

Evil Winter 2025

RS 121

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Class Schedule

Course	Meet Days	Meet Time	Location	Instructor(s)
RS 121 081 [LEC]	Online			S. Kline scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca (mailto:s...

schedule data automatically refreshed daily

Instructor & TA (Teaching Assistant) Information

Use the LEARN Course Discussions forum to communicate with your instructor and classmates. Discussion topics can be accessed in LEARN by clicking **Connect** and then **Discussions** on the course navigation bar.

For questions of a personal nature, please email your instructor.

**Instructor:** Scott Kline  
[scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca) (mailto:scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca)

Course Description

*Calendar Description for RS 121:*

How do the religions of the world define evil? How do they suggest it can be overcome? Classical and modern writers from Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism will be considered.

[View requirements for RS 121](https://acal.fast.uwaterloo.ca/course/1251/RS/121) (https://acal.fast.uwaterloo.ca/course/1251/RS/121).

This course is about the death of millions, even tens of millions, of people. It is about slavery, colonialism and imperialism, war and genocide, intentional mass starvation, the threat of nuclear weapons, and ecological destruction. While modern society has brought many advances, it has also given us the power to kill on an unprecedented scale. Much of the evil of the 20th and 21st centuries would not be possible without modern technology, bureaucracy, ideology, and the political, economic, and social structures of a modern society. We will examine how religious communities respond to these new forms of evil.

We will look at a number of religious thinkers who attempt to understand modern societies and the unique forms of evil they produce. These thinkers turn to ancient writings, ideas, values, and practices to address the problem of evil in the modern world. They come up with some startling suggestions. For example, many of them find that their own traditions often contribute to the problem. They also find sources of wisdom and goodness in them to offer solutions to confront the evil they see around them. Finally, they allow us to analyze the nature of the evil in the world and in each one of us.

As this is a first-year course in Religious Studies, we will also learn how Religious Studies scholars look at religion and the specific traditions we will be examining. Do not be concerned about the number of readings from ancient religious scriptures. Each passage is only a few paragraphs long.

Learning Outcomes

No explicit learning outcomes defined for this course.

Tentative Course Schedule

Please see the **Course Schedule** in LEARN for complete details.

Week	Content Module	Activities and Assignments
1	Module 1: Evil in the Modern Age	Introduce Yourself
2	Module 2: Judaism, Modernity and The Holocaust	Inform instructor if opting out of Turnitin for your Written Assignment

Week	Content Module	Activities and Assignments
3	Module 3: Judaism, the Holocaust, and Israel	Quiz 1: Modules 1-3
4	Module 4: Roman Catholicism, Innovation, and Modern Evil	
5	Module 5: Colonization, Modernity and Evil	
6	Module 6: Ideology and Evil in Modern Society	Quiz 2: Modules 4-6
7	Module 7: Economic Liberalism	
8	Module 8: The Pope and the Planet	
9	Module 9: The Environmental Crisis: A Buddhist Perspective: Thich Nhat Hanh, Part I	Quiz 3: Modules 7-9
10	Module 10: The Environmental Crisis: A Buddhist Perspective: Thich Nhat Hanh, Part II	
11	Module 11: Buddhist Eco-Feminism	
12	Module 12: Conclusion: Religious Responses to Evil in the Modern World	Quiz 4: Modules 10-12 Written Assignment

There is no final examination for this course.

## Texts / Materials

*Note: Any prices provided in course outlines are best estimates based on recent online prices and do not include shipping or taxes. Prices may vary between retailers.*

Title / Name	Notes / Comments	Required	Price (CAD)
Wiesel, Elie. (2006). Night. Hill and Wang.		Yes	17.00
Kozol, Jonathan. (1995). Amazing Grace. Crown.		Yes	23.00
Hanh, Thich Nhat. (1992). Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life. Bantam.		Yes	23.00

To order your textbook(s), please visit:

[Night - Print Version](https://lb.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/additem.bbx?/Z109991/I9780374500016) ( <https://lb.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/additem.bbx?/Z109991/I9780374500016>).

[Amazing Grace - Print Version](https://www.amazon.ca/Amazing-Grace-Children-Conscience-Nation/dp/0770435661) (<https://www.amazon.ca/Amazing-Grace-Children-Conscience-Nation/dp/0770435661>).

[Peace is Every Step - Print Version](https://lb.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/additem.bbx?/Z109991/I9780553351392) (<https://lb.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/additem.bbx?/Z109991/I9780553351392>).

For assistance, please email [wstore@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:wstore@uwaterloo.ca) (<mailto:wstore@uwaterloo.ca>).

[Course Reserves for Students](https://uwaterloo.ca/library/services/course-reserves-students) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/library/services/course-reserves-students>) are used in this course. Course Reserves can be accessed using the **Library Resources** widget on the **Course Home** page.

