



PSYCHOL 2011A (570)
Altered States of Consciousness
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Dr. Imants Baruss

Email: baruss@uwo.ca

Course Information

Mode of Instruction: in-person

Calendar Description: A survey of altered states of consciousness such as sleep, dreaming, hypnosis, drug-induced states, meditation and near-death experiences considered from a phenomenological perspective.

Prerequisite(s): None

Antirequisite(s): None

Extra Information: 2 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: PSYCHOL

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.

Psychology 2011a Section 570
Altered States of Consciousness

Course Syllabus

1. Instructor Contact Information

Contact is by email: baruss@uwo.ca. Please note that the email must be sent from a student's Western email account. The Instructor will respond to students between 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, usually within a few days, although it may take up to a week to receive a response.

2. Office Hours

Office hours are by appointment, more details on Brightspace. The Zoom information is on the OWL site.

3. Course Description

This is a course about altered states of consciousness. The material covered may include perspectives on consciousness, the neuroscience of consciousness, the default mode network, definitions of consciousness, beliefs about consciousness and reality, the occurrence of anomalous phenomena in altered states of consciousness, the scientific study of consciousness, introspection, William James's characteristics of thinking, daydreaming, mind wandering, imagination, psychoneuroimmunology, remote healing, sensory restriction, physiology and neurobiology of sleep, sleep mentation, benefits of sleep, sleep wake disorders, dream theories, stimulus incorporation in dreams, hypnapompic and hypnogogic states, dream interpretation, dream incubation, lucid dreaming, precognitive dreaming, shared dreaming, definitions of hypnosis, hypnotic induction, hypnotic phenomena, hypnotic susceptibility, theories of hypnosis, tripartite theory of hypnosis, dissociation, hypnotically recalled memories, false memories, clinical applications of hypnosis, shamanic states of consciousness, characteristics of possession phenomena, dissociative identity disorder, alien abduction experiences, history of psychedelic drugs, physiological and psychological effects of psychedelic drugs, neuropharmacology of psychedelic drugs, pathological and therapeutic effects of psychedelic drugs, the Good Friday experiment, the Johns Hopkins experiment, varieties of transcendent states of consciousness, mystical experiences, meditation, physiology of meditation, Franklin Wolff's transcendental experiences and philosophy, finders course, explanations of transcendence, survival hypothesis, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, reductionist explanations of near-death experiences, veridical perception during near-death experiences, past-life experiences, mediumship, the Scole experiment, instrumental transcommunication, and an exosomatic theory of consciousness. The study of consciousness and altered states of consciousness is a multidisciplinary effort and material from psychology, neuroscience, biology, anthropology, mathematics, statistics, and physics may be discussed in this course. Students will be expected to know that material to the extent that it is reasonable to know it given the prerequisites for the course and explicit instruction given in the textbook. This course is taught from a phenomenological perspective in that the phenomena that occur in altered states of consciousness are considered essentially as phenomena without automatic reduction to a materialist interpretation of reality.

4. Course Learning Outcomes

1. Student engagement by reading the required material and attending lectures and participating in class.
2. Good understanding of the course material.

3. Development of sensitive attitude toward course material.
4. Development of critical thinking skills.

5. Mode of Instruction

In-person only.

6. Course Materials

Barušs, I. (2020). *Alterations of consciousness: An empirical analysis for social scientists* (second edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Available at the Western Bookstore for ~ \$77.50+ or alternatively;
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/alterations-consciousness-second-edition>

7. Methods of Evaluation

There will be two term tests in class, on Wednesday, October 7, 2026, and Wednesday, November 11, 2026, and a final examination during the mid-year examination period, worth 30%, 30%, and 40% respectively. The second test and final examination will be cumulative and cover material from the textbook and class lectures from the beginning of the course to the time of the test or examination. All tests and examinations are multiple choice in format. In the event of absence from the second test or the final examination formal supporting documentation is required. Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent. The make-up dates for the two tests are Friday, October 16, 2026, and Friday, November 20, 2026 respectively.

Students must bring proper university identification cards to all tests and examinations. Students without such identification may be photographed and barred from the test or examination. Students are also required to bring a pencil and an eraser to the tests and examination for filling in the examination forms. Students are not allowed to use a cell phone, or any other electronic device, during the tests or examination.

