

## Apocalypse: Religious Movements and the End of Time (01:840:305:01)

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Office hours:

Tuesday, 1:35–2:35 (64 College Ave); Weds 12:30–2 (zoom);  
other times by appointment

Spring 2024  
Hybrid Course  
Face-to-Face mtg: Tues 12:10–1:30  
Scott Hall, 219

### Course Description

From the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to whispers about the year 2012, many texts and traditions speak of a time of global catastrophe and judgment. Though many of these traditions claim to reveal images of “*the apocalypse*” or “*the end*,” this course seeks to understand these claims as products of diverse social-settings and cultural environments, not as evidence for a single over-arching religious event. A central aim of the course is to understand how apocalyptic traditions reflect the values, aspirations, and anxieties of their writers, editors, and audiences. The first part of the course introduces the critical academic study of religion by focusing on Ancient Mediterranean religious literature, including Babylonian, Greek, Israelite, and Jewish texts such as Genesis, Daniel, *1 Enoch*, 1 Thessalonians and Revelation. Here the focus will be on historical analysis and the close reading of texts, as well as on particular theories of myth and millenarian movements. Given its influence in later periods, the book of Revelation offers a helpful touchstone for the course. Part two builds on this work to explore specific types of social movements, with particular interest in gender, race, ethnicity, material economic issues, and colonization. Case studies will include the “Cargo Cults” of Micronesia, the Native American “Ghost Dance” movement, the Nation of Islam, and US Evangelical cultures.

### LEARNING GOALS FOR THE COURSE:

This course aims to develop critical thinking about apocalyptic writings, ideas, and social movements. In this course, students will learn to:

1. Engage in careful, critical reading of the primary source material and learn to ask critical historical questions about the texts, their writers, and their contexts.
2. Be introduced to some basic theoretical approaches to the academic study of religion and their importance for the study of apocalypticism.
3. Appreciate the diversity of Christian apocalyptic writings and movements.
4. Produce an original research paper that uses both primary and specialized, academic secondary literature to explore apocalyptic literature and/or social movements.

THIS COURSE WILL FULFILL GOALS FOR THE FOLLOWING WRITING INTENSIVE CORE REQUIREMENTS:



- Goal [HST]. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.
- Goal [WCR] Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
- Goal [WCD] Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE:**

1. Attendance: regular attendance and participation is a significant part of your grade. In the case of illness or emergency, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. More long-term illnesses or other issues will be handled on a case-by-case basis. More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero grade for attendance.
2. Quizzes: there will be quizzes for most online classes and many in-person ones. Students will have an opportunity to retake 2 of these quizzes in a different, oral format where they will meet with the instructor to discuss the material (typically over zoom). The lowest two quiz grades will be dropped.
3. In-class writing assignments: students must come to class having engaged with the materials assigned and with paper and pen for note-taking and other in-class work (**no laptops allowed**). Written work will include quizzes and small-group projects.
4. Exams: two exams covering the first second parts of the course. Both exams will consist of essays and identifications that should be prepared in advance and written during an 80 min. class period.
5. Paper and paper draft (with peer review): a final research paper (8–12 pages), normal fonts (Times or Times New Roman, 12 point, standard margins). The topic will be selected by the student in conversation with the instructor; students will begin thinking about a topic very early on in the course and work towards the final paper in a number of smaller projects. The paper is due by 5 pm on May 7, uploaded to Canvas.

- The paper should develop a focused, in-depth analysis of a particular text or movement and engage with specialized research (i.e. academic, scholarly books and articles).
- The paper should present be a carefully argued, well-written essay that uses primary and secondary source materials to support a clear and well-argued thesis and supporting arguments.
- On three occasions during the course, we will pause to do writing workshops that highlight major issues with critical analysis, writing and argument. These especially focus on developing a clear thesis and supporting arguments; proper attribution and citation; evaluating sources; and using library and online resources.
- Students will submit a draft of the paper in advance and engage in peer review in small groups; they will also receive feedback from the instructor in at least two meetings that focus on the topic, scope, use of sources, and argument. Students must participate in these peer-review exercises to get full credit for their drafts.

Assignments will be weighted roughly as follows:

- a. First Exam 20%
- b. Second Exam 20%
- c. Paper 20% (final paper and paper draft; draft worth 5%)
- d. Writing Assignments 15%
- e. Quizzes 15%
- f. Participation 10% (esp. attendance, in-class participation and engagement, peers review and small-group discussion; research paper meetings with Professor Wasserman)

**Technology requirements:** the online portion of the course will be asynchronous, and students will need a working computer and reliable internet to complete the online assignments each week.

