



University of Colorado Denver
Downtown Campus

Graduate Interdisciplinary Studies

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HUMN 5984/SSCI 5050: Apocalyptic Imagination

Instructor: Dr. Katherine Rousseau
Fall 2011, T 5:00-7:50pm
Classroom: CU BLDG 1120

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:45pm or by appointment

Course Description and Goals

Apocalyptic imagination, with its visions of a grand and cosmic reversal of fortune, is as persistent as it is adaptive. In it, we find current debates ranging from climate change to clashing civilizations. For better or worse, apocalyptic narrative lends a heightened urgency and significance to the subject at hand. This class will present different ways of understanding apocalyptic imagination: as a literary genre; as a form of group behavior; as a historical and social phenomenon; as political-religious commentary; and as a means of persuasion. Our approach will be interdisciplinary and students are encouraged to explore the issues and materials from a range of methodological perspectives.

We will critically consider the works of the early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic period; pivotal “apocalyptic moments” from the approaching year 1000 in medieval Europe to Y2K anxiety; diverse religious and social movements, such as the Native American Ghost Dance and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas; cognitive dissonance theory as applied to millennial groups; and apocalyptic themes in contemporary film.

We will examine how the apocalyptic imagination resonates culturally and remains relevant, addressing questions of violence, imperialism, comic inversion and role reversal, identity, technology, and ecological sustainability. The goal is to assess the following questions: does the apocalyptic arise from specific cultural, religious, and political circumstances? Or is the apocalyptic a general mode of thinking and communicating that continually processes problems of the day? In this class, students will develop a familiarity with apocalyptic narrative in its

scholarly, cultural, and social dimensions, as well as develop analytical tools for identifying and assessing contemporary instances of apocalyptic imagination.

Required Texts:

Weekly readings will be available on the class Blackboard page (<http://blackboard.cuonline.edu>). There are no required textbooks beyond these weekly readings. If students are interested in purchasing books for their research, *War in Heaven/Heaven on Earth* is a useful interdisciplinary book for those working on millennial movements. *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* is also a good introductory volume for those interested in apocalyptic genre in historical and religious context. Both books are cited in the weekly readings below.

Recommended Texts:

Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th edition. New York: Longman Press, 2000.

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Assignments and Grades:

Presentation in class and short paper (3-5 pages) on one weekly reading or readings – 25%

Students will sign up for one week to cover a listed reading (or readings, if desired) and present the material to the class. On the same class day as the student's presentation, a paper on the reading(s) will be due. Students may present the readings in the manner they choose: hand-outs, slide presentations, etc.

The aim of the class presentation is to *summarize and contextualize* a reading or readings. Examples and illustrations (images, fiction, film, news items, related scholarly work) are effective tools. Presentations will be 20-30 minutes in length. Since this is a seminar, after presenting, students will take in active role in the discussion on the source.

Sample outline for a presentation:

1. What is the argument in this reading? What are the key points? Case studies?
2. Define key terms used by the author(s).
3. How do you evaluate the argument – is it effective? Effective in part? If the argument is not effective, how could it be improved?
4. What is *apocalyptic* in this reading? How does the author define/use apocalyptic ideas?
5. How does the reading relate to other sources we have read?

Paper proposal (3-5 pages) – 20%

This proposal should contain a clear, focused thesis statement and 4-5 proposed *scholarly* sources (peer-reviewed journal articles, sources from JSTOR or Google Scholar, etc.). Students may incorporate non-scholarly and non-refereed sources in addition to these 4-5 scholarly sources. Before this proposal is due, we will have a class session where students can bring in their initial ideas for class brainstorming and feedback.

Research paper (12-15 pages) – 40%

Submitted work will be typed and double-spaced, conforming to a standard academic style (e.g. MLA, Chicago), submitted as a hard copy at the beginning of the last class of the semester. Written work will be evaluated for composition and grammar as well as argumentation.

Attendance and roundtable participation (final two classes) – 15%

Refer to the attendance and participation section in Course Policies below. The requirements for the roundtable participation are detailed on the syllabus, final two classes of the semester.

Course Policies:

Assignments are due in class on the day they are listed in the schedule below. Papers will lose a letter grade increment for each day they are late (e.g., A to A- for a paper one day late).

Attendance and Participation: Because this is a seminar, discussion of assigned readings is crucial to a full and enriching experience for all participants. Please read carefully and thoughtfully all assigned texts and be prepared to discuss them, your ideas, and your peers' ideas, in class. Come with questions, comments, and points for clarification. This seminar critically assesses various theories and approaches. We are interested in ideas, but also how those ideas are formed and why they are held. Be curious! The most effective learning process involves active participation.