## Student Assessment

Component	Value
Introduce Yourself	Ungraded
Quiz 1: Modules 1-3	20%
Quiz 2: Modules 4-6	20%
Quiz 3: Modules 7-9	20%
Quiz 4: Modules 10-12	20%
Written Assignment	20%

## Assignment Screening

Text matching software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin and alternatives in this course. See Administrative Policy below for more information and links.

## Administrative Policy

### Late Assignments

A late penalty of 5% per day (including Saturday and Sunday) will be strictly enforced. If you are going to be late, contact the instructor before the deadline. No papers will be accepted after one week past the deadline.

### Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the [CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory](https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory) (<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>).

### Accommodating religious and spiritual observances

*[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]*

The University of Waterloo has a duty to [accommodate religious, spiritual, and other creed-based beliefs and practices](https://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/page/Acad-Regs-Accommodations) (<https://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/page/Acad-Regs-Accommodations>) under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) [Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed) (<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed>). Students may seek accommodations for missed course components on religious, spiritual, or other creed grounds. In such cases the students should please consult the instructor within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which the accommodation is being sought. Students also may request accommodations for temporary absences from classes or other course-related activities to engage in prayer or other daily spiritual practices. Instructors are expected to make reasonable arrangements to respectfully accommodate such requests. The University of Waterloo has a number of [multi-faith spaces](https://uwaterloo.ca/multi-faith-spirituality-resource-team/multi-faith-spaces-campus) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/multi-faith-spirituality-resource-team/multi-faith-spaces-campus>) that students can use for faith-based practices.

### Declaring absences

*[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]*

Please see the [Academic Regulations](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-calendar/undergraduate-studies/catalog#/policy/SkiPsB9Vp?bc=true&bcCurrent=Assessments%3A%20Academic%20Considerations%20and%20Accommodations&bcGroup=Academic%20Regulations&bclItemType=policies) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-calendar/undergraduate-studies/catalog#/policy/SkiPsB9Vp?bc=true&bcCurrent=Assessments%3A%20Academic%20Considerations%20and%20Accommodations&bcGroup=Academic%20Regulations&bclItemType=policies>) section of the Undergraduate Calendar for more details. Regardless of the process used to declare an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact their instructor so that the instructor can determine how to accommodate the missed work.

#### Absences due to religious, creed, and spiritual observances

Beginning Fall 2024, students can submit a [Religious Observance Self-Declaration Form in Quest](#). This form allows the student to register dates of potential conflicts with coursework. Students are expected to record their absence within two weeks of announcement of the due date or scheduled examination date for which academic accommodation is being sought. Submission through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence.

#### Absences due to verified illness

For absences due to illness that are not pandemic-related, students need to obtain a [Verification of Illness or Extenuating Circumstances Process](https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other>). Submission through the [Absence Verification System](https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/) (<https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/>), once registered, will notify your instructors of your absence. Students **should not** submit their VIF or any other medical documentation to your instructors, teaching assistants, or other course personnel. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their health condition.

#### **Absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement)**

For absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement, serious family illness), students submit [a request for absence due to extenuating circumstances](https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other>) to the [Absence Verification System](https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/) (<https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/>) for processing. Students use the form to submit supporting documentation, which will be considered in a comparable manner to a VIF. Official documentation is necessary before any action can be taken. Examples are plane/train/bus tickets, court documents, police reports, death certificates/obituaries/letters from funeral directors. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their circumstances.

#### **Self-declared absences due to COVID-related illness**

Students can [self-declare](https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students>) an absence on Quest due to COVID-related illness or a requirement to self-isolate. A self-declared COVID absence covers up to 10 days and no documentation is required. No in-person course activity is permitted during the period of a self-declared COVID absence. Participation in on-line components is permitted but should not be required if the student notifies the instructor that they are too ill to participate in the online work. Submitting the self-declaration through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors within the first 48 hours after submitting their COVID-related absence, or as soon as they are well enough, to discuss arrangements for missed course components.

#### **Self-declared short-term absences for any reason**

Students can [self-declare](https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students>) one short-term absence per term on Quest for any reason. A short-term absence covers two calendar days, and no documentation is required. The student has only one self-declared short-term absence per term and this absence can only be used during the formal lecture period. Self-declared absences cannot be applied to Laboratory (LAB), Clinic (CLN), or Studio (STU) course components. Submitting the self-declaration through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors within the first 24 hours after submitting their self-declaration to discuss accommodations for missed course components.

## **Recording lecture**

Use of recording devices during lectures is only allowed with explicit permission of the instructor of the course. If allowed, video recordings may only include images of the instructor and not fellow classmates. Posting of videos or links to the video to any website, including but not limited to social media sites such as: Facebook, Twitter, etc., is strictly prohibited.

## **University Policy**

**Academic integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check [the Office of Academic Integrity](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>) for more information.]

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check [the Office of Academic Integrity](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties>).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71, Student Discipline](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>).

**Note for students with disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/) (<https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/>), located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Turnitin.com:** Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.

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