

REL395
New Testament Texts: The Book of Revelation

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Description

Revelation is perhaps the most widely used biblical book and yet the least understood. This module will introduce the main historical, literary, and theological issues of the Book of Revelation using other early Jewish apocalypses to provide context.

Outcomes

By the end of the module, a diligent student will:

- be able to discuss critically the political, religious and geographical background of the worlds of apocalyptic literature, and of the seven Asia Minor churches of Revelation in particular;
- understand the major thematic elements at play in Revelation;
- be familiar with major scholarly debates and methods for the study of Revelation;
- develop skills in clear, concise formal academic communication.

Teaching Types

Interactive lecture; small group discussion; text-based classes.

Planned Study

The module requires a workload of 200 hours, of which 5 are devoted to lectures and 15 to seminars. A further 40 hours each are assigned to the research and writing of a 4000-word essay. The remaining 100 hours will be required for the reading of prescribed texts, recommended reading, use of the Internet, where appropriate, and preparation for class discussions, presentations, and debate.

Assessment

Thinking Pieces	10%
Research Paper	60%
Presentation	20%
Response	10%

Focused Thinking Pieces

Each week at the start of class, you will hand in a reflection piece responding to a particular question or reading. These reflection pieces are low-stress—grammar, syntax, spelling, etc. will not be marked, nor are you required to have a formal argument. Instead, you will be rewarded for the process of thinking rather than for the effectiveness of the writing. This should be “exploratory” writing—more like thinking out loud than a formal essay. The purpose of these pieces is for you to engage with the primary readings more directly, to deepen your thinking, and to get you into the habit of writing regularly. To receive full marks for a thinking piece, it must address the assigned text and/or question; show that you have done the required reading; reveal interesting, engaged thinking; and be about one single-spaced page long. Late thinking pieces are not accepted.

Presentation

At the beginning of the semester, each student will sign up to give a 10 minute presentation on a chosen topic, with a short, 3-4 minute discussion period after. The presentation is an opportunity to research a particular topic further and to explore key scholarly questions together with your colleagues. The presentation should engage directly and critically with one or more of the texts (including material evidence) covered in the course. Further information will be made available on MOLE.

Final Essay

The final essay is an opportunity to develop the chosen topic of the presentation into a formal research essay. Topics for the presentation and the essay will be distributed on MOLE. The essay is due on 15 December.

Resources

Students will be expected to study scholarly issues relating to the Book of Revelation and other apocalypses. In order to do this, students must identify and use appropriate Library and IT resources.

At the very least, you should have access to the following works, and consult them as necessary throughout the module:

- Aune, David E. *Revelation*. 3 vols. Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1997.
- Ford, J. Massyngberde. *Revelation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975.
- Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2014.
- Levine, Amy-Jill, ed. *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*. London: T & T Clark, 2009.
- Pagels, Elaine. *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991.
- Yarbro Collins, Adela. *Crisis & Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
- Yarbro Collins, Adela. *The Apocalypse*. NTM. Wilmington: Glazier, 1979.

A list of further resources is given below.

Schedule of Readings

29 September: The Genre of Apocalypse

Read:

- Daniel 2, 7-12; Zechariah 9-14; Ezekiel 38-39
- 1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 1 Cor 15; 2 Thess 2:1-12; Rom 8:18-30; Mark 13; Matthew 23-25; Luke 21, 17:22-37

- *1 Enoch* (Can be found on EarlyJewishWritings.com)
- John J. Collins, “The Apocalyptic Genre” and “Apocalypticism in Early Christianity” in *The Apocalyptic Imagination*
- Hellholm, David. “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John.” Pages 13–64 in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*. Edited by Adela Yarbro Collins. *Semeia* 36 (1986).

6 October: Revelation: Author, Date, Provenance

Read:

- Revelation, *in toto*
- Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.25; 4.26.2
- Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.30.3
- Koester, *Revelation*, 65–85.
- Thomas B. Slater, “Dating the Apocalypse of John,” *Biblica* 84 (2003) 252–258
(Available here: bsw.org/biblica/vol-84-2003/dating-the-apocalypse-to-john/202/)

13 October: Structure

Preparation Assignment: **Before attempting the secondary readings**, read Revelation three times: 1. in NRSV translation in a single sitting, noting big sections that capture your attention; 2. in another, significantly different translation (KJV, NJB, JSB, etc.); noting sections that capture your attention; 3. in NRSV again, this time outlining the text (try to ignore subject headings in your own Bible).

Read:

- Revelation, *in toto*
- Ralph Korner, “And I saw... An Apocalyptic Literary Convention for Structural Identification in the Apocalypse,” *Novum Testamentum* 42.2 (2000): 160–183.
- Christopher R. Smith, “The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 36, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 1994), pp. 373–393.
- Hall, Mark Seaborn. “The Hook Interlocking Structure of Revelation: The Most Important Verses in the Book and How They May Unify Its Structure.” *NovT* 44 (2002): 278–96.

