



PSYCHOLOGY 3120G (570)
Altered States of Consciousness: Selected Topics
Fall/Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: Dr. Imants Baruss
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

Topics may include the physiology, psychopathology, and anomalous aspects of altered states, dreams, dissociative states, drug-induced states, and experiences associated with death.

Prerequisite(s): [Psychology 2840F/G](#) (or [Psychology 2801F/G](#), [Psychology 2802F/G](#), the former Psychology 2800E, the former Psychology 2820E, [Psychology 2830A/B](#), [Psychology 2855F/G](#) or [Psychology 2856F/G](#)) and registration in the third or fourth year of Honours Specialization, Honours Double Major, Major or Specialization in Psychology, or Honours Specialization in Applied Psychology.

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: PSYCHOL

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Psychology 3120G, Section 570
Altered States of Consciousness: Selected Topics

Course Syllabus

1. Instructor Contact Information

Contact is by email: baruss@uwo.ca Please note that the email must be sent from a student's Western email account. The Instructor will respond to students between 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, usually within a few days, although it may take up to a week to receive a response.

2. Office Hours

Office hours are in-person in the Instructor's office on campus on Fridays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and by Zoom on Fridays 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. or by appointment. The Zoom information is on the OWL site.

3. Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine death as an altered state of consciousness, including the phenomenology of experiences associated with death, as well as to develop critical thinking skills and writing skills, including, but not limited to, comprehensiveness of understanding, integration, insight, logical coherence, organization, and writing style, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the correct use of APA conventions. Topics covered can include: near-death experiences, afterdeath communication, deathbed visions and coincidences, past-life experiences, electronic voice phenomenon, instrumental transcommunication, out-of body experiences, mediumship, poltergeist activity, the Scole experiment, the apparent nature of the afterlife, anomalous phenomena associated with death, empirical research concerning any of the previous topics, and theories of experiences associated with death. The study of altered states of consciousness is a multidisciplinary effort and material from psychology, medical sciences, philosophy, neuroscience, anthropology, mathematics, statistics, physics, and religious studies may be discussed in this course. Students will be expected to know that material to the extent that it is reasonable to know it given the prerequisites for the course and explicit instruction given in the readings and in class. This course is taught from a phenomenological perspective in that phenomena are considered essentially as phenomena without automatic reduction to a materialist interpretation of reality. And it is taught from a humanistic and transpersonal perspective in that existential meaning, authenticity, and transcendent experiences are taken seriously as critical aspects of human psychological functioning.

Mode of instruction: in-person

4. Learning Outcomes

1. Student engagement in the learning process.
2. Good understanding of course material.

3. Development of sensitive attitude toward course material.
4. Development of critical thinking skills.
5. Development of effective writing.

5. Assignments

Student Engagement: Students are expected to read the textbook, attend in-person classes, participate in class discussions, write weekly homework essays of 500 to 1000 words in length, and write one-minute essays.

Homework Essays: There will be 10 homework essays due at 2:30 p.m. on January 13, 20, 27, February 10, 24, March 3, 17, 24, 31, and April 7, 2026. In writing the essays, students can confer with each other or use other sources of information when preparing their weekly essays but must write the essays entirely by themselves and demonstrate, in the course of their answers, that they have read the assigned material. Students are not allowed to use AI to create or write their essays or to use language translators to translate their essays from other languages into English. The only AI assistance that students are allowed to have is to check grammar and spelling. More information about the essays is given on the course OWL site.

One-minute essays: Students may be asked to write short in-class essays that will not be graded nor contribute to the final grade but can be used as a basis for discussion. The essays must be submitted on OWL after the end of the class by 9:00 p.m.

6. Course Materials

Required textbook:

Barušs, I. (2023). *Death as an altered state of consciousness: A scientific approach*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. \$98.45

7. Evaluation

Essays, 30%: Students are required to write 10 essays, each of which must be submitted on OWL by the beginning of the class for which it is due. The essay grade will consist of the average of the 8 best essay marks. Because of this flexibility in assessment, students will not be given accommodation for failing to submit an essay.

Midterm Tests, 40%: There will be two in-person midterm tests, on February 3, 2026, and March 10, 2026. The midterm tests will be essay-style in format and will cover material in the assigned readings and class lectures from the beginning of the course to the time of the test. The second Midterm Test is a designated assessment, and an undocumented absence cannot be used for missing it.

Examination, 30%: There will be a final examination during the final examination period April 12, 2026, to April 30, 2026. The examination will be essay-style in format and will cover all the material in the assigned readings and class lectures from the beginning of the course.

8. Academic Consideration for Absence.

Students who cannot attend a designated assessment or examination for medical or other extraordinary reasons should obtain proper documentation and contact their dean=s office as soon as possible. Allowance will not be made for tests and assignments in other courses, employment, or family responsibilities. All students who cannot write a regularly scheduled test or examination are required to write an appropriate alternate test or examination. All alternate tests and examinations will be essay-style in format.

9. Class Policy Concerning Instructor=s Intellectual Property

Course content created by an Instructor, such as PowerPoint slides, is the Instructor=s intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the Instructor.

10. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the policies for academic integrity set out by Western University. The following is the Western Scholastic Discipline policy:
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Department of Psychology Policies Related to AI Tools

1. Policy on the Use of Generative AI Tools

The Department of Psychology expects that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial).

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) is not permitted for any submitted coursework unless express permission has been granted by your instructor.

Students **should not have AI tools write any part of their assignments or papers, either by copying and pasting or by paraphrasing the output.** Unauthorized use of AI constitutes an academic offence and will be subject to academic discipline.

Additional information: Students can use AI tools to clarify questions they have about course content (e.g., you can ask ChatGPT about a course concept to help with your understanding), but students should be aware that the response may be inaccurate or inconsistent with the course content. Asking your instructor is a more effective strategy. Students should note that information provided by AI tools such as ChatGPT can include mistakes, inaccuracies, biases, and outdated information. Whenever these tools are used, students should cross-verify the information provided to them. This means verifying that the sources used by AI exist and have been accurately summarized, consulting multiple original and reputable up-to-date sources to verify information, and being cautious of bias that could be present in the information provided.

2. Policy on Use of Translation Tools*

The Department of Psychology views the unapproved use of translation or language applications as an academic offence.

Any usage of translation applications or language generation by students to complete specific assigned work for this course **must be approved** by the instructor **prior** to submitting the work **and noted by the student in the submitted work** itself.

Writing text and then feeding it into a computer application to improve or translate your own words, changing a few words, and then submitting this text as if it was your own **constitutes plagiarism**. You must compose text, choose words, construct logic flow, structure sentences and paragraphs to organize, synthesize, interpret information with your own mind. When you borrow language or ideas from another person or from a machine this must be acknowledged with quotation marks and/or citations.

Why do we have this policy?

- Translation is intellectual work and produces intellectual property, thus any text which is translated must cite the translator.
- Psychology endeavors to advance students' linguistic, analytic, and reasoning competencies – this can not happen outside of specific language competencies.
- Earning a university degree signals that an individual has advanced literacy and communicative skill in the language of instruction at the university; this is English at King's University College at Western University. If translation machines are used by students without regulation, we will have no way of certifying whether these competencies exist and fewer mechanism for encouraging students to do the hard work to develop them.

* Based on the policy developed by the Department of Child and Youth Studies

King's University College
General Course Policies
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the

course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's

University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality_Reports_-_TurnItIn.html.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.