

**THE BOOK OF REVELATION NOW AND THEN: VISIONS FOR A  
JUST WORLD AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD**  
**NT 6/741**  
**SPRING 2024**

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Office Hours: Wednesday, noon – 2 PM or by appointment

*Prerequisite:*

Diploma/MA: NT 500, 501

MDIV: NT 500, 501, BIBL 500 or equivalent

This class is intended as an introduction to ancient apocalyptic literature in general and a thorough study of the Book of Revelation in particular. The course will focus on the historical backdrop and theories of origins of the Book of Revelation, Revelation as literature or a textual world, Revelation as a text that has had enormous influence in shaping the western imagination, and Revelation as a call to faithful discipleship. Particular attention will be given to considerations of sacred texts and violence, gender, imperial and post-colonial urban imagination, and the place of apocalyptic theology in contemporary society. The course invites students to compare and contrast the dystopic and utopian visions of Revelation with contemporary visions of society. It will explore the relation of apocalyptic and apocalypse to preaching and the task of the preacher in holding up for listeners visions of God's world and the call to discipleship.

**OBJECTIVES/COMPETENCES**

1. To identify literary, historical and social theories of the origins of apocalyptic theology.
2. To help students distinguish the meaning of the terms apocalypse, apocalyptic, apocalypticism, and apocalyptic eschatology.
3. To locate Revelation in its historical setting and to interpret the text in the light of its historical background.
4. To offer a close reading of the text as a literary product, with considerations of time, plot, character, and structure, relationship with Hebrew Bible tropes and literary devices
5. To relate a historical reading of Revelation to contemporary interpretations, including the history of interpretation of key texts.
6. To relate the eschatology of Revelation, especially as it relates to its treatment of Babylon and Jerusalem, to contemporary social ideals and challenges
7. To introduce a wide variety of scholarly perspectives on the interpretation of Revelation and its relationships to contemporary identity.
8. To foster sophistication in the interpretation of apocalyptic texts and to encourage a growing awareness of the importance of apocalyptic theology in shaping the

contemporary imagination, especially as it relates to social and religious identities.

9. To consider the place of apocalypse and apocalyptic in preaching and the act of preaching as revelation and unveiling.
10. For MDiv students *who have not previously written the NT Major Exegetical Paper*: to offer an exegetical paper on a passage of the Book of Revelation, with the help of Greek tools of exegesis

## FORMAT

Lecture (2 hours) with seminar on brief essays (1 hour)

Each week will include:

### 1. Apocalypse Watch

We will spend 5-10 minutes sharing the results of Apocalypse Watch. Following Catherine Keller's (*Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* [Boston: Beacon, 1998]) observation that western culture is "in Apocalypse" one of the goals of the class is to raise awareness of the degree to which the Book of Revelation and invocations of apocalypse continues to shape the contemporary secular imagination. To help achieve that goal, students are assigned for the duration of the semester to keep their eyes and ears open for invocations of apocalypse in mass media and to come to class prepared to share their findings. You should be creative! Be prepared to share instances of music, art, websites, newspaper clippings, movies, etc. The Book of Revelation continues to create the most optimistic and pessimistic of citizens, but often in ways that are disguised. Your task is to make explicit the way John's Revelation continues to be the Word on the streets.

### 2. Seminar Discussion

Each week a different student will draft and distribute a two-three page single-spaced typed response to an essay question designed to aid engagement with the assigned readings for the week.

### 3. Revelation Book Fair

The final class students will spend time telling one another of a book, film, or other medium relating to the Book of Revelation or apocalyptic literature more generally that focuses in particular on a topic that relates Revelation to questions of contemporary concern, theology, and proclamation. Participants are invited to be creative in use of multimedia, choice of genre, etc. Those who elect a more traditional route can offer a 750 word book/medium review. The review will state the basic thesis of the author/medium, the methods by which the "author" comes to his/her conclusions and a brief overview of

each chapter/unit, with a final section dedicated to a brief discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the work as whole.

## EVALUATION

**\*If you don't bring your Bible, please do not come to class!**

**Please note that use of social media is strictly prohibited during class time except for family reasons.**

1. 80% class attendance; class participation. This means that absence for more than two sessions, in whole or in part, will constitute a Not Approved for the course. **In the case of absences, students will submit a full 2-page single spaced précis of the prior week's lecture, submitted at the start of the following class. More than two late submissions will constitute a Not Approved for the course.**

*Synchronous students are required to be visible (i.e. in person) at all times during the class.*

2. Students who are normally physically present in class and have not paid the extra fee to access the class remotely must inform the instructor if personal circumstances require them to be present via zoom.
3. Asynchronous learners will submit a 2-page single spaced précis of the prior week's lecture, submitted by the start of the following class. **More than two late submissions will constitute a Not Approved for the course.**

## MDiv Exegetical Paper

The paper should be a treatment of a text taken up with a view to consideration of a contemporary issue relating to social issues broadly interpreted and the use of the text in formation (teaching/ preaching/ discipleship). While the focus of the class is on the Book of Revelation students may elect to take up another instance of apocalyptic/apocalypse in the New Testament. A hand-out will be distributed in class that sets out the rubrics for the paper.

## MATS/MAIIS

MATS/MAIIS students may write an exegetical paper that follows the MDiv exegetical paper guidelines or elect to offer a paper that investigates a popular medium of apocalyptic (zombies, nuclear war, science fiction, music, etc) and to compare and contrast it with the apocalyptic found in the Book of Revelation or another NT apocalyptic text.

**Research Depth:****MDiv/MATS/ MAIIS:** 10-15 citations**ThM:** 15-20 citations**ThM students** are also required to furnish a 10 item annotated bibliography with their paper.

Bibles (including Study Bibles), concordances, grammars, and other exegetical helps do not count as bibliographical items. Avoid older commentaries. The ones in the reference section of the library are examples of what is appropriate.

**Paper Length:****MDiv/MATS/MAIIS:** an exegetical paper of 3750-5000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography.**ThM:** 6000-6500 words**Due Dates:****Graduating Students:** 12 April**MDiv/ MATS/MAIIS non-graduating:** 26 April**ThM non-graduating:** 24 May**Not Approved Rewrites:****Graduating:** 26 April**Non-Graduating:** 14 June**ThM non-graduating:** 28 Jun**Required Textbooks**

**Textbooks will be on sale at the UBC Bookstore; students may elect to purchase new or used copies (print or e-book) from other booksellers.**

David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Santa Rosa CA: Polebridge Press. ISBN 978-1598150339. Available as an ebook at the VST library.

Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*. New York: Orbis, 2000. ISBN 978-1570752872. Available as an ebook at the VST library.

Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*. Oxford: OUP, 2001. ISBN 978-0195188219. Available as an ebook at the VST library.

Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. ISBN 978-0800634926.

**Recommended Textbooks**

Catherine Keller, *God and Power: Counter-Apocalyptic Journeys*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. ISBN 978-0800637279