



Religious Studies 3301F/G (570)
Modern Catholic Thought
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: J. Marsh
Email: jmarsh26@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

A critical exploration of the development of Catholic thought from the 16th-century Protestant and Catholic Reformations to the present day, with emphasis on theological renewal in the 19th and 20th centuries and the emergence of contemporary global perspectives.

Prerequisite(s): [Religious Studies 2205F/G](#), and third- or fourth-year standing in an Honours Specialization, Specialization or Major module in a Religious Studies program or permission of the Department.

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.



Modern Catholic Thought

RS 3301G | Section 570 | Winter of 2026

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

Email: jmarsh26@uwo.ca Please allow 24 hours for replies.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Office Hour: TBA
Course Weight: 0.50

Description

How did Catholic theology go from affirming the possible moral legitimacy of religious executions in the sixteenth century to championing pluralism, democracy, and religious freedom in the twentieth? What internal developments and external pressures underpinned this dramatic transition? And what explains other shifts associated with “Catholic modernity” regarding, for instance, the interpretation of nature and Scripture, or workers’ rights?

These will be our guiding questions. A major source will be Vatican II (1962-65), though we will first examine the intellectual developments that led to it, beginning with the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and conclude with more recent themes (e.g., Catholicism and AI).

Aims & Outcomes

Our primary aim is to deepen our understanding of modern Catholic thought. To this end, every RS3301G student will:

- Learn about a series of intellectual crises, revolutions, and internal concerns that inspired changes in Catholic theology.
- Consider different types of theological responses to challenges of modernity, including *preservationists*, *accommodationists*, and *reformists*, and critically assess their advantages and tradeoffs.
- Consider influential works (e.g., councils and encyclicals) and concepts of leading Catholic theologians (e.g., Karl Rahner’s “supernatural existential”).

Students will also:

- Advance their own focused and sustained argument, in writing, in a core area of the course.
- Explore, during classroom dialogues, how Catholic thought continues to address emerging twenty-first-century challenges.

Prerequisite(s): [Religious Studies 2205F/G](#), and third-or fourth-year standing in an Honours Specialization, Specialization or Major module in a Religious Studies program or permission of the Department.

Methods

Teaching methods include lectures, film analysis, music, crowdsourcing, dialogues and online forums.

Textbook & Costs

There is no textbook for this course and there are no anticipated course-specific costs.

Evaluative Requirements

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1. Presentation/Dialogue	20%	Dates TBA
2. Research Paper	30%	March 26
3. Exam	30%	April Examination Period (TBA)
4. Participation	20%	Weekly

1. Presentation/Dialogue (20%): Dates, topics and a list of dialogue groups will be circulated after our class population stabilizes.

2. Research Essay (30%): It is important for students to conduct their own research and to defend a sustained argument, in writing, that moves a published discussion forward. This is the aim of your research paper. I will provide some broad topics, but each student must come up with their own project and thesis statement.

3. Exam (30%): To take place during the April examination period (date: TBA). The College, not your instructor, will post an exam schedule. Please wait until this is available prior to making any irrevocable travel arrangements, as failing to do so does not entitle a special exam; nor does misreading or misremembering the schedule. Anything we cover in class, at any point, is admissible and hence a proper object of study, unless I explicitly say otherwise in writing (via OWL Brightspace).

4. Active & Informed Participation (20%): The success of our weekly sessions will be largely determined by the overall quality of the comments of our participants. Students are, accordingly, expected to take active measures to advance the discussion throughout the term. Such measures include:

- (a) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings,
- (b) applying the tools and virtues associated with critical thinking (e.g., careful argumentation, open-mindedness, reflective questioning, virtuous disagreement, and active listening),
- (c) following the College's student conduct requirements and any course-specific policies including our **attendance policy**.
- (d) not using one's laptop/cellphone or talking while other students are presenting ideas,
- (e) being reliably present
- (f) in addition to verbal contributions, submitting all required written comments, via OWL Brightspace's forum, whenever prompted.
- • These (typically 1-3 sentence) assignments will be briefly worked on in class and cannot be submitted late, and/or outside the classroom, and/or by a surrogate submitter (e.g., a group member/classmate). Nor will the questions be circulated ahead of time. Any technical difficulties with the forum must be brought to my attention immediately, in class, as submissions, after class or when the window closes, are never permitted.

Grading Information and Explanation of Grades:

All assignments will be accompanied by grading criteria and clear directions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation

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

As the above scale implies, intellectual performances and skills come in degrees. This scale helps clarify those degrees.

Missed Work: Except for the final exam, no assignments will be received after the last day of classes. Moreover, any missed assessments will receive a grade of zero (o) unless a student receives academic considerations. Students are permitted **one (1) academic consideration** for this half (0.5) course without formal supporting documentation.

o Please note: **academic considerations** for a missed exam and/or a missed essay (i.e. an essay that isn't submitted before the assignment window closes) always require a **formal** recommendation from your advisor. Formal considerations for a missed final exam ordinarily come in the form of a special exam. Formal academic considerations for a missed paper will, ordinarily, come in the form of a new due date. Considerations

for a missed dialogue may be **informal**; however, since a group dialogue cannot be substituted with a solo/alternative assignment, while retaining its purpose, any considerations, if granted, will come in the form of a grade transfer (i.e., its value will be distributed evenly across remaining assignments).

To request formal or informal considerations, please submit the **Student Absence Portal**.

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

Attendance/Participation Policy: Participation requirements are designed to enhance collective learning and enrich our classroom experience throughout the entire term. For this reason, any missed participation cannot be made up for with alternative/solo assessments without this grade losing its meaning. Rather than providing academic considerations for individually missed sessions, I will require **only 10 full sessions** (of up to 13 weeks). There's never a need to notify me of an absence unless you will be missing an in-class assignment (viz., your presentation/dialogue) or the final exam. Importantly, given the already flexible nature of this policy:

- **Late Registration:** Late registration does not lower the required minimum number of 10.
- **Early Departure/Late Arrival:** Arriving late, or departing early (which can distract, rather than enhance, the learning experiences of all) does not entitle participation credit (i.e., count towards the 10). Nor does forgetting to sign-in, even if the full session was attended.
- **Honor System & Purpose:** Attendance freebies permissions are not unconditional. Their purpose is to make things easier for students who must miss class for legitimate reasons (e.g., illness, delayed registration, or long commutes during a snowstorm). This involves trust. If a student were to decide to miss class to work on assignments, attend on campus events, or study for midterms or final exams (all of which are strongly discouraged reasons for missing class), this would go against their stated intention.
 - Anything beyond the permitted maximum (up to 3 missed sessions = 3 weeks [if there are 13 weeks], for informal considerations, equals **1 month+** of missed class/participation. As this, even if faultless, makes it impossible to have meaningfully contributed to the classroom learning experience of all throughout the term (the purpose of this assignment), such circumstances cannot, by their very nature, be made up for with alternative assessments. The only solution here, if formal considerations are received for missing 1 month +, is a grade transfer (i.e., a reweighing of the student's solo assessments, viz. the term paper and final exam).
- **Hybrid Sessions:** As this is an in-person class, we will not have "hybrid" sessions (where some students join us over Zoom).

Classroom Recordings

To respect the privacy and confidentiality of all members of this class, recording any portion of our sessions is strictly prohibited unless a student/member/visitor has pre-approved considerations and—so all members of the class can be confidentially notified of recording--the instructor's written permission.

AI & Cheating-Detection Software

No AI: Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline. Traditional *Microsoft Word* spelling and grammar checks are permitted and encouraged.

Notice of Turnitin Analysis: All written work 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement.

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.