

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

136.32I - BNT: Special Studies in New Testament - Revelation

3 credit hours

Instructor: Ed Neufeld

SYLLABUS

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

John the Seer directed this Revelation to Christians who found themselves on the margins of society, often despised, and periodically attacked. The reception of the Book of Revelation throughout the history of the church parallels the experiences of those first readers in certain respects. Frequently, the church politely ignores Revelation at best, ridicules and rejects it at worst. It rarely figures prominently in the day-to-day experience of most Christians. This course will explore the original setting and audience of this writing and the history of its reception among various interpretive communities.

This course is designed as an independent study, based on audio lectures with power point outlines, and supplementary reading and assignments. The audio / power point lectures were originally offered as a seminary course, and are now presented as part of this college credit.

Prerequisites: 121.11 - BINT and 121.12 - BINT and one set of *either* 132.22/23 - BNT *or* 134.22/23 - BNT.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following course objectives flow out of various learning opportunities available to students, including assigned readings, audio lectures, and individual student research. As with all courses, students play an integral role in learning outcomes, which are commensurate with student initiative and effort. As a collective effort, this course aims:

- To clarify the genre of Revelation; what is the nature of apocalyptic literature generally (Jewish and Christian examples introduced); how did it function among ancient readers of approximately 200 B.C.E. – 200 C.E.
- To reconstruct the historical setting in which John wrote his letters to the seven churches; why this style of writing? why was this appropriate for the communities addressed?
- To demonstrate how texts depicting violence and gender exclusive categories (e.g., Rev 14:4) can be dangerous when not carefully integrated into a holistic interpretive grid that considers historical-critical and theological matters
- To introduce Revelation studies to argue that Revelation is a beautiful, spiritually rich text that should not be feared. It is a guiding and encouraging text for all Christians at all times, and an inviting text for others.

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C. COURSE TEXTS

Note: these texts are available at the Providence Bookstore, 204-433-7488 or 1-800-668-7768; email bookstore@prov.ca.

Kirsch, Jonathan. *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

Lupieri, Edmondo F. *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*. Trans. Maria Poggi Johnson and Adam Kamesar. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

D. COURSE AUDIO LECTURE OUTLINE

- Unit 1 Revelation 1 -- Prologue and Opening Vision
- Unit 2 Rev 2-3 -- Messages to the Seven Churches
- Unit 3 Rev 4-5 -- Throne Room Vision
- Unit 4 Rev 6-7 -- Seven Seals
- Unit 5 Rev 8:1 - 11:18 -- Seven Trumpets
- Unit 6 Rev 11:19 - 14:5 -- The Deeper Conflict
- Unit 7 Rev 14:6 - 16:21 -- Deeper Conflict Ends; Bowl Judgments
- Unit 8 Rev 17 -- 'Symbols', the Harlot, and the Beast
- Unit 9 Rev 18:1 - 20:6 -- The Harlot and the Beast (Conclusion)
- Unit 10 Rev 20:7 - 22 -- New Heaven and Earth; Epilogue

E. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students may submit documents either in hard copy (paper) or electronically as an attachment. Electronic submissions should be formatted just as hard copy would be, that is, with proper title page, page numbers, and so on.

1. Lecture Responses. Type (double spaced) a one to two page response to each audio lecture. Do not summarize the lecture. Pick one or two or three points made in the audio lecture that caught your attention for one reason or another. Describe them and explain why this or attracted your interest. These may express approval, disapproval, or surprise, or something else. Submit all ten in one document. 20%
2. Reading Revelation. Read Revelation completely through eight times in the translation of your choice. As much as possible read it through in one sitting, or at least all in one day. Do not read it through more than once in a single day, and not more than twice a week. After each reading, type a one page (double-spaced) response to your reading. Write out a reflective impression you gained from that reading. If possible, respond to the whole writing (or some theme in it) rather than one sentence that caught your attention. Date each response. Submit all eight responses as one document. 15%
3. Kirsch Review. Read Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World*, and write a 6-page (double spaced) review. The first four pages or so should summarize the book. Then cover two more matters: spend about one page indicating the main purpose or point of the book: what gap does Kirsch intend to fill, or what view "out there" does he hope to correct? Read the whole book with this question at the back of your mind. Lastly, evaluate the book. What do you think are its strengths and weaknesses? 20%
4. Lupieri introduction. Read Lupieri, pp. 1-44, and summarize his views particularly on apocalyptic and on the book of Revelation. Four double spaced pages. 10%
5. Apocalyptic Reading. Three dictionary/encyclopaedia articles on "Apocalyptic" (or "Apocalypse," or "Apocalypticism") are listed below. Read *any two* of them, and write a four to five page summary (double-spaced) of each one you read. There will be a fair amount of repetition between the two, which is good. There will also be some differences; if you notice them, indicate this in your summaries. Submit these two summaries together, as one single document. 10% of course grade.

"Apocalypses and Apocalypticism." Pages 279-291 in vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Ladd, G. E. "Apocalyptic Literature." Pages 151-161 in vol. 1 of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Edited by Geoffrey Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979.

Hanson, P. D. "Apocalypse, Genre" and "Apocalypticism." Pages 27-34 in Supplementary Volume of *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.

Alternative Apocalyptic Reading - If the resources listed above are not available, or if the student prefers, in place of the two out of three articles required above, the student can read Leon Morris's *Apocalyptic* (Eerdmans, 1973). This small book has about 80 pages of text, and is a fine

introduction to apocalyptic. The entire book is available online as a pdf file, and can be downloaded free of charge. E. Neufeld can send it as an attachment if it is no longer available. *Apocalyptic* is divided into 24 short chapters. Write an eight to ten page summary of Morris's *Apocalyptic*, organized and labelled as one or two paragraphs summarizing each of Morris's 24 chapters. In your conclusion evaluate the usefulness of the book, and note what parts of the reading were most helpful to you. 10% of course grade

6. Research Paper..Pick a text from Revelation, research enough to find out what commentators agree on in your text, and what the problems are. This is a good paper in which to explore some debated aspect or theme of Revelation, or a section you have grappled with for some reason. Explain the passage as you understand it. It is appropriate to suggest an application of your text, but not before the last paragraph or two. Write ten to twelve pages of double-spaced text, in Turabian 7th edition format (which permits both the foot or endnotes-bibliographic style of citation, and parenthetical-reference list style citations). Do not take more than one page to get to the core of your text or issue. Imagine that you are writing to a fellow student, one who is taking the course with you, but knows little about the matter you are researching. 25%

F. COURSE POLICIES

In addition to the policies outlined in the *Student Handbook*, the full text of the academic policies, procedures and regulations of Providence College is available online (http://prov.ca/college/ac_pol-proc-reg.aspx) or in the Library, Admissions Office, and the Dean's Office.

Plagiarism

Issues of academic integrity will be dealt with according to the policies outlined in the Academic Conduct section of the Student Handbook (<http://prov.ca/studentLife/handbook.aspx>), the Providence College document entitled "Academic Dishonesty: The Problem of Plagiarism in Academic Writing," in the Providence College Academic Formation Guide available in the bookstore, or in the Providence College Policies, Procedures, and Regulations (http://prov.ca/college/ac_pol-proc-reg.aspx). Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the policies and with the consequences attached to their violation.

G. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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