



TNLA 2901E (570)
The Birth of the Modern
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Jason Hoult and Mark Sholdice
Email: jhoult2@uwo.ca / msholdi@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description: An interdisciplinary exploration of social structures and literary-cultural expressions of Western thought from the medieval era to the Enlightenment. It incorporates: 1) engagement with primary historical, literary, philosophical texts/ideas; 2) training in public speaking and critical argument; 3) 'hands-on' exposure to music, art during seminars and field trips; 4) a Research Project.

Antirequisite(s):

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in the King's Scholar program or permission of the Dean.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: CATEGORY B

Subject Code: TNLA

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.

King's University College
TNLA 2901E: The Birth of the Modern
2026-2027

Course information

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Instructor(s): Jason Hoult and Mark Sholdice
Contact Information: jhoult2@uwo.ca / msholdi@uwo.ca
Office hours: TBA

Course description

An interdisciplinary exploration of social structures and literary-cultural expressions of Western thought from the medieval era to the Enlightenment. It incorporates: 1) engagement with primary historical, literary, philosophical texts/ideas; 2) training in public speaking and critical argument; 3) 'hands-on' exposure to music, art during seminars and field trips; 4) a Research Project.

Course learning outcome:

New Liberal Arts is a *personalized* program of study that offers students the chance to access knowledge and experiences beyond their Honors discipline. Through both lectures and discussion, students study the ideas that have shaped today's modern world, including concepts of love, duty, the Self, democracy, diversity, equality, marginalization, and scientific method. Students will be acquainted with the radical doers and shakers of the past. Most importantly, the New Liberal Arts allows students to direct their own learning; *you* choose your own research topics and work with a supervisor on a project meaningful to you. Looking ahead toward post-graduate and career decisions, students learn professional competencies such as seminar participation, public speaking, as well as research and communication skills. Part of the 'fun factor' of the course is the experiential learning component.

The King's Scholar courses evolve into a supportive cohort of students keen to learn with and from each other. Study groups emerge, and every KS student is given a KS student Mentor as well as membership in the FY/KS Student Club. You will also work closely with the KS faculty to strengthen your specific challenges and to hone your unique skill-set.

Mode of Instruction

In-person

Course textbooks

Discourse on Method by René Descartes, trans. by Donald A. Cress, published by Hackett Publishing Co. – \$12.68

Selections from the Thoughts by Blaise Pascal, trans. by Aruther H. Beattie, Crofts Classics published by Wiley-Blackwell – \$13.95

Hamlet by William Shakespeare, edited by Sylvan Barnet, Signet Classics published by New American Library, Penguin Group (ISBN: 9780451526922) – \$8.99

All other course readings will be provided on the OWL course website.

Course Assignments

Participation in class discussions	15%
Integrated assignment (29 October 2026)	15%
Term test (10 November 2026)	15%
IRP outline (12 February 2027)	5%
IRP presentation (16 and 18 March 2027)	5%
IRP final paper (9 April 2027)	25%
Final exam (to be scheduled during exam period)	20%

Academic consideration for the term test and IRP outline requires submission of formal supporting documentation.

Late Policy

A penalty of one mark per day (including weekends) will be assessed for late assignments beginning the first day after the deadline. No assignment will be accepted after the seventh day.

Students who miss an in-class test (due to illness, etc.) will be required to complete a make-up test at another time, arranged in conversation with the course instructor. For students who are unable to attend the make-up test, arrangements can be made with the Exam Office to host a make-up assessment. Please note that, as of this year, students will be charged \$45.00 for each make-up assessment booked with the Exam Office.

AI Policy

Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, co-pilot, 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.

Western's scholastic discipline policy can be found at:

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

If you are unsure of AI use in this class, please consult with your instructor.

