
TAYLOR UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
REL 358: Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Revelation
Fall Semester 2006

Course Details

Instructor: Ralph J. Korner
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Office Hours: By appointment or as posted on office door.
Weight/Times: 3 credits (3-0-0); Tuesday & Thursday 3:25–4:40 pm
Prerequisites: REL 103 (NT Literature); REL 200 (Hermeneutics) highly recommended

Description

This course is an introduction to apocalyptic literature. It will focus on the nature of apocalyptic literature, and its interpretation. This will include a focused examination of the biblical book of Revelation.

Learning Outcomes

At the successful completion of the course students should have

- 1) a knowledge of the political, religious and geographical background of the worlds of apocalyptic literature, and of the seven Asia Minor churches of Revelation in particular.
- 2) a knowledge of the major themes of Revelation and the content of each section.
- 3) an acquaintance with the various methods of interpreting the book of Revelation.
- 4) an awareness of some of the critical issues related to the study of apocalyptic literature, with special reference to the book of Revelation

Required Readings

Mitchell G. Reddish, ed. *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990.
Leonard L. Thompson. *Revelation*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
J. Ramsey Michaels. *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.

The required Bible for this class is *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (3rd edition; New Revised Standard Version; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In addition, each student must have access to at least one more modern translation of the Bible, preferably employing different translation techniques. For example, students may choose from a “dynamic” translation (e.g., NIVI, NIV, NCV NEB, GNB) or a “formal” translation (e.g., RSV, NASB, JB)

Course Requirements

Lectures will be held twice a week. All assignments are due by 4:30 pm of the due date. The assignments and their weights are as follows:

- 1) **Class Participation (5%).** *Regular and faithful attendance at lectures is mandatory.* This component includes attendance, preparation for class (i.e., completing the assigned readings and questions), and taking part in class discussions. Participation marks will be assigned by the instructor with reference to an end of term student self-evaluation. At Taylor University College the expectation is that students will attend and participate in all scheduled classes. Absences are deemed to be exceptions. As per College policy, students are responsible for any and all consequences of missed classes, including any instructions, handouts, notes, announcements of changes in the syllabus, etc., given out or announced in classes for which they are absent (This means that you should ask other students for lecture notes or copies of handouts, etc., rather than the instructor).

- 2) **Reading Report** (10%). Required readings include the entire book of Revelation, the three textbooks and the Reserve Readings. BONUS: if you write a one page critical review of one of the Reserve Readings you will receive upwards of a 2% bonus. The completed Reading Report form (and Bonus critique) is due **Dec. 8th**.
- 3) **Inductive Study** (10%). A 900-1200 word (3-4 typed, double-spaced pages) personal reflection on the purpose, content and application of the book of Revelation with respect to its first century audience. The Inductive Study is due **Friday, Sept. 29th**. See the *Inductive Study guidesheet*.
- 4) **Class Presentations** (10%). Each student will be required to make up to a 10 minute presentation on one chapter/visionary scene in the book of Revelation (i.e., chs. 4–22). The presentation will seek to understand the content of that particular chapter in light of the overall emphasis of the vision report in the book of Revelation. Chapters will be assigned by the instructor. Creativity in presentation is a worthwhile endeavour. Use of academic sources is encouraged.
- 5) **Take Home Mid-term Examination** (15%). The Mid-term exam will cover all primary and secondary readings and lectures. The Take Home Mid-term is handed out **Oct. 12th and due Friday, Oct. 13th**
OR Exegetical Study (15%). A 1200-1800 word (i.e. 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages) analysis of one significant symbol in the book of Revelation (e.g., Babylon). You will compare it with similar symbols occurring in the HB and apocalyptic literature and explain its relevance to a first century Asia Minor audience. The Exegetical Study is due **Friday, Oct. 27th**. It will consist of at least seven sources of which one will be a refereed journal article.
- 6) **Research Paper** (25%; 5% for abstract, thesis statement, and annotated bibliography; 20% for the final paper). A 2700-3600 word (i.e. 9-12 typed, double-spaced pages) research paper is due on **Friday, Dec. 8th**. A one-paragraph description of your project (including a well-defined thesis statement) and an annotated bibliography is due **Oct. 31st**.
- 7) **Final Examination** (25%). The final exam will cover all primary and secondary readings and lectures. The Final Examination is scheduled for **Tuesday, Dec. 12th** at 2:00-4:00 pm. Please consult the most current edition of the Taylor University College Final Examination schedule to confirm the date and time of the examination. Please note that according to College policy “No final examination can be rescheduled except by consent of the Academic Committee” (see the full final examination policy in the Taylor University College Academic Calendar).