8. Bonus Marks

Students can earn 2% bonus marks for participating in a research study that consists of two online surveys: one survey is filled out in September with time given in class to do so. And the second survey is filled out in December, again with time given in class to complete the survey. The surveys can also be accessed from OWL. In order to receive the 2% bonus credit, students must answer at least 90% of the questionnaire items. Alternatively, students can earn the 2% bonus credit by writing a 500 word essay about the impact that the course material could have on a student's well-being. The essay would be written in person immediately after the final examination in the examination room. All grading in the course will be done by the instructor and the instructor will only receive information about who receives the bonus marks and who does not immediately prior to submitting the grades, and will not know, in any case, if a student chose to participate in the study or write the essay.

9. Academic Consideration for Absences.

Please see the policy below regarding consideration for illness and non-medical absences. In the event that a student has received academic consideration from their dean's office for missing a test or

examination, a make-up date will be arranged by the instructor.

10. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the policies for academic integrity set out by Western University. The following is the Western Scholastic Discipline policy:

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

11. Technology and Space Requirements

This course will require a computer, tablet, or cell phone to access OWL.

12. Class Policy Concerning Intellectual Property

Please note that course content created by an Instructor is the Instructor'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 Instructor.

13. Schedule

Week	Dates	Topics	Required Reading
1	September 9	Orientation, Introduction	Chapter 1
2	September 16	Wakefulness	Chapter 2
3	September 23	Sleep	Chapter 3
4	September 30	Non-Instructional Day — No Class	
5	October 7	Test 1 (30%)	
6	October 14	Reading Week — No Class	
7	October 21	Dreams	Chapter 4
8	October 28	Hypnosis	Chapter 5
9	November 4	Trance	Chapter 6
10	November 11	Test 2 (30%)	
11	November 18	Psychedelics	Chapter 7
12	November 25	Transcendence	Chapter 8
13	December 2	Death	Chapter 9
14	December 9	Conclusion & Review	Chapter 10
	December 11–22	Mid-Year Examination Period (40%)	

Department of Psychology Policies Related to AI Tools

1. Policy on the Use of Generative AI Tools

The Department of Psychology expects that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial).

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) is not permitted for any submitted coursework unless express permission has been granted by your instructor.

Students **should not have AI tools write any part of their assignments or papers, either by copying and pasting or by paraphrasing the output.** Unauthorized use of AI constitutes an academic offence and will be subject to academic discipline.

Additional information: Students can use AI tools to clarify questions they have about course content (e.g., you can ask ChatGPT about a course concept to help with your understanding), but students should be aware that the response may be inaccurate or inconsistent with the course content. Asking your instructor is a more effective strategy. Students should note that information provided by AI tools such as ChatGPT can include mistakes, inaccuracies, biases, and outdated information. Whenever these tools are used, students should cross-verify the information provided to them. This means verifying that the sources used by AI exist and have been accurately summarized, consulting multiple original and reputable up-to-date sources to verify information, and being cautious of bias that could be present in the information provided.

2. Policy on Use of Translation Tools*

The Department of Psychology views the unapproved use of translation or language applications as an academic offence. Any usage of translation applications or language generation by students to complete specific assigned work for this course **must be approved** by the instructor **prior** to submitting the work **and noted by the student in the submitted work** itself.

Writing text and then feeding it into a computer application to improve or translate your own words, changing a few words, and then submitting this text as if it was your own **constitutes plagiarism.** You must compose text, choose words, construct logic flow, structure sentences and paragraphs to organize, synthesize, interpret information with your own mind. When you borrow language or ideas from another person or from a machine this must be acknowledged with quotation marks and/or citations.

Why do we have this policy?

- Translation is intellectual work and produces intellectual property, thus any text which is translated must cite the translator.
- Psychology endeavors to advance students' linguistic, analytic, and reasoning competencies – this can not happen outside of specific language competencies.
- Earning a university degree signals that an individual has advanced literacy and communicative skill in the language of instruction at the university; this is English at King's University College at Western University. If translation machines are used by students without regulation, we will have no way of certifying whether these competencies exist and fewer mechanism for encouraging students to do the hard work to develop them.

** Based on the policy developed by the Department of Child and Youth Studies*

**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 at [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 supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

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

MentalHealth@Western 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](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.