



**Religious Studies 2134 A/B (670)**  
**Modern Moral Dilemmas**  
**Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**Instructor:** Chau, Carolyn  
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**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

An examination of the religious, philosophical, social, and cultural contexts that lead people to adopt diverse positions on moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, and so forth. This course includes a presentation of Christian positions on the moral problems to be discussed.

**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.

## **RS 2134A (670) Modern Moral Dilemmas**

**Fall 2025**

**Instructor: Dr. C. Chau**

*This is an online asynchronous course.*

### **Instructor Contact Information:** [cchau33@uwo.ca](mailto:cchau33@uwo.ca)

Please use your UWO email address when contacting me, and include the course code, RS 2134A, in the subject line.

Remember that emailing your instructors is different from texting your friends. Aim for a professional tone in all your correspondence.

I will do my best to respond to emails within two working days of receipt, during regular office hours. If you have not received a response to your message within two working days, please resend your message.

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course engages students in informed reflection and critical thinking on some of the moral challenges of our time. The course begins with an introduction to theories in philosophical and religious ethics, including deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, feminist ethics, and Christian ethics. These ethical theories will help us to think through various moral issues of the day including abortion, war and peace, and artificial intelligence (AI).

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Name, identify, and apply the concepts of major ethical theories through the completion of a midterm test and a final exam.
2. Analyze a moral issue using one or more ethical theories to arrive at an informed and reasoned judgment, however tentative, through completion of a writing assignment.
3. Converse in an informed way on topics of moral controversy through regular participation in Forum discussions on the OWL course site.

### **Mode of Instruction**

Course delivery is *online asynchronous*.

This is a fully online course that will use King's/Western's learning platform, OWL Brightspace, and other educational resources based on the needs of the course. This class is designed to be

asynchronous, meaning we will not have a regular, mandatory time when the entire class must be online.

This course begins on September 4, 2025 and continues until December 9, 2025, 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/>.

Throughout the course you are expected to interact regularly with other students, and with me, as your instructor. The course is designed to structure and guide some self-paced elements as well as offer interactive opportunities for community learning. Each student brings their own knowledge, experience, and interests to our learning community; we will build on that and use our course material (readings, discussions, lessons, etc.) to amplify learning for everyone.

We will each be responsible for our own learning progress and for contributing to the growth of our learning community through our participation in all course activities and assessments, especially the online Forum discussions, for which there is an expectation of weekly engagement. We will be ready to engage and connect meaningfully. We will be present, professional, respectful and ready to contribute to our group.

### **Course Materials**

Barbara Mackinnon and Andrew Fiala, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, Cengage Publishing (2023)

Students need to purchase this edition. Second-hand or older editions will not be sufficient.

Textbooks are available for purchase at the UWO Bookstore in e-book format.

Cost for textbook may be found at the following link:

<https://www.cengage.ca/c/ethics-theory-and-contemporary-issues-10e-fiala-mackinnon/9780357798539/?filterBy=Higher-Education>

Technical requirements for this course include a stable internet connection, computer with working microphone and/or webcam in the event that the student would like to meet with the instructor but does not have the ability to come to office hours on campus.

### **Method of Evaluation**

1. Participation (25%)
  - on-line Forum discussion contributions: students are required to make one post each week in response to a question posted by the professor
  - quality and quantity of contributions matter
  - students should have a total of 13 Forum posts by the end of the semester
  - posts should show careful reading of the assigned text for the week and thoughtful, engaged reflection on the reading; posts that generate deeper consideration of the moral issue at hand are an example of strong participation
  - posting in the aforementioned ways will result in a strong participation grade

2. Midterm (20%)

- Midterm test is to be completed online using Proctor Track, an online proctoring service, for October 24-25, 2025, as per the guidelines concerning test dates for online asynchronous courses, which must fall on Friday-Saturdays to avoid conflict with in-person classes.
- Students will have a 48-hour window in late October to complete and submit a 2-hour test via OWL. It is recommended that students allocate 2.5 hours for the assessment to allow for completion of the technological requirements of the assignment, including signing the oath of integrity as part of the submission process of electronic assignments for this course (TurnItIn) and the preliminary procedures involved in using Proctor Track.

3. Short Paper (20%)

- Students will have multiple opportunities between week 4 and week 13 to submit a short paper on any one of the issues we explore in this course.
- Length of paper is 4 pages double-spaced using a standard font such as Times New Roman 12-point and 1-inch margins.

4. Final Exam (35%)

- Take-home on-line 3-hour exam using Proctor Track to be submitted by the tenth examination day of the December exam period subject to approval by the Department Chair and the Academic Dean. It is recommended that students allocate 3.5 hours for the assessment to allow for completion of the technical requirements involved in completing and submitting an online exam.

A cumulative grade of 50% or more is required to pass the course.

### Grade Descriptors

Western's university-wide grade descriptors are as follows:

A+	90–100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80–89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70–79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60–69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50–59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

### Academic Consideration for Absences, Missed In-Semester Assessments

Academic consideration for the **midterm test** requires submission of formal supporting documentation.

A missed assessment will be handled via a conversation over Zoom with the course instructor and the department Chair.

