articulation Machines." *Strategy Science*, 11(1), 31-54. doi:10.1287/stsc.2025.0439

Examines which strategic tasks are well matched to LLM capabilities and which still require forms of judgment that current systems do not reliably provide.

McBride, R., Dastan, A., & Mehrabinia, P. (2022). "How AI Affects the Future Relationship Between Corporate Governance and Financial Markets: A Note on Impact Capitalism." *Managerial Finance*, 48(8), 1240-1249. doi:10.1108/MF-12-2021-0586

McBride, R. (2019). "Human-Like Implemented AI and Human Problem-Solving AI." *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*, 9(3). doi:10.30845/ijbht.v9n3p1

Horn, R. E., Yoshimi, J., Deering, M., & McBride, R. (1998). "Can Computers Think? The History and Status of the Debate." *MacroVU Press. Seven argument maps and accompanying handbook.*

A visual synthesis of the major arguments, counterarguments, and conceptual fault lines in the debate over whether computers can think.

Entrepreneurship, organizations, and social ontology

McBride, R., Packard, M. D., & Clark, B. B. (2024). "Rogue Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 48(1), 392-417. doi:10.1177/10422587221135763

McBride, R., & Wuebker, R. (2022). "Social Objectivity and Entrepreneurial Opportunities." *Academy of Management Review*, 47(1), 75-92. doi:10.5465/amr.2017.0451

McBride, R. (2022). "Deontic Binding: Imposed, Voluntary, and Autogenic." *Social Epistemology*, 36(2), 218-237. doi:10.1080/02691728.2021.1996657

Gordon, B., & McBride, R. (2018). "Toward a Unified Account of the Firm: Deontic Architecture." In *Philosophical Reflexivity and Entrepreneurship Research*. Routledge.

Current research

Under review	What the Best Theory of Cognition Implies for AI - a paper connecting contemporary theories of cognition to claims about artificial intelligence.
Under review	Bio-Chauvinism or Empirically Grounded Prudence? - a paper on the evidential standards for attributing consciousness to machines.
Under review	The Deontic Origination of Resources - with Mark Packard and Per Bylund; develops a social-ontological account of how resources come to exist as usable economic objects.
In preparation	Deontic Engineering - with Anastasia Sergeeva; examines the deliberate construction of rights, duties, permissions, and authority as a form of entrepreneurial design.
Book manuscript	Pragmatic Entrepreneurship - a practical and theoretical approach centered on constructing new possibilities through social agreements.
In preparation	Have Large Language Models Solved the Frame Problem? - examines relevance, novelty, context selection, and the limits of current LLM reasoning.

AI teaching and curriculum development

Spring 2025 - Introduction to Entrepreneurship, AI-intensive redesign

The entire course was devoted to using and critically evaluating contemporary AI tools across entrepreneurial research, analysis, venture development, communication, and execution. AI was the working environment for the course rather than a single supplementary topic.

2024	Thinking Like a Programmer: Logic and Data Science in Python, UC Merced.
2009-2012	Artificial Intelligence, SUPINFO International University, France - four course offerings.
Additional	Entrepreneurship, innovation, financial analysis, social ontology, behavioral economics, philosophy of social science, cognitive science, philosophy of mind, and logic.

Selected recent presentations

Aug 2026	Why LLMs Will Never Generate Strategic or Scientific Breakthroughs. Academy of Management Annual Meeting.
Aug 2026	Pragmatic Entrepreneurship. Academy of Management Annual Meeting.
May 2026	Superfecund Agreements. University of Bath School of Management, United Kingdom.
Sep 2025	How Far Can LLMs Interpolate Beyond Their Training Data? University of Bristol Business School, United Kingdom.
Aug 2025	Mean Articulation Machines. Strategy Science special-issue invitational conference, Sundance, Utah.
Jun 2025	Mean Articulation Machines. University of Bath School of Management, United Kingdom.
Apr 2024	Current and Future Prospects for Large Language Models in AI. Innovation & Design Entrepreneurship Hub, UC Merced.
Jan 2022	Human-Like AI and Human Problem-Solving AI. National University of Singapore.
Mar 2020	The Central Challenge to Building Real AI. Management of Complex Systems Speaker Series, UC Merced.

Selected appointments and leadership

2016-present	Faculty member; current Associate Professor, Management of Complex Systems, UC Merced.
2022-present	Director, Innovation & Design Entrepreneurship Hub, UC Merced.
2016-present	Director, Social Reality & Cognition Research Group (SORAC), UC Merced.
2020-2021	Visiting Professor, Department of Entrepreneurship & Strategy, University of Utah.
2011-2016	Director, University of Utah Foundry Startup Entrepreneurship Incubator; research and teaching roles in Entrepreneurship & Strategy.
1995-1998	Artificial Intelligence Researcher, Lexington Institute.

Education

2009 Ph.D., Philosophy and Cognitive Science, University of California, Berkeley. Committee: John Searle, Hans Sluga, George Lakoff.
1994 A.M., Philosophy and Symbolic Systems, Stanford University.
1990 B.A., Philosophy and Cognitive Science, with honors, University of California, Berkeley.

Technical & entrepreneurial background

- Founder, Psyex Software & Consulting (2006-2013); Programmer, UC Berkeley Information Technology (2007-2012).
- Python for data analysis, quantitative research, research automation, and prototyping; Bash/Zsh; Vue.js/Nuxt; prior Ruby development.
- Current technical work includes local open-weight model workflows, model quantization and deployment, LLM benchmarking, agent and harness evaluation, dataset design, retrieval workflows, and AI-assisted software development.

Research leadership, funding, and service

2022-2025 Co-Principal Investigator, Blackstone Entrepreneurship and Development Grant (\$200,000). Selected editorial and review service includes Academy of Management Review, Journal of Business Venturing, Organization Science, Strategic Management Journal, Strategy Science, European Management Review, Social Epistemology, and the Cognitive Science Society Annual Conference.