

Required Texts

- *Bible, New Revised Standard Version (with Apocrypha)*
- Clark, J. Michael, *Defying the Darkness: Gay Theology in the Shadows* (Pilgrim 1997)
- Erhman, Bart D., *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford UP 1999)
- Heyward, Carter, *God in the Balance: Christian Spirituality in Times of Terror* (Pilgrim 2002)
- Pippin, Tina, *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (Routledge 1999)
- Wessinger, Catherine, ed., *Millennialism, Persecution, & Violence: ...Cases* (Syracuse UP 2000)

Purpose & Rationale: Turn of the century scholars have argued that apocalypse—whether apocalyptic literature or apocalyptic action—is symptomatic of systemic suffering and that apocalypse may be understood as the last desperate vision generated by an oppressed people who can no longer imagine achieving justice for themselves within the realities of this world. Such apocalypse, generated by collective despair, relinquishes all hope in the here and now; moreover, apocalyptic actions fueled by such apocalyptic despair may be both suicidal and homicidal, precisely because this life is void, without any hope of justice for the utterly marginalized. Given this scholarly analysis of apocalypse as a genre, this course will include the following: (1) An examination of the literary/cultural features and motifs of biblical apocalypse with attention both to the obvious primary texts (Daniel, Revelation, Mark 13) and to the less obvious texts which can also be read apocalyptically (the Flood, the Tower of Babel, the Destruction of Sodom, the near Sacrifice of Isaac, the Jezebel narrative[s], the Book of Job). (2) An examination of various postbiblical apocalyptic communities and/or events over history. (3) An examination, at times interwoven with other course materials, of how apocalyptic thinking continues to shape 20th and 21st century ways of being in the world, including apocalyptic readings of racism, sexism, heterosexism and the AIDS pandemic, environmental abuses, and the socioeconomic and geopolitical justice issues underlying the current war mentality, whether against terrorism generally or specifically against Iraq. **Please note:** This is a reading-intensive course.

General Requirements & Grading: Completing assigned homework readings, as listed in the following schedule, in advance of the scheduled lecture/discussion day will substantially enhance a student's experience in this course; moreover, failure to read assigned material is clearly reflected in performance during class and small group discussions and will affect the student's class participation grade. Class time is not for merely repeating assigned reading, but for expanding, clarifying, and interpreting materials and ideas as well as for interacting with the literature at hand; the readings should therefore be seen as necessary preparation for class activities. Indeed, each student is expected to stay current on assigned readings (both texts and handouts), to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussions; **class time will depend very heavily on group discussion and response.** In fact, students will be welcomed and encouraged to discover additional relevant readings and/or other materials for discussion other than those already listed in this syllabus. Formal assignments will include three 2-3 page guided and critically reflective response papers and two exams. Students will also be expected to provide discussion leadership on at least two occasions as scheduled; in addition, students will also be assigned a grade for discussion and general classroom participation and attendance.

The evaluation of each student's classroom and discussion performance will be based not simply on the quantity of his/her contribution, but on the student's ability to bring challenging questions to the group, to add creatively to the conversation at hand, and to be a sensitive and responsive listener to his/her colleagues. Especially in view of our numbers, regular attendance is **vital** to the functioning of the seminar

group; more than a total of five (5) absences for **any** reason (so-called “excused” **or** unexcused) during the semester will constitute an automatic “zero” for the class participation and attendance grade. Valid, written excuses and/or emergency situations will be handled rigorously on an individual basis. Similarly, excessive, routine tardiness will also be noted. Late written assignments will **not** be accepted, also resulting in an automatic “zero” for any such assignment; moreover, electronically submitted papers (e-mail or fax) are **unacceptable**. Most importantly, we should all nurture and maintain an openness to new ideas and new perspectives, willing to engage each other in fruitful dialogue and in looking at issues in depth. Because all methods of student evaluation are equally valuable, the final grade computation will consist of a simple average of the following eight (8) items: 3 guided reflection/response papers; 2 exams, 2 leadership presentations, 1 class participation and attendance grade.

Tentative Schedule (*subject to revision as necessary; complete all reading in advance of date assigned*)

***** Postmodern Openings: Multiple Paths to THE END**

M	8/25	Introduction to the course (syllabus, texts, expectations, etc.)	Triad Schedule
W	8/27	<i>Frontline: Apocalypse</i> (part 1)	Ehrman 3-19, video
F	8/29	<i>Frontline: Apocalypse</i> (part 2)	video, continued
M	9/1	Labor Day	TBA
W	9/3	Historical Review Lecture: Ancient Israel, 1250 BCE – 135 CE	Efird 78-81 (<i>reprint</i>) Harris & Platzner 332-337 (<i>reprint</i>)
M	9/8	Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature I: Lecture on Daniel	Efird 81-85 (<i>reprint</i>) Harris & Platzner 337-345 (<i>reprint</i>) The Book of Daniel (all)
W	9/10	Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature II: Lecture on Revelation (plus...)	Ehrman 425-440 (<i>reprint</i>) The Book of Revelation
F	9/12	Introduction to Apocalyptic Thinking: Lecture	Pippin ix-xiii, 1-5, 9-12 (preface, ch. 1)