I am committed to creating a learning climate characterized by mutual respect and courtesy. I ask that all students make a similar commitment. **Respectful discussion is expected at all times.** In addition, we will be discussing religious texts in a historical-literary context, so be prepared to approach this material in an analytical manner.

Non-participation in class will affect your final grade. Please be prompt and avoid arriving late. Attendance is required. Students may have *one* unexcused absence during the semester. Further unexcused absences (e.g., non-medical or non-emergency) may incur a letter-grade drop in your final grade. Students who miss two or more classes should consider withdrawing from the course. It is the responsibility of the student to withdraw according to university rules.

In addition to announcements made and written handouts distributed in class, I may need to contact you between classes, which I'll do through individual and group email messages. One of the requirements for this course is that you maintain an email address, check it regularly for messages, be sure it is working, and let me know if you change your email address. You are responsible for any messages, including assignments and schedule changes, sent to you via email. You also may contact me via email, in addition to seeing me during office hours or calling me. If you are unavailable during regular office hours, we can arrange another way to have a meeting, such as a phone appointment.

Please contact me early for assistance. Planning is a key element of any seminar or research project. If you're having difficulties with the readings or your research paper, we'll need time to map out a strategy. If you have questions about scholarly versus non-scholarly sources, especially if you're working on a popular culture topic, ask me. Familiarize yourself with the necessary resources on campus, including library research tools and the Writing Center (<http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/writing/>). Remember: if the library doesn't have that one crucial title you need, interlibrary loan takes time. If you need access to the ATLA Religious Studies database for your research (not available at the UCD library), please contact me.

Course Schedule:

8/23/11, Week 1

Introductions, housekeeping, and class syllabus.

Basic terms: do you know your Armageddon from your apocalypse?

8/30/11, Week 2: Apocalyptic Discourse, Preliminary/Comparative Views

Carey, Greg. "Encountering Apocalyptic Discourse." *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005. 1-18.

Daniels, Ted. *A Doomsday Reader: Prophets, Predictors, and Hucksters of Salvation*. New York: New York University Press, 1999. 1-51.

9/6/11, Week 3: Apocalyptic as Literary Genre

Barr, David L. "Beyond Genre." *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. Ed. David L. Barr. Atlanta: SBL, 2006. 71-89.

Collins, John J. "The Apocalyptic Genre." *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998. 1-42.

Springen, Karen. "Unhappily Ever After." *Newsweek* 7/21/2008, Vol. 152, Issue 3.

9/13/11, Week 4: 9/11, Apocalypse, and Memory

Harris, Mark. "It's Like a Movie? Really?" *Entertainment Weekly*, 4/1/2011.

Howard, Robert Glenn. "Sustainability and Narrative: Plasticity in Online Apocalyptic Discourse After September 11, 2001." *Journal of Media and Religion* 5.1 (2006): 25-47.

Strozier, Charles B. "The World Trade Center Disaster and the Apocalyptic." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 12.2 (2002): 361-380.

9/20/11, Week 5: Prophecy and Persuasion

Second half of class: roundtable on research paper ideas

Daniels, Ted. "Charters of Righteousness: Politics, Prophets and the Drama of Conversion." *War in Heaven/Heaven on Earth: Theories of the Apocalyptic*. Millennialism and Society, Vol. 2. Ed. Stephen D. O'Leary and Glen S. McGhee. Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2005. 3-17.

O'Leary, Stephen D. "Toward a Rhetorical Theory of Apocalypse." *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 3-19.

9/27/11, Week 6: Apocalyptic as Political-Religious Commentary

Carey, Greg. "Revelation and Empire: Symptoms of Resistance." *The Reality of Apocalypse*. 169-180.

Harrington, Patricia. "Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56.1 (1988): 25-50.

10/4/11, Week 7: Narrative and Satire

Charlesworth, James H. *How Barisat Bellowed: Folklore, Humor, and Iconography in the Jewish Apocalypses and the Apocalypse of John*. North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1998. 1-29.

Twain, Mark. "The Mysterious Stranger." Online text:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3186/3186-h/3186-h.htm>

10/11/11, Week 8: Storytelling, emotion and apocalyptic

Second half of class will be devoted to paper proposal discussion – instructor will stay to answer any questions; students may use second half of class time for library research.

Fuller, Robert. “Spirituality in the Flesh: The Role of Discrete Emotions in Religious Life.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.1 (2007): 25–51, esp. 32-8.

Poniewozik, James. “Postapocalypse Now.” *Time*, 10/23/2006, Vol. 168, Issue 17.