**We will adhere to Rutgers policy on academic integrity:** <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. Please familiarize yourself with this policy and note that this prohibits the use of non-assigned materials such as summaries that are not your own; and of course, **GP Chat and other AI writing programs. To summarize:**

**"In concert with Rutgers' code of conduct, which mandates "that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations." this course has been designed to promote your learning, critical thinking, skills, and intellectual development without reliance on unauthorized technology including chatbots and other forms of "artificial intelligence" (AI). Although you may use search engines, spell-check, and simple grammar-check in crafting your assignments, you will be asked to submit your written work with the following statement. "I certify that this assignment represents my own work. I have not used any unauthorized or unacknowledged assistance or sources in completing it including free or commercial systems or services offered on the internet or text generating systems embedded into software."** Please consult with your instructor if you have any questions about the permissible use of technology in this class." (From "Critical AI Literacy" by Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Sharon Stoerger, in collaboration with the AI Advisory Roundtable).

## STUDENT SUPPORT AND MENTAL WELLNESS

- Student Success Essentials: <https://success.rutgers.edu>
- Student Support Services: <https://www.rutgers.edu/academics/student-support>
- The Learning Centers: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>
- The Writing Centers (including Tutoring and Writing Coaching): <https://writingctr.rutgers.edu>
- Rutgers Libraries: <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>
- Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services: <https://veterans.rutgers.edu>
- Student Health Services: <http://health.rutgers.edu/>

- Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS): <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>
- Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

### BOOKS REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE:

1. Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0674048362
2. Alex Ross and Mark Waid, *Kingdom Come*. DC Comics, 2008. ISBN:978-1401220341
3. *Harper Collins Study Bible*. New York: HarperOne, 2006. ISBN: 9780-060786847

### SCHEDULE:

A week-by-week schedule for the semester can be found at <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>. After you sign in, select this course (01:840:305) and then click on “modules” in the left-hand column for updated assignments, pdfs and images, links, and reading notes from Professor Wasserman. The work for most weeks will include: 1) readings and other materials (typically about 2-3 hours) to be completed prior to the face-to-face meeting; 2) an in-person meeting on Tues from 12:10–1:30; and 3) about 2-3 hours of additional online assignments (usually online readings, screenings, and quizzes) that will be due by the end of the week, by which we mean the end of the day on Friday, at 11:55 pm.

### TENTATIVE PLAN FOR THE COURSE

**\*\*please consult the Canvas Modules for the most up-to-date schedule\*\***

### Part 1: Apocalyptic Writings as Types of Myths

#### Module 1: Introduction; Apocalyptic Ideas and the History of Christianity; the Critical Academic Study of Myth

Tues (1/16), Face-to-face meeting: Introduction to the Course

In class-screening of film and media clips; critical approaches to the Bible, and the academic study of religion

Examples include:

1. Rev 1; 6 (Revelation chapters 1 and 6)
2. Paintings of “Four Horsemen” by 1887, V. Vasnetsov, S. Dürer, 1497–8
3. Clips (esp. trailer) *The Omega Code*
4. Listen/read lyrics to *Battle Hymn of the Republic*; compare Mark Twain, “*The Battle Hymn of the Republic Updated*”

By Friday (1/19), by 11:55 pm, complete the following: *Apocalyptic Ideas and the Christian Canon and its Reception in Evangelical Cultures*

1. Read (in your Harper Collins bibles): Revelation (approx. 60 mins)
2. Read Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, first read 1–7, and then the preface: ix-xiv;
3. Read select biblical texts:
  1. Genesis 6
  2. Daniel 7
  3. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11
  4. Mark 13
  5. Also, briefly compare:
    1. Mark 9:1 with Luke 9:27
    2. Mark 14:62 with Luke 22:69 and Acts 1:1–9
    3. Romans 6:4–5 with Col 2:12 (approx. 10 mins)
4. Take the quiz on #1–3 above (approx. 45 mins)

5. Choose a text, film, music, or media that you feel is in some way “apocalyptic.” Write 3–4 sentences explaining what it is and why you deem it apocalyptic, and bring this to class for peer review exercise. ***\*\*Please print the assignment before class next Tues\*\**** (approx. 15 mins)

## Module 2: Ancient Religions, Modern Interpreters

Tues 1/23, Face-to-face meeting: Interpreting Myths, Interpreting Texts

1. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 1–425 (pp. 23–35, approx. 20 mins)
2. Read McCutcheon, “Myth,” 190–207 (approx. 40 mins)
3. A popular psychological approach: Joseph Campbell on Myth (watch “The Meaning of Myth” episode 2, 60 mins): <https://youtu.be/Aee5DJ9DSwU>
4. Come to class with the short writing assignment from 1/19

By Friday 1/26 at 11:55pm, complete the following work: Babylonian Creation and Its Interpretation