***** (Re)Reading the Texts, Upending the Sacred, or, God Acting Badly**

M	9/15	Deepening Apocalyptic Thinking: Theodicy I <hr/> <hr/>	Clark 1-26 (ch. 1, 2)
W	9/17	Deepening Apocalyptic Thinking: Theodicy II <hr/> <hr/>	Clark 27-42 (ch. 3)
M	9/22	Textual Case Studies Discussion: The Flood Narrative The Destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah The Near-Sacrifice of Isaac (The Akida) The Fictional Book of Job	Genesis 6:1-9:17 Genesis 18:16-19:29 Genesis 22:1-23:2, Umansky <i>reprint</i> Job 1-2, 38-42
W	9/24	Deepening Apocalyptic Thinking: Horror & Fear Lecture	Pippin 78-116 (ch. 6, 7)

F 9/26 Interpretive Case Study: The Tower of Babel Pippin 43-63 (ch. 4)
_____ **Genesis 11:1-9**

M 9/29 Interpretive Case Study: Jezebel Pippin 32-42 (ch. 3)
Due: Guided Reflection/Response Paper #1 I Kings 16:31-34, 19:1-10, 21:1-16
_____ II Kings 9:30-37

W 10/1 Interpretive Case Study: Pippin 64-67, 117-125 (ch. 5, 8)
Abyss, Holy City, & Apocalyptic Sex (review **Revelation** citations as needed)

***** Incarnating Apocalypse**

M 10/6 The Apocalyptic Jesus I: Lecture Ehrman 125-181 (ch. 8, 9, 10)
(recommended background reading: Ehrman 21-123)

W 10/8 The Apocalyptic Jesus II: Lecture Ehrman 183-225, 239-245 (ch. 11, 12, 14)

F 10/10 Interpretive Case Study: The “Little Apocalypse” Pippin 13-31 (ch. 2)
(Discussion) **Mark 13**

M 10/13 Racism as an Apocalyptic Script lecture, video, & review
(additional background reading, re: neonazi racism, Kaplan/Wessinger 299-322)

W 10/15 *Mid-Term Exam*

10/20-10/24, Fall Break, No Class

***** Revisiting Apocalyptic Thinking**

M 10/27 Apocalyptic Ecology Keller articles x 2 (*reprints*), Pippin 5-9

W 10/29 Apocalyptic Community & AIDS Clark, *Erotic Ecology*, Ch. 4 (*reprint*)

F 10/31 Apocalyptic Movements: Introductory Lecture Wessinger 3-39, + ch. 2 *reprint*

***** Examining Apocalyptic History & Politics**

M 11/3 Mormon Persecution (mid-1800s) Underwood/Wessinger 43-61
Due: Guided Reflection/Response Paper #2

W 11/5 Wounded Knee (1890) Pesantubee/Wessinger 62-81

M	11/10	Nazism (1940s)	Ellwood/Wessinger 241-260

W	11/12	The People's Temple: Jonestown (1978)	Moore/Wessinger 121-137

F	11/14	The Branch Davidians: Waco (1993) (...and Millerite influences)	Gallagher/Wessinger 82-100 cf., Ehrman 12-14

		<i>The Vietnam Era: Special Screening, "Apocalypse Now"</i>	<i>TBA</i>
M	11/17	Aum Shinrikyo: Japan (1995)	Reader/Wessinger 158-182

W	11/19	Justis Freeman: Montana (1996)	Rosenfield/Wessinger 232-344

		<i>11/24-11/26, AAR Meetings in Atlanta & Thanksgiving Break, No Class</i>	
M	12/1	The Solar Temple & Heaven's Gate (1997, 1998)	Introvigne/Wessinger 138-157, + <i>reprint</i>

W	12/3	Turning the Millennium (2001, 2003): Lecture	Barkun/Wessinger 352-363, + <i>reprint</i>
		*** Resisting the Apocalyptic Present	
M	12/8	Terrorism & Response (Discussion) <i>Due: Guided Reflection/Response Paper #3</i>	Heyward 9-50
W	12/10	Terrorism & Theology (Discussion)	Heyward 51-91
F	12/12	Counter-Apocalyptic Scripts	Heyward 92-104
		_____	Senator Byrd's Speech to the Senate <i>reprint</i>
		_____	Clark <i>JMS 11.2</i> (2003) <i>reprint</i> + sermon excerpt <i>reprint</i>
M	12/15	<i>Final Exam</i>	
W	12/17	<u>THE END</u> : concluding conversation, course evaluations, return papers, etc.	