10/18/11, Week 9: Millennial Movements I

Paper proposal due at the beginning of class

McGhee, Glen S. “A Cultural History of Dissonance Theory.” *War in Heaven/Heaven on Earth*. 195-219.

Nash, David S. “The Failed and Postponed Millennium: Secular Millennialism Since the Enlightenment.” *The Journal of Religious History* 24.1 (2000): 70-86.

10/25/11, Week 10: Millennial Movements II

Baumgarten, Albert. “Four Stages in the Life of a Millennial Movement.” *War in Heaven/Heaven on Earth*. 61-75.

Selengut, Charles. “Apocalyptic Violence.” *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*. 2nd ed. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008. 87-120.

11/1/11, Week 11: Apocalyptic, Time & Space

Holden, Constance. “Apocalyptic Adjustment.” *Science* 315.5811 (2007): 441.

Bousquet, Antoine. “Time Zero: Hiroshima, September 11 and Apocalyptic Revelations in Historical Consciousness.” *Millennium* 34.3 (2006): 739-764.

Schaefer, Nancy A. “Y2K as an Endtime Sign: Apocalypticism in America at the Fin-de-Millennium.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 38.1 (2004): 82-105.

11/8/11, Week 12: Eco-Apocalypse

Jennaway, Megan. “Apocalypse on You! Millenarian Frenzy in Debates on Global Warming.” *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 19.1 (2008): 68-73.

Johnson, Laura. "(Environmental) Rhetorics of Tempered Apocalypticism in *An Inconvenient Truth*." *Rhetoric Review* 28.1 (2009): 29–46.

Jenkins, Philip. "Burning at the Stake." *New Republic* 237.11 (2007): 14-15.

11/15/11, Week 13: Apocalyptic Images & Postmodernity

Torgovnick, Marianna. "The Lure of Urban Destruction." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5/9/2008, Vol. 54, Issue 35.

Oswalt, Conrad. "Movies and the Apocalypse." *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003. 157-88.

Pike, Sarah M. "Desert Goddesses and Apocalyptic Art: Making Sacred Space at the Burning Man Festival." *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*. Ed. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001. 155-76.

11/22/11 – Fall break, no class

11/29/11, Week 14: Roundtable, Part I - Applications

The final class two classes will have students sharing their research with the group. A key goal for this course is the application of theory to contemporary situations and texts. To this end, during the first roundtable session on 11/29/11, students will bring to the group one contemporary example of apocalyptic imagination (approx. 10 minutes for each student's example). The example can be a film clip, a piece of music, an image, a novel, a news story, or some other case study approved by the instructor. Each student's example must apply some approach or theorist we've studied in the class readings. The example may support the approach/theorist partially or entirely, or the example may refute the approach/theorist.

12/06/11, Week 15: Roundtable, Part II - Research

Final paper due in class

For the roundtable discussion on 12/6/11, students will present their research papers (approx. 10 minutes for each student's paper). This discussion will allow students to hear how others in the class have used the material we've discussed. Students will describe the following: what was the paper's argument? Was there a case study, and if so, what was it and how was it chosen? Were there any key sources used? Did the paper use a particular approach or method (e.g., a particular behavioral model to examine to actions of millennial group members or a particular critical theorist to examine a post-apocalyptic novel?). What further research might be done on your topic?

College policies:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, and dismissal from the University. You are responsible for being attentive to or observant of campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University's Student Conduct Code. (<http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/studentlife/studentlife/introduction.html>)

The University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, FAX 303-556-2074. I will be happy to provide approved accommodations, once you provide me with a copy of DRS's letter.

CLAS Incomplete Policy: The faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences passed the following policy relating to the awarding of incomplete grades. This CLAS policy is consistent with the UCDHSC campus policy. Incomplete grades (IW or IF) are NOT granted for low academic performance. To be eligible for an incomplete grade, students MUST:

- Successfully complete a minimum of 75% of the course
- Have special circumstances beyond their control that preclude them from attending class and completing graded assignments
- Make arrangements to complete missing assignments with the original instructor. Verification of special circumstances is required.

UCD deadlines for Fall 2011, including drop deadlines, are available at:

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/registrar/Documents/AcademicCalendars/downtown/AcademicCalendarFall2011.pdf>

Fall 2011 CLAS Academic Policies

The following policies pertain to all students and are strictly adhered to by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS).

- Every student MUST check and verify her/his schedule prior to the published drop/add deadlines. Failure to verify a schedule is not sufficient reason, later in the semester, to justify a late add or drop. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that his/her schedule is correct.
- CLAS students must use their *email.ucdenver.edu* address. Email is the official method of communication for CU Denver business; all email sent to students will be via their University address. Go to <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/Pages/WebMail.aspx> to activate your email address.
- **Waitlists:** Students are not automatically notified if they are added to a class from

a waitlist. After waitlists are dropped, students are not automatically added to a course from a waitlist. Even if told by a faculty member that s/he will be added from the waitlist, the student must complete the paperwork to add a course and must verify her/his schedule.