1. Read the *Enuma Elish* (read p. 15–17, 37–59; then also and 18–36) (approx. 80 mins)
2. Short introduction: Klamm, “The Enuma Elish and the Bible”  
<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-enuma-elish-and-the-bible/>
3. Locate a text or media that you consider to be a myth and explain 1) how Campbell might interpret it, and 2) how McCutcheon might interpret it. Use at least 2 direct quotes for each theorist. Print this out and bring it to class for next Tues.
4. Quiz on the *Enuma Elish* readings (1–2 above)

## Module 3: Creation Accounts, Cosmologies, and Threats

Tues 1/30 (face-to-face meeting): Different Creation Myths; Different Approaches to Myth

1. Genesis 1–6
2. Hesiod, *Theogony* (See pdf, pp. 61–89)
3. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 141–159

By Fri 2/2, at 11:55 pm complete the following work: Myth and Biblical Myth

1. Read Genesis 1–12
2. Brief introduction: Tobolowsky, “the Bible and Myth”  
<https://blog.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-bible-and-myth>
3. Levenson, “Creation and the Persistence of Evil,” 3–13.
4. Explain how Lincoln might analyze Genesis and one other text read so far; use at least 3 direct quotes; *print out and bring to class next Tues*

## Module 4: Creation, Comparison, and the Bible

Tues 2/6 (face-to-face meeting): Creative Destruction in Genesis

1. Gen 1–6
2. Brief introduction: Carr, “The First Creation:”  
<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-first-creation/>
3. Levenson, “Creation and the Persistence of Evil,” 13–25
4. In-class quiz on Levenson and Carr

### WRITING WORKSHOP #1: READING PRIMARY TEXTS; WHAT IS CRITICAL-ACADEMIC ANALYSIS?

By Friday 2/9, at 11:55 pm: Introducing Daniel, **Begin Thinking About Paper Topics**

1. Short introduction: Hidalgo, “What is an Apocalypse?”  
<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/what-is-an-apocalypse/>
2. Dan 7–12
3. Hays, “The First Apocalypse (Dan 7–12),” 19–36

4. Watch lecture for writing workshop #1
5. Develop 2 paper-topic ideas, 1 paragraph each. Submit them to the online forum groups and complete peer-discussion exercise
6. Quiz

## Part 2: Millenarian Movements; Kinds of Ancient Judaism; Early Christian Apocalypticism

### Module 5: Ancient Religion? Diverse Forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Roman Religion

Tues 2/13 (face-to-face meeting): Early Christianity and Its Texts

1. Short introduction: Wright, “In What Ways is the Bible a Religious Text?” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/in-what-ways-is-the-bible-a-religious-text/>
2. Galatians
3. Gospel of Mark 1–4
4. In-class project on defining religion

By Fri 2/16 (online work): Types of Judaism, Types of Religion

1. Ehrman, *Introduction to the New Testament*, selections
2. Short introduction: Jassen, “Dead Sea Scrolls Community” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-dead-sea-scrolls-community/>
3. Read the *War Scroll*, Columns 1, 8 and 9 (you can read the whole thing, but only need to prepare these three columns).
4. Short introduction: Crawford, “The Other Bible from Qumran,” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-other-bible-from-qumran/>
5. 1 Enoch 1–32

### Module 6: Social and Historical Analysis of Apocalyptic Texts: Paul and the Gospels

Tues 2/20, Face-to-face meeting: Paul as Charismatic Prophet

1. 1 Thessalonians
2. Daniel Pals, “Max Weber,” selections
3. Weber, “Charismatic Authority”
4. Short introduction: Orlin, “Polytheistic Rome” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/polytheistic-rome>

By Fri 2/23 (online): What is a gospel? What is apocalyptic about it?

1. Short introduction: Rollens, “Did the Authors of the Canonical Gospels Know Each other?” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/did-the-authors-of-the-canonical-gospels-know-each-other/>
2. Matthew
3. Compare: 1) Mark 9:1 with Luke 9:27
  - a. 2) Mark 14:62 with Luke 22:69 and Acts 1:1–9
  - b. 3) Romans 6:4–5 with Col 2:12 (approx. 10 mins)
4. Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 20–28
5. Quiz

### Module 7: Historicizing Revelation: Gender, Colonial Power, and Violence

Tues 2/27 (face-to-face meeting): Revelation and Violence

1. Revelation (again)
2. Brief introduction: Warren, “Revelation and Rape Culture” <https://www.shilohproject.blog/sexual-violence-and-rape-culture-in-the-new-testament/>
3. Colleen Conway, “Masculinity and Violence in the Book of Revelation,” 159–174