### **Academic Integrity**

- Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Any material taken from another author or thinker must be acknowledged with proper citation of the source, and quotation marks where appropriate. Course instructors are required to refer suspected cases of plagiarism immediately to the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies. (See appendix on college-wide policies for further information and links, including information on what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.)
- 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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)
- Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.  
This policy is in support of the learning goals of the course, which include building students' abilities to think critically, logically, with integrity and originality about moral concepts that involve studying and coming to understand the historical, religious, and philosophical contexts of key contemporary ethical debates. Synthesizing information based on personal study of an issue is part of developing the skills necessary to be an effective critical thinker/learner.
- All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under licence 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).
- Tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using Proctor Track remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

**Course Schedule (\* - key assignments)**

Week 1	<p><b>Introduction and Ethical Theory 1: Ethics, Ethical Reasoning, and Religion</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 1 and 2</p>
Week 2	<p><b>Ethical Theory 2: Utilitarianism and Deontological Ethics</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 5 &amp; 6</p>
Week 3	<p><b>Ethical Theory 3: Virtue Ethics and Feminist Ethics</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 8 &amp; 9</p>
Week 4	<p><b>Ethical Theory 4: Natural Law and Catholic Social Teaching</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 7</p> <p>Josef Zalot and Benedict Guevin, O.S.B. <i>Catholic Ethics in Today's World</i>, Revised Edition (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011), Ch. 3</p>
Week 5	<p><b>Healthcare Ethics</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 10</p>
Week 6	<p><b>Abortion and Euthanasia</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 11</p>
Week 7	<p><b>Racial Justice and Discrimination</b></p> <p>Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 13</p> <p><b>*Midterm Test</b></p>
Week 8	<p><b>Economic Justice and Consumerism</b></p> <p>Reading: William Cavanaugh, "Consumer Culture" in <i>Gathered for the Journey</i>, Therese</p>

	Lysaught and David Matzko McCarthy (eds.), Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008.
<i>Reading Week</i>	
Week 9	<b>War and Peace</b>  Reading: <i>Catholic Ethics in Today's World</i> , revised edition, Jozef D. Zalot and Benedict Guevin (eds.) Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2008, Ch. 7
Week 10	<b>Environmental Ethics</b>  Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 19;  Pope Francis <i>Laudato Si'</i> , chapters 1 & 4
Week 11	<b>Animal Ethics</b>  Reading: MacKinnon, Ch. 20;  John Berkman and Stanley Hauerwas, "The Chief End of All Flesh"
Week 12	<b>Artificial Intelligence</b>  Reading: Braden Molhoek, "Possible Consequences of AI and Transhumanism: Health Concerns Surrounding Unemployment, Second-Class Citizenship, and Religious Engagement" in <i>Spiritualities, Ethics, and Implications of Human Enhancement and Artificial Intelligence</i> , Christopher Hrynkow (ed.), Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2020.

## Class Policies

Online behaviour and intellectual property statement:

- All students are expected to engage online in a professional and respectful manner. This includes all interactions with peers, as well as communication between TAs or your Professor. Failure to do so will result in academic discipline and/or discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

- Recording of lectures or tutorials without the explicit consent of the Professor or TA is grounds for academic discipline.
- Course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member'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 faculty member.

#### Student Communication Policy:

- Students are expected to be self-responsible with regard to their learning needs. To foster respectful and constructive dialogue, students are asked to approach the instructor individually rather than in groups with any questions, particularly regarding grade-related concerns or disciplinary matters.
- Matters of grades and progression through the course are confidential and will only be discussed on a one-to-one basis with the instructor. That confidentiality should also be respected by students in what they share with other students in the course.

#### Other course expectations:

- Assessments such as tests and exams will take place online. The short paper assignment will be submitted online after completion on one's own.
- All assessments and examinations done online are expected to be done by the student registered in the course.
- Amount of time to be spent online, reviewing material:  
Regarding Forum posts, you are expected to be online reading and responding to question(s) under discussion at least once each week. Your final mark will reflect your consistent participation, as well as the quality of each contribution.
- Debarment from Final Exams:
  - i. A student may be debarred from writing the final exam for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
  - ii. Any student who is not engaged online too frequently, as per guidelines stipulated above, 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.

\* Due warning means that the instructor has advised the student in writing/email of the nature of the unsatisfactory performance (i.e. absent too frequently from class), and the consequence of continued unsatisfactory performance (i.e. if another class is missed, the instructor will advise the department and request the student be barred from writing the final exam.

#### A statement on grades:

- Grades are earned through sustained absorption of material, careful completion of work, and demonstrated application of required skills.
- The final grades for the course cannot be changed. If the student believes that there exists an objective reason for the change of the final grade i.e. a mathematical miscalculation, they must provide the instructor with details in writing in an email along with suitable explanation for the same. In this case the instructor may revisit and re-grade student's work. Depending on the results of the review, the grade may go either higher or lower than the initially determined.
- Other than for a mathematical calculation issue, grade appeal issues should go through the official grade appeal process of the university. Please consult with the Academic Dean's office for details.
- The instructor reserves the right to reallocate the distribution of marks as special/unforeseen circumstances may demand, in the interest of academic fairness. This redistribution would never negatively affect the grades of any student.

# 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](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](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

##### **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/](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](mailto: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](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](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.