- Students must complete and submit a **Schedule Adjustment Form** (drop/add form) to make schedule changes. Search "Schedule Adjustment Form" on the CU Denver website.
- Students are not automatically dropped from a class if they never attended, stopped attending, or do not make tuition payments. After open drop/add, a Schedule Adjustment Form is required.
- **Late adds** will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late add are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation from the student. Go to "**Drop/Add Procedures**" on the CU Denver website, or visit **NC 4002** for a petition form. Note that the signature of a faculty member on a Schedule Adjustment Form does not guarantee that a late add petition will be approved.
- **Late drops** will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late drop have arisen after the published drop deadlines and are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation from the student. Pre-existing circumstances (existing prior to the published drop deadlines) regarding illness, work, family, etc. will not be considered adequate reason to drop or withdraw after the published drop deadlines. Note that the signature of a faculty member does not guarantee that a late drop petition will be approved.
- Students who drop after the published drop/add period will not be eligible for a refund of the COF hours or tuition.
- **Graduation:**
- Undergraduate students wishing to graduate in fall 2011 must complete the online Intent to Graduate Form and meet with their academic advisor to obtain a graduation application. This application must be submitted by Census Date, September 7, 2011, 5 PM. You can obtain an application only after meeting with your advisor. There are no exceptions to this policy.
- Graduate students wishing to graduate in fall semester 2011 must complete the online Intent to Graduate form and have a Request for Admissions to Candidacy on file with the CU Denver Graduate School (Lawrence Street Center 12th floor) no later than 5 PM, September 7, 2011.
- Students are responsible for completing financial arrangements with financial aid, family, scholarships, etc. to pay their tuition prior to Census Date. Students will be responsible for all tuition and fees for courses if they do not officially drop using proper procedures and forms.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **August 22, 2011:** First day of classes.
- **August 28, 2011:** Last day to add a class or be added to a waitlist using the UCD Access student portal. After this date, you must use a Schedule Adjustment Form to change, add, or drop.
- **August 29, 2011: LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT DROP CHARGE –**

THIS INCLUDES SECTION CHANGES.

- **August 29, 2011: Waitlists are dropped.** Any student not added to a course automatically from the waitlist by this date **MUST** complete a Schedule Adjustment Form to be added. Students are **NOT** automatically added to the class from the waitlist after this date and time. If your name is not on the official student roster, you are not registered for the course.
- **August 30-September 7, 2011:** Students are responsible for verifying an accurate fall 2011 course schedule via the UCDAccess student portal. Students are **NOT** notified of their waitlist status by the University. All students must check their schedule prior to 9/7 for accuracy.
- **August 30, 2011:** First day instructor may approve request to add a student to a course with a Schedule Adjustment Form.
- **September 7, 2011: Census date.**
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day to add structured courses without a written petition for a late add. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such. This deadline does not apply to independent studies, internships, project hours, thesis hours, dissertation hours, and late-starting modular courses.
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day to drop a fall 2011 course or completely withdraw from all fall 2011 courses using a Schedule Adjustment Form and still receive a tuition refund, minus the drop fee. After this date, tuition is forfeited and a "W" will appear on the transcript. This includes section changes. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such.
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day to request pass/fail or no-credit option for a course.
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day for a graduate student to register for a Candidate for Degree.
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day for a Ph.D. student to petition for a reduction in hours.
- **9/7/11, 5 PM:** Last day to apply for fall 2011 graduation. You must make an appointment and see your academic advisor before this date to apply for graduation if you are an undergraduate; you must complete the Intent to Graduate and Candidate for Degree forms if you are a graduate student.
- **September 19-28, 2011:** Faculty can use the Early Alert system.
- **October 31, 2011, 5 PM:** Last day for CLAS students to drop or withdraw without a petition and special approval from the academic dean. After this date, a dean's signature is required.
- **November 14, 2011, 5 PM:** Last day for CLAS students to drop or withdraw with signatures from the faculty and dean but without a full petition. After this date, all schedule changes require a full petition. Petitions are available in NC 4002 for undergraduates and in the CU Denver Graduate School offices for graduate students.
- **November 21-27, 2011:** Fall break (no classes; campus closed). Be thankful.
- **December 12-17, 2011:** Finals Week. No schedule changes will be granted once finals week has started. There are **NO** exceptions to this policy.
- **December 27, 2011:** Fall final grades available on UCD Access (tentative).