By Fri 3/1 (online): Revelation and the Failure of Prophecy

1. Rev 13–24

2. Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 28–43

## Module 8: First Exam and Writing Workshop #2

Tues 3/5 (face-to-face meeting): First Exam

**\*\*Exam day! Prepare for the first exam, to be taken in-class during the 80 minute class period\*\***

### WRITING WORKSHOP #2: CONDUCTING RESEARCH, EVALUATING SOURCES, AND ATTRIBUTION AND CITATIONS

By Fri 3/8 (online): Weber and His Critics

1. Worsley, *Trumpet Shall Sound*, introduction and critique of Weber
2. Reread Max Weber, “Charismatic Authority”
3. Watch video lecture for writing workshop #2
4. Create 2 outlines of potential paper topics, one on a primary text we have read already (approx. 1 page each); the other on a topic of your choosing. Provide an annotated bibliography of at least 3 sources you might use. Post them to the online groups and bring them to class next Tues.
5. Quiz on Weber/Worsley (optionally, may be taken by the Monday after Spring Break).

**\*\*\*3/12–3/15, No Class, Spring Break\*\*\***

## Part 3: Millenarian Social Movements in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

### Module 9: Colonialism and Apocalypse (again?)

Tues 3/19 (face-to-face meeting): Charisma and Cargo

1. Read Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 11–48
2. Screen documentary on Jon Frum
3. Paper check-in: make an appt. to discuss your plan for the paper with Prof. Wasserman

By Friday 3/22 (online): What is an argument?

1. Ton, “What ever happened to Cargo Cults?”
2. Analyze two of the following three arguments: Ton, Worsley, and/or the Documentary filmmakers (as part of the writing workshop for next week); post to online forums.
3. Quiz on Ton

### Module 10: Colonial Conquest and Race

Tues 3/26 (face-to-face meeting): Ghost Dance

1. Gottshalk, *American Heretics: The History of Religious Intolerance*, 57–80
2. Screen clips on Ghost Dance from the documentary “the American West” (see library link); major clip runs from about 25:20-42; see also the discussion of land-grabs beginning around 10:20.

### WRITING WORKSHOP #3: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT? DEVELOPING A THESIS AND SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

By Friday 3/29 (online): “Ghost Dance”?

1. J. Graeber, “They Call it Ghost Dance,” 124–147
2. Quiz
3. Working towards a draft: write a thesis statement and outline; submit to online peer review groups.

### **Module 11: Race and Millenarian Prophecy: the Nation of Islam**

Tues 4/2 (face-to-face meeting): Nation of Islam and Apocalypticism

1. Edward Curtis, "Nation of Islam: Astrophysical Disaster, Genetic Engineering, UFOs, White Apocalypse, and Black Resurrection," 5–26

By Friday 4/5 (online): Race and Religion in American

1. Malcolm X, *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 154–205
2. 2Pac Shakur, "Words of Wisdom"
3. Quiz

**\*\*Paper drafts due to peer review groups\*\*\* (and the instructor) by 11:55 pm on Monday\*\***

### **Module 12: US Evangelical Cultures**

Tues 4/9 (face-to-face): Apocalyptic Producers and Consumers

1. Screen either *The Omega Code* or one of the Left Behind films
2. Short Video Interpretation oby Lion of Judah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-wbyVL28MA>
3. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind and US Evangelical Culture*, selections.
4. Locate a video or media that has to do with contemporary readings of Revelation, or predictions of apocalypse. Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining what it is and post this to your small-group as a kind of "apocalypse show-and tell."

By Fri 4/12 (online): Apocalypse and Christianity in the US

1. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, selections
2. Quiz
3. Prepare for the exam next week

### **Module 13: Apocalyptic Thought in US Evangelical Culture**

Tues 4/16 (face-to-face): Exam 2

\*\*\*In-class written exam (identifications and essays), 80 mins\*\*

Fri 4/19 (online): From "Fundamentalists" to Evangelicals

1. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, selections
2. Kingdom come (DC Graphic Novel)
3. Quiz
4. Peer review of paper-drafts due to peer-review groups
5. Paper check in: make an appt. with Prof. Wasserman to discuss your draft before the end of the semester (15–20 mins)

### **Module 14: Kingdom Come?**

Tues 4/23 (face-to-face): Evangelical Politics

1. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, selections
2. Kingdom come (DC Graphic Novel)
3. Robert M Price, "The Seven-Sealed Comic: The Book of Revelation in the Graphic Novel Kingdom Come" *Journal of Unification Studies* Vol. 13, 2012 - Pages 215-233.
4. In-Class presentations (group 1)

Fri 4/26: Wrap-up and Self-evaluation

1. Complete class participation self-study
2. In-class presentations (group 2) and peer review



**\*\*Papers due by Tues May 7 uploaded to the Canvas site by 5 pm\*\***