A Note on Research Paper Topics

For your papers you may choose from the options below (if you have an alternative topic for one of the papers, you will need to secure permission from the instructor).

<i>Research Paper Topics</i>
The structure of Revelation and its relevance for interpretation
The Christology of Revelation
Interpreting Revelation in light of Jewish apocalyptic literature
The Millennium and the book of Revelation
The genre of Revelation
The socio-cultural background to the book of Revelation
The authorship of Revelation
The dating of Revelation
Paranesis in Revelation
Eschatological symbols in Revelation (e.g., Earthquake)
The New Jerusalem in Revelation
HB Intertextuality in the book of Revelation (e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah)
Qumran and apocalypticism
Understanding Revelation in light of one interpretive system (e.g., preterist)

- 1) *Annotated Bibliographies*: Your annotated bibliography should comprise at least *seven sources of which one is a refereed journal article* (Your research paper's final bibliography must have at least ten sources but need not be annotated). Each item should have a couple sentences explaining the author's *specific* thesis and the evidence garnished to support it. Make sure that you provide evidence that you have read and understood the article or book. In addition, annotations for commentaries should only focus on the specific passage or issue with which you are dealing. It is due Oct. 31st.
- 2) *Breadth of Sources*: Your final bibliography must consist of at least *ten items of which at least three are articles from refereed journals*. Use a variety of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, encyclopedias, specialized books and) representing a number of critical perspectives. Note that a maximum of two internet resources may be used – and they must be cited with full bibliographical details as per College guidelines (ensure the quality of the internet resources!).
- 3) *Research Language*. You should employ acceptable research language for your paper which is not too informal yet reads inclusively. Avoid the use of gender specific language (e.g., Do not refer to “man” generically or to “mankind,” “men,” “he”; rather use “humankind,” “humanity,” “person,” etc.

Guidelines for Written Assignments

All written assignments are to be submitted to the General Office by 4:30 pm of the due date. ***No late papers or assignments will be accepted.*** Please note that papers outside the specified word-range will be penalized. In addition, no term work can be accepted after the last day of class (please see the policy on “Incomplete Courses” in the Academic Calendar). *Please note that students are required to retain a copy of all assignments* (hard copy or electronic version).

All studies and papers should be typed and formatted according to the Society of Biblical Literature writing style as outlined in the College's *Guidelines for Research Writing in Religion & Theology (SBL)*. For the full stylesheet, please refer to Patrick H. **Alexander**, et al., ed., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson, 1999) which is in the reference section of the library. For help with writing research papers in Religion & Theology see Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). This is in the library and copies are available for purchase in the Taylor Bookstore.

Evaluation of Papers and Assignments

Students will receive percentage grades on work completed throughout the term. The percentage will only be converted to the alpha letter grading system at the end of term according to the following descriptors:

	Descriptor	Alpha Grade	4.0 Scale
		A+	4.00
Excellent		A	4.00
		A-	3.70
		B+	3.30
Good		B	3.00
		B-	2.70
		C+	2.30
Satisfactory		C	2.00
		C-	1.70
Poor		D+	1.30
Minimal Pass		D	1.00
Failure		F	0.0

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity is essential to the academic enterprise and the College community. All written work submitted *must* be your own. *Guidelines for Research Writing* defines plagiarism as the failure to give credit where credit is due: “To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written something original which in fact you have borrowed from another without acknowledging that other person's work” (*Guidelines for Research Writing*, 2002, p. 5). If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, or include direct quotations in your written assignments, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly by in-text citation or footnote. It is also wrong to copy another person's work or to submit an assignment previously handed in for credit in another course. **Students guilty of plagiarism will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and will be brought to the attention of the College's Discipline Committee.** See the discussion in the *Guidelines for Research Writing*.

Outline of Lectures, Readings & Due Dates

All written assignments are due in the General Office by 4:30 pm of the due date. Required readings are on reserve in the library. Note that knowledge of all secondary readings will be tested on the final exam.

