



Religious Studies 3453F/G (570)
Suffering, Grief, and Injustice
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: C. Halberstam

Email: chalbers@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

The biblical book of Job is a masterpiece of world literature about a good man afflicted with untold suffering. We will explore this book and the way artists and thinkers through the ages in literature, art, and film have re-imagined Job to make sense of their own experiences of suffering, grief, and injustice. There are no prerequisites for this course and it is open to all with an interest in these topics.

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.

Suffering, Grief, and Injustice: A Timeless Tale



INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Chaya Halberstam

CONTACT

Messaging on OWL
Brightspace

CLASS MEETINGS

Thursdays 2:30-5:30

OFFICE HOURS

Thursdays 10am-12pm &
by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

The biblical book of Job is a masterpiece of world literature about a good person afflicted with untold suffering. We will explore this book and the way artists and thinkers through the ages in literature, art, and film have re-imagined Job to make sense of their own experiences of suffering, grief, and injustice. There are no prerequisites for this course, and it is open to all with an interest in these topics.

COURSE MATERIALS

- Mitchell (Translation) *The Book of Job*
- Kafka, *The Trial* (original or graphic novel version)
- Use of OWL Brightspace and Perusall

ASSESSMENT

- ★ 15% Perusall Online Discussions
- ★ 35% In-Class Reflections & Participation
- ★ 20% Oral Midterm
- ★ 30% Final Exam

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- ◇ Explain the intricacies and contradictions of the highly complex book of Job
- ◇ Analyze how different authors and artists through the ages have drawn from the book of Job in creating their works
- ◇ Comprehend the subtleties and sensitivities of grief and consolation
- ◇ Relate issues raised in the book of Job to contemporary problems, both personal and political
- ◇ Write, in both shorter and longer formats, clearly, persuasively, and creatively
- ◇ Express oneself clearly and professionally orally in discussion and one-on-one conversation

CLASS FORMAT

This course meets *in person* on Thursday afternoons during the Fall term. Given the growth of LLMs / generative AI, this course will be “back to basics”: I will give you class time to read aloud and quietly (with paper books and handouts!), to write, and to discuss. Lecture will be minimal: there will be introductions at the beginning of each class session, but this is not primarily a lecture course. Work at home will largely consist of online discussion of several readings and film viewing/notetaking. The classroom will be a laptop and phone-free zone. A reflection page/paragraph will be handed in at the end of each in-class session. I will have copies of the translation of the book of Job we are using that you can either borrow from me or buy from me for \$15.

CLASS ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, AND REFLECTIONS

Attendance will be taken through submission of the one-paragraph reflections due at the end of each class. **You have one free absence** which will not affect your grade. Any additional absences or (significantly) late arrivals/early departures will result in a lower grade for this assessment category. **There will be no makeups for in-class work, including reflections**, unless I receive an email from your academic counselor letting me know that there is a substantial reason for compassionate consideration.

ORAL MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAM

Right after reading week, I will schedule 7-minute meetings with each member of the class to assess your progress in the class. You will be able to come in to the session with one sheet of notes (you can use both sides). In face to face meetings I can get a very good sense of whether you have memorized some facts or really understood the course material. I *want* you to succeed here, so I will help guide you towards being well prepared for this!

The final exam will both test your knowledge of the book of Job AND a recent film that has either adapted it or wrestles with similar themes (I will give you a choice of 4-5 films, but you can choose your own if I approve it). We will discuss these films in small groups in the last class which will help you prepare for the final exam in which you'll have to compare your film to a particular part of the book of Job.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK	SUBJECT	PREPARATION
1 (Sept 4)	Introductions	none
2 (Sept 11)	Wisdom Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading / discussion
3 (Sept 18)	Job Folktale (<i>online session</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch two lecture videos <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading/discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to discussion forum
4 (Sept 25)	Job's Speeches	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading/discussion
5 (Oct 2)	CLASS CANCELED – YOM KIPPUR	
6 (Oct 9)	Friends' Speeches	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading/discussion
7 (Oct 16)	YHWH's Speeches	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading/discussion
8 (Oct 23)	What does it all mean?	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Perusall reading/discussion
	READING WEEK	
9 (Nov 6)	Oral midterms	Perusall reading/discussion
10 (Nov 14)	New Directions I: Suffering has a Purpose!	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture

		<input type="checkbox"/> Persuall reading/discussion
11 (Nov 20)	New Directions II: Does Suffering Have a Purpose?	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Persuall reading/discussion
12 (Nov 27)	New Directions III: Suffering Has No Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch online lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Persuall reading/discussion
13 (Dec 4)	Discussion of Chosen Film & Preparation for Final Exam	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch one film & take notes

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

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.