



Religious Studies 1022b (670)
Perplexing Issues
Summer 2026

Instructor: C. Walsh

Email: cwalsh44@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

An examination of selected thought provoking questions such as "What's after death?"; "Why do bad things happen to good people?"; "Why are religions in conflict, sometimes violently?"; "Do miracles happen?". The aim of this introductory study is to broaden students' awareness of religious ways of understanding the human condition.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: RELSTUD

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.



RS1022B (670): Perplexing Issues Summer 2026

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Corinne Walsh, MA, LLM
Email: cwalsh44@uwo.ca (preferred contact)

Course Information

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30pm-1:30pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

An examination of selected thought-provoking questions such as “What’s after death?”, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”, “Why are religions in conflict, sometimes violently?”, “Do miracles happen?”. The aim of this introductory study is to broaden students’ awareness of religious ways of understanding the human condition.

Anti-requisite(s): You may not take this course if you have already received credit for its equivalent from another university. **You are responsible for ensuring this course is not an anti-requisite to another course for which you have already been given credit.**

Prerequisite(s): None

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll 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 you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Note: No knowledge of religion(s) is assumed. All backgrounds and points of view are welcome.

Delivery Format:

Lectures will be online asynchronously held between June 15 – July 24, 2026 honouring all important dates derived from University approved guidelines and academic policies (<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-dates-and-events/>). **Please note that there are deadlines students must meet for completing work throughout the term.** You cannot wait until the last few weeks of the course to submit your work.

There is an optional synchronous Q&A held on Wednesdays, 12:30pm-1:30pm (Eastern Daylight Time) for students who wish to discuss course content. As well, some assignments/assessments involve synchronous online meetings. Students will have options of meeting times to align with their personal schedule as best as possible.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This course is about the 'big questions of life' – E.g., Is there a Higher Power(s)/God(s)? Why do bad things happen to good people? etc. – and explores these questions through the lens of religions. No prior experience with or study of religions is required or assumed. We will engage in three broad types of conversation: religion as an academic discipline; key teachings of the five major global religions; and what these religions say of how humans should live.

The Learning Outcomes for this course include a student's ability to:

- Grasp the relationship between religious viewpoints, practices, teachings, and modern society.
- Articulate religious aspects of the human condition with respect to selected issues.
- Discuss and compare diverse religious traditions on aspects of the human condition and society.
- Articulate their own informed views on these thought-provoking questions.

I hope this course is an opportunity for you to:

- ✓ Explore timeless questions.
- ✓ Engage with diverse avenues of thought.
- ✓ Be challenged in and refine your own thinking and assumptions.
- ✓ Expand your worldview through the experiences of and dialogue with others; and,
- ✓ Develop the transferable skills of listening, critical thinking, articulate communication, and stretching beyond our comfort zones into spaces of learning and growth.

Course Materials:

Course readings will be available at no extra cost through links on OWL Brightspace or accessed digitally through King's Cardinal Carter Library. The Topic and Reading Schedule are posted on Brightspace.

A note about some of the readings: Some of the articles are classic literature and therefore use language that reflects the time in which they were written. While we cannot change those texts, we will engage with them critically, recognizing their historical context, limitations, and contributions. And, we note that this course does not adopt that exclusive language. Our language will strive to be inclusive, and part of our shared work will be to notice how language and frameworks reflect culture, power, and history – and how they, and we, continue to grow, evolve, and change.

Students' critical analysis should be informed by and explicitly reference the academic perspectives represented in the readings. You do NOT have to agree with the authors' perspectives. However, you should demonstrate you have read and understand what these scholars say, articulately paraphrase their arguments, and further the scholarly discussion through your critical analysis.

Students will need the following technology and space requirements:

- Stable high-speed internet connection
- Computer with working webcam and microphone

- A quiet and private space to take part in synchronous online Zoom meetings (e.g., virtual office hours).

You will need to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the system requirements for Zoom. Information about the system requirements is available at: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Note: Zoom servers are located outside Canada. If you prefer to use only your first name or a nickname to login to Zoom, please provide this information to the instructor in advance of a Zoom meeting.

Evaluation:

Writing Assignment 1	15%	Sunday, June 21, 9am
Video Learning Journal 1 with narrative	15%	Sunday, June 28, 9am
Writing Assignment 2	15%	Sunday, July 05, 9am
Video Learning Journal 2 with narrative	15%	Sunday, July 12, 9am
Sign up for Learning Pod Discussion	0%	Friday, July 10, 9am
Learning Pod Discussion	20%	Week of July 13 – students select meeting time
Sign up for Final Exam	0%	Friday, July 17, 9am
Final Exam	20%	Week of July 20 – students select meeting time

Note: Assignment instructions will be posted to Brightspace. Assignments will also be submitted to Brightspace. Assignments will be submitted for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. See University regulations for details.