Sept. 7 *Course Intro and Overview*

Section 1.1 Apocalyptic Terminology and Genre

Sept. 12 *Terminology: Apocalypse, Apocalypticism, Apocalyptic Eschatology*

Reading: Reddish, 19-37.

Question: Choose one of two “proto”-apocalyptic writings (Isaiah 24–27 or Zech 9–14) and explain which aspects fulfill, and which do not fulfill, Reddish's definition of an “apocalypse.”

Sept. 14 *Apocalyptic vs. Prophetic Eschatology*

Reserve: Aune et al., “Apocalypticism,” in *DNTB*, 45-51; J.J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 21-43.

Questions: What are the limitations of Collins' definition of apocalyptic eschatology? How does Revelation reflect apocalyptic eschatology more so than prophetic?

Sept. 19 *Rev 1:9—22:21 → The angelically mediated, otherworldly journey of John*

Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature: Genre Characteristics

Reading: Michaels, 21-33.

Reserve: J.J. Collins, “The Jewish Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 21-49;

Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.), 1-8.; Aune, *Revelation* 1–5, lxxi-xc.

Question: Using the handout (Aune—Collins paradigmatic grid), find four apocalyptic genre characteristics that are reflected in Revelation (aside from the two in this section's title)

Section 1.2 Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and Eschatological Themes

Sept. 21 *Last Days in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*

Reading: The Community Rule: 1QS (Reddish, 224-28); War Scroll: 1QM (Reddish, 229-36)

Reserve: J.J. Collins, “Eschatology,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000), 256-61.

Question: How does the eschatology of the apocalyptic Essenes help us understand why they did not write formal apocalypses?

Sept. 26 *Messiah in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*

Reading: 2 Baruch 22–30 (Reddish, 108-112); 4 Ezra 9:26–13:58 (Reddish, 84-94); *I Enoch* 37–71 (Reddish, 170-187).

Question: How do the various messianic portrayals accord with, and differ from, the portrayal of the Christ in Revelation (e.g., warrior-king motif)?

Sept. 28

Symbolism in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

Reading: The First Vision: *1 Enoch* 83-84 (handout); The Animal Apocalypse: *1 Enoch* 85-90 (Reddish, 41-53); Apocalypse of Weeks: *1 Enoch* 93, 91 (Reddish, 54-57)
 Reserve: Richard Bauckham, "The Use of Apocalyptic Traditions," in *The Climax of Prophecy*, 38-83.

Questions: *Why are numbers, animals and other symbols so prominent in apocalyptic writings? How did they function for the original ancient readers? How do they affect modern readers differently?*

➤ **Inductive Study due Friday, Sept. 29th**

Section 2**Revelation: Interpretive Issues**

Oct. 3

Authorship, Dating and Stuff like that.

Reading: Thompson, 19-46
 Reserve: Mounce, *Revelation* (NICNT), 8-21

Questions: *What difference do questions of dating and authorship make to one's interpretation and application of Revelation?*

Oct. 5

Revelation: Interpretive Systems

Reserve: Beale, *Revelation* (NIGTC), pp. 44-49.

Question: *Which interpretive system are you most familiar with and what are its strengths and weaknesses in your view?*

Oct. 10

Revelation: Narrative Criticism

Reading: Michaels, pp. 95-106.

Question: *How does an appreciation of the narrative voices help one in hearing the message of Revelation?*

Oct. 12

Revelation: Structure → Problems and Possibilities

Reading: Michaels, pp. 51-74

Reserve: Korner, "'And I Saw...' An Apocalyptic Literary Convention for Structural Identification in the Apocalypse," *NovT* 42/2 (2000): 160-83.

Question: *How does a structural outline aid in one's interpretation of Revelation? What are some key structural indicators that need consideration for one's structural outline?*

➤ **Take Home Mid-Term Exam due Friday, Oct. 13th**

Section 3**An Exegetical Study of Revelation**

Oct. 17

Revelation: Tradition History → Images Transformed

Reading: Michaels, pp. 107-127.

Question: *How do some modern interpreters re-transform images in Revelation (midrash)?*

Oct. 19

Revelation 1:1-20: The Purpose of Revelation

Reading: Thompson, pp. 47-61.

