

SC-618 The Book of Revelation Preliminary Syllabus Spring 2014

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Class Meets: Tuesdays 4:30-7:30pm

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9:30am-12noon

I. Course Description

The Book of Revelation is a complex text – full of imagery, visions of destruction, and God’s triumph over evil (to name a few). We will attempt to read Revelation in the way it may have been read or heard by the first-century Christian inhabitants of Asia Minor. In other words, we will examine the ways in which modern New Testament scholars have attempted to analyze (that is, “make sense of”) this text in its first-century historical, social, political, and religious setting. But we won’t stop there! This course will also aim to situate the Book of Revelation in our contemporary world by examining how it has been interpreted in other critical discourses such as feminist/womanist studies, masculinity studies and queer theory; liberation hermeneutics and postcolonial studies; and ecotheology and ecocriticism.

III. Required Texts

Harold W. Attridge, ed. *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. New Revised Standard Version (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006). Other acceptable NRS translations that provide study notes developed for the academic study of the Bible are the *Oxford Annotated Study Bible* or the *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*.

This course is not based on any one textbook, as the reading assignments illustrate. Students may choose to purchase some of the recommended books, however, as they may prove helpful to you as you negotiate the course. Students may also wish to purchase them for their personal libraries.

IV. Recommended Texts

The following books feed into different parts of the course.

Commentaries:

Aune, David E. *Revelation 1-5*. Dallas: Word Books, 1997.

_____. *Revelation 6-16*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

_____. *Revelation 17-22*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Barr, David L. *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. 2nd edition. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2011.

Boring, Eugene M. *Revelation*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989.

Boxall, Ian. *The Revelation of Saint John*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Other studies:

Barr, David L., ed. *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Blount, Brian. *Can I Get a Witness: Reading Revelation Through African American Culture*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005.

Habel, Norman C., and Vicki Balabanski, eds., *The Earth Story in the New Testament*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002.

Howard-Brook, Wes, and Anthony Gwyther. *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.

Pagels, Elaine H. *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Viking, 2012.

Pippin, Tina. *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Rhoads, David, ed. *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

IV. Course Requirements and Assessments

A. Presence, Participation, and Preparation (10% of Final Grade)

Regular attendance at all class sessions and active participation in discussion groups are expected. If you are unable to attend a class session, please notify the professor in advance or at the earliest opportunity. Please plan to arrive promptly to class, and stay for its duration. *It is also important that students return promptly after class breaks.* Your presence is necessary and important for maximal learning for everyone. **Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing three sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 20%. Missing four or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.**

Be ready to ask questions and participate in discussions in a positive and constructive way. Rich, critical dialogue occurs when we discuss, debate, and consider the texts and various issues as a collective. Care should be taken when speaking; however, to make sure that everyone (including the less talkative ones) gets an opportunity to engage.

B. Two (2) Essays: (70% [total] of Final Grade)

Students are required to write **two essays, each accounting for 35% of the final grade**. Quality essays will show evidence of having been thoroughly researched, and include materials discussed in class. Essays must be **double-spaced**. Include **properly formatted footnotes** (or some other standard form of documentation, such as author-date-page references inserted parenthetically in the main text) to acknowledge your debts to the scholarly literature that you use. **Avoid plagiarism**. At the end of the essay, include a **bibliography of works cited**, also correctly formatted. Direct quotations are to be kept to a minimum, however. It is ***your voice*** that I want to hear in these essays. Although essays will need to be informed by scholarly opinion, students are encouraged to determine and state their position in relation to it.

First Essay (based on Part Two of the course): Write an exegetical essay on one or more passages in Revelation related to **gender and/or sexuality**. Passage(s) should be exegeted in detail. Length: between 1,500 and 2,000 words for Masters/Certificate students; between 2,000 and 2,500 words for PhD/DMin students.

Second Essay (based on Parts Three or Four of the course): Write an exegetical essay on one or more passages in Revelation related to **empire and/or ecology**. Passage(s) should be exegeted in detail. Length: between 1,500 and 2,000 words for Masters/Certificate students; between 2,000 and 2,500 words for PhD/DMin students.

C. Presentation: (20% of Final Grade)

Masters/Certificate Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation that analyses the ways in which some element of the Book of Revelation is represented, alluded to, or otherwise “recycled” in a contemporary cultural artifact (e.g. a sermon, a song, a TV show, a [political] speech, or a visual work of art). Students may make their presentation individually, or with one other student (for a 20 minute rather than a 10 minute presentation). It must be clear in team presentations that each student has contributed equally to the preparation. *Your presentation must not overlap significantly with any of your two papers*. Take heed to the time limit; rehearse beforehand. Be creative with these presentations, and have fun! Presentation ideas must be approved by the professor in advance.

PhD/DMin Students will write a 750-1000 word book review on a scholarly examination of (a text of) Revelation. They will then give a 7-10 minute presentation that will include: an examination of the text’s title (Is it accurate? Does it match the content?); an overview of the text’s main argument(s) and how the author arrived there; and her or his own overall assessment of the work. Two questions to facilitate dialogue should also be included. Books must be approved by the professor in advance.