Writing Assignments (WAs)

- Short writing assignment on assigned topic; instructions posted on Brightspace
- Each writing assignment is valued at 15% of course mark
- WA1: Due Sunday, June 21, 9am EDT; will be accepted without penalty until Tuesday, June 23, 9am EDT
- WA2: Due Sunday, July 05, 9am EDT; will be accepted without penalty until Tuesday, July 07, 9am EDT
- Since flexibility is incorporated into the assessment, requests for consideration may be denied. If extenuating circumstances arise after the original deadline, then academic consideration may not be granted beyond the no-late-penalty period.

Video Learning Journals (VLJs) with Narrative

- Short video with accompanying narrative text; instructions posted on Brightspace
- Each VLJ is valued at 15% of course mark
- VLJ1: Due Sunday, June 28, 9am EDT; will be accepted without penalty until Tuesday, June 30, 9am EDT
- VLJ2: Due Sunday, July 12, 9am EDT; will be accepted without penalty until Tuesday, July 14, 9am EDT
- Since flexibility is incorporated into the assessment, requests for consideration may be denied. If extenuating circumstances arise after the original deadline, then academic consideration may not be granted beyond the no-late-penalty period.

Learning Pod Discussion (LPD)

- 45-minute facilitated online small group discussion with up to four students + instructor; instructions posted on Brightspace
- Valued at 20% of course mark. Students will be evaluated on individual performance within the small group format
- Sign up by Friday, July 10, 9am. LPDs will be held the week of July 13. Students will be provided a variety of meeting time options so you can select a session that suits your schedule
- Note: The LPD is the designated assessment for the course. This means that requests for academic consideration WILL REQUIRE submission of formal supporting documentation. Students may NOT use an undocumented absence for the LPD
 - If requesting consideration, please ensure your request and supporting documentation are submitted within 48 hours of your LPD meeting. Requests submitted beyond 48 hours will not be considered.
 - If academic consideration is granted, the student may re-weight the value of the LPD to the remaining assessment or complete a make-up LPD at the instructor's discretion.
- Other notes:
 - Online meetings will happen on the Zoom videoconferencing platform
 - Cameras must REMAIN ON throughout the meeting
 - Students are required to remain in the online room for the duration of their meeting
 - Tech/technical issues such as internet outages, connection problems, computer crashes, etc. are NOT grounds for academic consideration.
- **Important: You CANNOT switch into a different LPD meeting after sign-up has closed.**
 - Students are provided a variety of days/times and asked to select an LPD meeting that aligns with their schedule. Once registration is closed, that meeting date & time are locked and students are expected to attend the meeting they have selected
 - If a student experiences an extenuating circumstance (such as illness), they must request academic consideration AND provide supporting documentation. Students cannot use an undocumented absence to change their LPD meeting
 - Circumstances such as work/changes to work schedule, other personal or professional commitments, time management, etc. are not grounds for academic consideration.

Final Exam

- 45-60 minute facilitated oral exam with up to four students + instructor; instructions posted on Brightspace
- Valued at 20% of course mark. Students will be evaluated on individual performance using the small group format
- Sign up by Friday, July 17, 9am. Oral final exams will be held the week of July 20. Students will be provided a variety of meeting time options so you can select a session that suits your schedule
- Note: Requests for academic consideration for the final exam WILL REQUIRE submission of formal supporting documentation. Students may NOT use an undocumented absence for the final exam.
 - If requesting consideration, please ensure your request and supporting documentation are submitted within 48 hours of your final exam date & time. Requests submitted beyond 48 hours will not be considered.

- If academic consideration is granted, the student will complete a make-up exam at the instructor's discretion.
- Other notes:
 - Online meetings will happen on the Zoom videoconferencing platform.
 - Cameras must REMAIN ON throughout the meeting.
 - Students are required to remain in the online room for the duration of their meeting.
 - Tech/technical issues such as internet outages, connection problems, computer crashes, etc. are NOT grounds for academic consideration.
- **Important: You CANNOT switch into a different final exam after sign-up has closed.**
 - Students are provided a variety of days/times and asked to select a final exam that aligns with their schedule. Once registration is closed, that meeting date & time are locked and students are expected to attend the exam they have selected.
 - If a student experiences an extenuating circumstance (such as illness), they must request academic consideration AND provide supporting documentation. Students cannot use an undocumented absence to change their final exam.
 - Circumstances such as work/changes to work schedule, other personal or professional commitments, time management, etc. are not grounds for academic consideration.

Attendance and Academic Consideration:

Completing all course components is essential for your success in this course. If you miss a component, you may request academic consideration by following the University's policies and procedures:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/courses-enrolment/exams-and-tests/academic-consideration-requests/>

Details about the University's Academic Consideration policy are available at:

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

In general, requests for academic consideration must include: a) self-attestation signed by the student; b) indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) affected by the request; and (c) supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests for consideration without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course. For RS1022B (670), a request for academic consideration for a missed Learning Pod Discussion and for a missed Oral Final Exam WILL REQUIRE submission of formal supporting documentation.