20 October: Social Setting of Revelation

Read:

- Revelation, *in toto*
- Koester, *Revelation*, 86–103
- Stephen Friesen, “Satan’s throne, imperial cults and the social settings of Revelation.” *Journal For The Study Of The New Testament*, 27.3 (2005), 351–373.
- Michael Naylor, “The Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 8/2 (2010) 207–39.
- Michael E. Stone, “Reactions to Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception and Conversion,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12:2 (1981): 195–204

27 October: Empire and Violence

Read:

- *Apocalypse of Peter*: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/apocalypsepeter-mrjames.html>
- Mark 13; Matthew 25–26
- Stratton, Kimberly B. "The Eschatological Arena: Reinscribing Roman Violence in Fantasies of the End Times." *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 45–76.
- Barr, David L. "John's Ironic Empire." *Interpretation* 63 (2009): 20–30.
- Marshall, John W. "Gender and Empire: Sexualized Violence in John's Anti-Imperial Apocalypse." Pages 17–32 in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*. Edited by Amy-Jill Levine. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. "The Early Christian Apocalypses." *Semeia* 14 (1979) 61–121.

3 November: "True" Jews and "True" Christians

Read:

- Revelation 1–3
- Romans 2:17–29; 1 Corinthians 10:23–30
- *2 Baruch* 41–42
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. 1986. "Vilification and self-definition in the Book of Revelation." *Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1-3: 308–320.
- John W. Marshall, "John's Jewish (Christian?) Apocalypse," pp. 233–256 in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Matt Jackson-McCabe, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- Stephen Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation 2–3: Churches, Christians, True Jews, and Satanic Synagogues," pp. 127–144 in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (David L. Barr, ed.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006).

17 November: Christology and Messianism

Read:

- *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18
- Qumran, *The War Scroll* (1QM) 1, 15-19
- James C. VanderKam, "Messianism and Apocalypticism," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York and London: Continuum, 2000) 193-228.
- Gundry, Robert H. "Angelomorphic Christology in the Book of Revelation." Pages 662–78 in SBLSP 33. Atlanta: Scholars, 1994.

Note: There will be no class on 24 November as I will be attending the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA

1 December: Symbolism: Throne, Lamb, Jerusalem

Read:

- Ezekiel
- Animal Apocalypse; *4 Ezra*
- *The Shepherd of Hermas*
- Hall, Robert G. "Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne: Another Look at Revelation 4.6." *NTS* 36 (1990): 609–13.
- Økland, Jorunn. "Why Can't the Heavenly Miss Jerusalem Just Shut Up?" Pages 88–105 in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*. Edited by Amy-Jill Levine. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.
- Morton, Russell. "Glory to God and the Lamb: John's Use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting His Theology in Revelation 4–5." *JSNT* 83 (2001): 89–109.

8 December: Symbolism: Beast, Whore, Rome

Read:

- Revelation 12-15; 17:1–6
- *4 Ezra* (review)
- Friesen, Steven J. 2004. "Myth and symbolic resistance in Revelation 13." *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 2: 281-313.
- Wes Howard-Brooke and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll: Obris, 1999) 197-222
- Glancy, Jennifer A., and Stephen D. Moore. "How Typical a Roman Prostitute is Revelation's 'Great Whore'?" *JBL* 30 (2011): 551–69.

15 December: Contemporary Uses of Revelation

Read:

- Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 241-256
- Blount, Brian. *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005. Pages 37–68, 91–117.
- Rossing, Barbara. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. Boulder, Co.: Westview, 2004. Pages 1–45
- Strombeck, Andrew. "Invest in Jesus: Neoliberalism and the Left Behind Novels." *Cultural Critique* 64 (2006), 161–95

Watch: Barbara Rossing, "Debunking the Rapture:"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frqIH5eATWg>

Listen to *This American Life*, "Apocalypse," Episode 125. Podcast found at

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/125/apocalypse>

Other Resources (NB: Koester [2014]'s bibliography is also useful):

Aune, David E. "Revelation." In *Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

_____. *Revelation*. 3 vols. Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1997.

_____. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.

Barr, David L. *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998.

_____, ed. *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*. SBLRBS 44. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

_____, ed. *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of REvelation*. SBLSymS 39. Atlanta; Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

Bauckham, R. J. *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1993.

Bauckham, R. J. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Beagley, Alan James. *The "Sitz im Leben" of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies*. BZNW 50. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987.

Beale, Gregory K. *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

_____. *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.

_____. *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*. JSNT Supplement Series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

Beasley-Murray, G. R. *The Book of Revelation*. NCBC. Revised ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

Biguzzi, Giancarlo. "Is the Babylon of Revelation Rome or Jerusalem?" *Bib*87 (2006): 371-86.

_____. "John on Patmos and the 'Persecution' in the Apocalypse." *EstBib* 56 (1998): 201-220.

Blevins, J. L. *Revelation*. KPG. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.

Blount, Brian K. *Can I Get a Witness?: Reading Revelation Through African American Culture*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Boring, M. E. *Revelation*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1989.