Course Schedule

Fall 2026

Week 1, 10 September: Introduction (JH & MS)

- course overview

Week 2, 15 and 17 September: Descartes (JH)

- *Discourse on Method*, Parts 1 – 4 (1637)

Week 3, 22 and 24 September: Pascal (JH)

- *Selections from the Thoughts*, Part I: Sections A-E, and G (omit Section F) (1670)

Week 4, 29 September and 1 October: Pascal (JH)

- *Selections from the Thoughts*, Part II (complete) and Part III, Section A (omit Sections B-D)

Week 5, 6 and 8 October: The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean World (MS)

- selections from Machiavelli, *The Florentine Histories* (1520-1525)

Fall Term Reading Week: October 10 – 18

- *no class*

Week 7, 20 and 22 October: Courtesy Books and Renaissance Society (MS)

- selections from Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* (1405)
- selections from Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528)

Week 8, 27 and 29 October: The Idea of the Human and Neoplatonism (JH)

- selections from Petrarch (1304-1374), Pico della Mirandola, and Marsilio Ficino
- **Integrated assignment due 29 October**

Week 9, 3 and 5 November: The Crisis of Modern Political Philosophy, Part 1 (MS)

- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

Week 10, 10 and 12 November: Term Test and Eloquentia Perfecta (MS)

- **10 November: Term Test**
- 12 November: Eloquentia Perfecta (no readings)

Week 11, 17 and 19 November: Reformations: More, Luther, Erasmus, Calvin (MS)

- selections from Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly* (1511)
- selections from Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516)

Week 12, 24 and 26 November: Reformations continued (MS)

- Martin Luther, *95 Theses* (1517)
- “Luther and the Ethiopian Deacon” (1534)
- John Calvin, *Letter to the King* (1536)

Week 13, 1 and 3 December: Thinking Reformations (JH)

- Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian” (1520)
- selection from Francis Bacon’s *Essays* (1597-1628)

Week 14, 8 December: Review (JH)

- review
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Winter 2027

Week 1, 5 and 7 January: Italian Renaissance Art (JH)

- selected works of art
- video: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Episodes 1 and 2

Week 2, 12 and 14 January: Northern Renaissance Art (JH)

- selected works of art
- video: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Episodes 3 and 4

Week 3, 19 and 21 January: The Beginning of European Colonialism, 1492-1560 (MS)

- selections from the *Florentine Codex*
- selections from Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578)

Week 4, 26 and 28 January: Wars of Religion and Imperialism, 1522-1648, Part 1 (MS)

- Henry IV, *Edict of Nantes* (1598)
- Montaigne, *Of Cannibals* (1580)
- **meetings with IRP supervisors (19-30 January)**

Week 5, 2 and 4 February: Wars of Religion and Imperialism, 1522-1648, Part 2 (MS)

- transcript of the trial of Anne Hutchinson (1637)
- selections from the Putney Debates (1647)

Week 6, 9 and 11 February: The *Essai* and the Self-Portrait (JH)

- “To the Reader,” “Of the Education of Children,” and “Of Repentance” from Montaigne’s *Essays* (1570-1592)
- **IRP outline due 12 February**

Winter Term Reading Week: 13-21 February

- *no class*

Week 7, 23 and 25 February: Absolutism and Mercantilism (MS)

- charter of the Hudson’s Bay Company (1670)
- selections from Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha* (1680)

Week 8, 2 and 4 March: Shakespeare (JH)

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (c. 1601)

Week 9, 9 and 11 March: Shakespeare (JH)

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Week 10, 16 and 18 March: IRP presentations

- presentation order to be scheduled by the drawing of lots

Week 11, 23 and 25 March: Descartes, Montaigne, and the Apology for Modern Thought

(JH)

- Descartes, “The Search for Truth” (unfinished dialogue, c. 1641)
- excerpts from Montaigne’s “Apology for Raymond Sebond” and “Of Experience”

Week 12, 30 March and 1 April: The Scientific Revolution (MS)

- Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* (1626)

Week 13, 6 and 8 April: The Crisis of Modern Political Philosophy, Part 2 (MS)

- selections from Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)
- selections from Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689)
- exam review
- **IRP final paper due 9 April**

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

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

You can reach supports at King's 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.