Students **must complete all course components** to receive a passing mark. The instructor reserves the right to fail any student who misses 20% or more of the course components without consideration. Students may be debarred from completing the (oral) Final Exam for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year, including repeated absences or missed assignments.

Academic consideration is not automatically recommended by Academic Counselling nor automatically granted by the instructor. I follow the University's policies and practices and the advice of Academic

Counselling. If a request for consideration is recommended, we will discuss your options and next steps which typically include a (different) make-up assessment due within 3-5 business days.

Late Submission Policy:

Late submissions will incur a 5% per day penalty, including weekends. Assignments will not be accepted more than 3 days beyond the due date.

Academic Integrity:

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

Artificial Intelligence:

King's is committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and creativity. Thus, 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.

Students must complete assessments and examinations independently, using your own knowledge and skills. Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools [such as ChatGPT, Claude, SaveMyGPA, translation tools, writing tools, etc.] are permitted exclusively for: information-gathering and preliminary research purposes. Students may NOT use AI for work submitted for evaluation. If AI tools are used for research or other purposes, students must acknowledge its use and state how the tool was used. If you are unsure of AI use in this class, please consult with your instructor to avoid any misunderstandings. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to penalties, including academic discipline.

Recordings:

To maintain the privacy, integrity, and safety of our learning environments, **students may NOT record any part of this course in any format**. This includes all course activities (e.g., lecture videos, meetings, exams, office hours, Q&A sessions). It includes all recording formats (e.g., video, audio, AI-supported platforms, etc.). Recording the course without the explicit written consent of the instructor is strictly prohibited.

Safe Learning Environment and Our Learning Ethic:

This course is grounded in principles of mutual respect and shared responsibility. We'll engage with topics that might be sensitive or challenging. Everyone's voice is welcome and valued here. Your thoughtful and respectful contributions are vital to shaping our learning environment and enhancing the learning experience for all, including myself as your instructor. Each of us plays an essential role in building a safe, supportive, and engaged learning community.

Emotional safety creates meaningful learning as it supports us to explore new ideas which can sometimes feel uncomfortable and new. We create and maintain this safe environment together, building a virtual space where we can openly discuss ideas and learn and with from one another. Creating such a space means

that sometimes we may disagree, and that's okay. We can be safe even if it's a little uncomfortable when another person's views are different from our own. When we disagree, it's important *how* we handle the disagreement - with an open mind, courtesy, and curiosity in a scholarly atmosphere. Sometimes it's in these 'stretch' zones - where we may be both safe and slightly less comfortable - where creativity, new ideas, and learning happen.

Professionalism:

Students are expected to engage with their peers, TAs, and the instructor in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner. Engaging with one another with courtesy and curiosity helps to foster a positive, safe, and meaningful learning environment for all.

During class, assessments, and meetings, students are to:

- Turn off electronics, mute notifications, and remain attentive to the discussion.
- Keep your webcam on to help build a stronger sense of community and ensure that non-verbal communication is clear. This also shows your presence and respect for the other person(s).
- Include your name on Zoom. If you prefer to use just your first name or a nickname, please let me know ahead of time.
- Mute your microphone when not speaking to help maintain a quiet and focused environment.

Intellectual Property:

Course content created by a faculty member is considered their intellectual property and is protected. It should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without the prior written consent of the faculty member.

I, Corinne Walsh, ask that all students – both current and former – respect my intellectual property. I do not give permission for any current or former student or third party to distribute, share, and/or sell my intellectual property and course content in any format on any platform, tool, and/or medium.

Communication:

Please email me at cwalsh44@uwo.ca. Please include the course name and section in the subject line. I will try to respond within 48 business hours, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm Eastern time.

Extra Credit Assignments and Alternative Assessments:

Extra credit assignments, alternative assessments, grade adjustments ('bumping up' a student's mark) are not provided. In fairness of all students, I must follow the University's grading policies and cannot adjust marks or offer individualized assessments.

I empathize with any personal challenges students may face. I know things can be difficult at times and sometimes we are not at our best. If you are encountering challenges, please reach out to available local or campus resources such as Academic Advising, personal counsellors on campus, the ITS Helpdesk at King's, or other student supports. If your personal circumstances are such that you wish to request consideration, please be sure to reach out to Academic Advising who will help you navigate your request.

Accessibility:

I'm committed to making this course accessible to every student, respecting your agency, dignity, and independence. If you need course materials in an alternate format or other arrangements to make this course more accessible, please reach out to me at cwalsh44@uwo.ca. For specific questions about accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services at King's (<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/accessibility-services/>) or Western (<http://accessibility.uwo.ca>).

Final Remarks:

It's a privilege to be part of your learning journey and I can't wait to dive into *Perplexing Issues* together. If you have questions, please reach out. See you online!

Corinne

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 [here](#).

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

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 https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html.

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-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/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/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.

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://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

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 [here](#).

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 you 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/OriginalityReports-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.