Bousset, Wilhelm. *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Jewish and Christian Folklore*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1999. German original: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895.

Boyer, Paul S. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.

Bredin, Mark R. J. *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Nonviolent Christology in the Book of Revelation*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003.

Briggs, Robert A. *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Lang, 1999.

Buchanan, G. W. *The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy*. MBCNT. Lewiston: Mellon, 1993.

Charles, R. H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*. 2 vols. ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920.

Court, John M. *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1979.

Davis, R. D. *The Heavenly Court Judgment of Revelation*. Lahham: University Press of America, 1992.

Duff, Paul B. *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Ford, J. Massyngberde. *Revelation*. AB. Garden City: Doubleday, 1975.

Frey, Jörg. "The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Relation Between the Seven Letters and the Visionary Main Part of the Book." Pages 231–55 in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*. Edited by John Fotopoulos. NovTS 122. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Glasson, T. F. *The Revelation of John*. CBC. New York: Cambridge Press, 1965.

Greg, Steve, ed. *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997.

Hemer, Colin J. *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Social Setting*. JSNTSS 11. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986.

Hendriksen, William. *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1939.

Himmelfarb, Martha. *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Horsley, Richard A. *Revolt of the Scribes: Resistance and Apocalyptic Origins*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Huber, Lynn R. *Like a Bride Adorned: Reading Metaphor in John's Apocalypse*. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007.

Hughes, Philip E. *The Book of the Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Humphreys, Edith M. *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse, and The Shepherd of Hermas*. JSPSup 17. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Johns, Loren L. *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation into Its Origins and Rhetorical Force* WUNT II/167. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

Jonge, Henk J. de. "The Apocalypse of John and the Imperial Cult." Pages 127–41 in *Kykeon: Religions in the Greco-Roman World. Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel*. Edited by H. F. J. HOrstmannhoff, H. W. Singor, F. D. van Straten, and J. H. M. Strubbe. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 142. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Keener, Craig S. *Revelation*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2000.

Kelhoffer, James A. "The Relevance of Revelation's Date and the Imperial Cult for John's Appraisal of the Value of Christians' Suffering in Revelation 1–3." Pages 553–86 in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte—Konzepte—Rezeption*. Edited by Jörg Frey, James A. Kelhoffer, and Franz Toth. WUNT 287. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Knight, Jonathan. *Revelation*. 2nd ed. Readings. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2014.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Kovacs, Judith, and Christopher Rowland. *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Kraybill, J. Nelson. *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* JSNTSup 132. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

_____. *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010.

Labahn, Michael and Outi Lehtipun, eds. *Imagery in the Book of Revelation*. Leuven: Peeters, 2001.

Lee, Pilchan. *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*. WUNT II/129. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

Levine, Amy-Jill, ed. *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*. London: T & T Clark, 2009.

Malina, B. J. *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995.

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.

Marshall, John W. *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse*. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001.

Mayo, Philip L. "Those Who Call Themselves Jews": *The Church and Judaism in the Apocalypse of John*. PTMS 60. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006.

Mazzaferri, F. D. *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*. BZNW 54. New York: de Gruyter, 1989.

Mealy, J. Webb. *After the THousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation* 20. JSNTSup 70. Sheffield: JSOT, 1992.

Metzger, Bruce M. *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

Michaels, J. R. *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Minear, Paul S. *I Saw a New Earth. An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse*. Cleveland: Corpus, 1968.

Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. NICNT. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Moyise, S. *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*. JSNT Supplement Series 115. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

_____, ed. *Studies in the Book of Revelation*. Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 2001.

Murphy, Frederick J. *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation to John*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998.

Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Pippin, Tina. *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*. Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Portier-Young, Anathea E. *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2011.

Räpple, Eva Maria. *The Metaphor of the City in the Apocalypse of John*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004.

Resseguie, James L. *Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Richard, Pablo. *Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.

Rissi, Mathias. *Time and History: A Study of Revelation*. ET. Richmond: John Knox, 1966.

Rossing, Barbara R. *The Choice Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire in the Apocalypse*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999.

Rowland, Christopher. *The Open Heaven*. London: SPCK, 1982.

_____. *Revelation*. NIB 12. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

_____. *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991.

Stevenson, Gregory. *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation*. BZNW 107. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001.

Stuckenbruck, Loren T. *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*. WUNT II/70. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995.

Talbert, Charles H. *The Apocalypse*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.

Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 1—7: An Exegetical Commentary*. WEC. Chicago: Moody, 1992.

_____. *Revelation 8—22: An Exegetical Commentary*. WEC. Chicago: Moody, 1995.

Thompson, Leonard. *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Wainwright, A. W. *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

Wall, Robert W. *Revelation*. NIBC. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991.

Witherington III, Ben. *Revelation*. NCBC. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Yarbro Collins, Adela. *Crisis & Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

_____. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

_____. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion 9. Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976.

_____. *The Apocalypse*. NTM. Wilmington: Glazier, 1979.