Question: *How does the above modern "midrash" impact one's personal application of the expressed purpose of Revelation?*

Oct. 24

Revelation 2—3: The Seven Churches

Reading: Thompson, pp. 62-88; Michaels, pp. 35-50.

Reserve: Aune, *Revelation* 1-5 (WBC 52A), 119-131.

Question: *What does an understanding of the structure and genre of the Seven Letters contribute to one's interpretation of their message?*

Oct. 26

Revelation 2—3: The Seven Churches

Reserve: Colin Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Historical Setting* (1989), 15-34.

Question: Review Hemer's principles of interpretation (p. 20) and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

➤**Exegetical Paper is due Friday, Oct. 27th**

Oct. 31

Revelation 4—5: The Heavenly Throne Scene

Reading: Thompson, pp. 88-100.

Reserve: Beale, 311-16; 337-48; 366-69.

Question: Take note of the heavenly symbols and participants and map out the throne room scene. What are the interpretive implications?

➤**Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper due Tuesday, Oct. 31st**

Nov. 2

Revelation 6: The Six Seals

Reading: Thompson, pp. 100-106.

Reserve: Beale, 372-74; R. Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *NovT* 19 (1977): 224-33.

Question: What is the purpose of the six seals in the context of the heavenly throne scene? Why are they literarily separated from the seventh seal? Is the sixth seal the return of Christ? Why?

Nov. 7

Revelation 7: The Interlude

Reading: Thompson, pp. 106-10.

Reserve: Beale, 409-23; 433-35.

Question: How do the 144, 000 interrelate with the "great multitude" and why? What purpose does this literary interlude serve at this point in the visionary narrative?

➤**No classes during Reading Days (Nov. 9, 10)**

Nov. 14

Revelation 8:1 –9:21: The Six Trumpets

Reading: Thompson, pp. 110-122.

Reserve: Beale, 465-91.

Question: Compare trumpets five and six with the second woe (ch. 11)? What do you notice?

Nov. 16

Revelation 10:1 –12:18: The Seventh Trumpet and the Three Signs

Reading: Thompson, pp. 122-37.

Question: How important is the heavenly 7th Trumpet scene for the message of Revelation? What is unique about it? Who are the actors in chap. 12, and why?

Nov. 21

Revelation 13:1 –15:4: The Mark, the Beast and the False Prophet

Readings: Thompson, pp. 137-51.

Reserve: R. Bauckham, "Nero and the Beast" in *The Climax of Prophecy*, 384-89; 431-52.

Question: To what degree does identifying Nero with the Beast fulfill the content of Rev 13 specifically?

Nov. 23

Revelation 15:5 –16:21: The Seven Bowls

Reading: Thompson, pp. 151-58.

Reserve: R. Wall, *Revelation* (NIBC), 194-211.

Question: *What does the addition of the hailstorm in the seventh bowl suggest about its connection to the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and thus to the trumpets judgment?*

Nov. 28 *Revelation 17:1 –19:10: Babylon and Judgment*

Reading: Thompson, pp. 159-75.

Reserve: Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 919-28.

Question: *What does the “Babylon” symbol mean to its first century audience (cf. 17:1-18, ch. 18 and 11:1-14)? Does it have application for today?*

Nov. 30 *Revelation 19:11 –20:10: The Millennium: Judgment and Salvation*

Reading: Thompson, pp. 176-80; Michaels, pp.129-147.

Question: *How much interpretive weight do we attach to this anomalous reference to the millennium in Rev 20?Why?*

➤ Research Paper due Friday, Dec. 8th

Dec. 5 *Revelation 21 –22: The New Jerusalem*

Readings: Thompson, pp. 180-90; Reddish, 237-40 (The New Jerusalem Scroll, 5Q15)

Reserve: R. Gundry, “The New Jerusalem: People as Place, not Place for People,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 254-64.

Question: *Summarize the purpose of New Jerusalem imagery in the message of Revelation.*

Dec. 7 *Revelation in Contemporary Society: Old Hat or New News?*

Question: *How does one apply the message of Revelation in culturally meaningful ways? Are there “apocalyptic” cultural modalities that could serve as communication bridges?*

➤ Reading Report due Friday, Dec. 8th

➤ Final Examination: Tuesday , Dec. 12th 2:00-4:00 pm