

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

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Office hours:  
Tuesday, 12–1:00, 5:30–7  
and by appointment

Rutgers University, Spring 2013  
Biological Science Building, 206  
T/Th 2:15–3:35

### Course Description

From the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to recent whispers about the year 2012, many texts and traditions speak of a time of global catastrophe and divine 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. Focusing especially on the earliest Christian literature, this course aims to understand the way ancient and modern apocalyptic traditions reflect the values, aspirations, and anxieties of their writers, editors, and audiences. The first part of the course aims to set biblical texts in their relevant political and mythic contexts and also considers the evidence for apocalyptic or millenarian movements associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the earliest forms of Christianity. The second part of the course shifts to consider how 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> century traditions appropriate the biblical texts in new contexts, especially relating them to the Cargo Cults of Melanesia and the Left Behind series of Christian thrillers.

This course will fulfill goals for the following writing intensive core requirements:

- a. (s2) Students will work at revision and peer-review of their writing in 2 ways: 1) in peer review of at least one short writing assignment 2) by engaging in peer editing of a short 6-8 page paper draft. These assignments will teach students to respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers and the instructor through successive drafts and revision.
- b. The daily reading responses, writing assignments, and group-work will teach students to communicate effectively in modes appropriate to the study of religion and apocalyptic movements and literature in particular.
- c. The midterm, final, and writing assignments will teach students to evaluate and critically assess sources for apocalyptic movements and literature and use appropriate conventions of attribution and citation.
- d. The midterm, final, and writing assignments focus on teaching students to 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 inform the instructor as soon as possible that you will not be able to attend class. In the case of more long-term illnesses or other issues, please provide a note from a health-care provider, or, if appropriate, from a dean. More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero grade for attendance.
2. Reading responses: for most classes, students will complete a reading response for the assigned readings, *post it to Sakai by 1 pm before the class meeting*, and come to class ready to engage in discussion.\* Reading responses should attempt to wrestle (as coherently as possible) with significant issues in the

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\*Please bring printed out copies of Pdf's to class.

reading; you may think of them as first drafts of very short essays or as reading reflections. Responses should normally be between 200–300 words and respond to one of the prompts on Sakai (normally you will have a choice of 2 or 3 options). You may opt to explore issues not raised in the prompts but must demonstrate a good-faith attempt to understand the readings, not to avoid reading or thinking carefully about the material. Responses will be graded based on whether they show adequate knowledge of the assigned readings and on the clarity of the writing (10 pts each); the lowest 6 grades will be dropped. If you miss class due to illness or emergency, you may submit the reading assignment to me directly via e-mail.

3. Other assignments: 2 additional assignments involving group work and in-class presentations (see below).
4. Exams: two exams covering the first second parts of the course. Both exams will consist of essays that can be prepared in advance but must be written in-class during the exam time.
5. Paper: One 6–8 page research paper on a topic to be selected by the student, due by 5 pm on Dec. 21 uploaded to Sakai and sent to the instructor via e-mail; students will also provide a draft of the paper in advance and work with other students in peer-review reading groups. The final paper should be a carefully argued, well-written essay with a clear and well-argued thesis and supporting arguments. The paper topics attached here build on coursework but develop particular issues further. Students may also choose to develop their own topic in consultation with the instructor.

Assignments will be weighted roughly as follows:

- a. Midterm 20%
- b. Final 20%
- c. Paper 25% (1<sup>st</sup> draft counts for 5%, to be graded mainly on effort)
- d. Reading Responses and other assignments 20%
- e. Attendance and participation 15%

Books required for purchase:

- 1) *Harper Collins Study Bible*, ed. Harold W. Attridge
- 2) David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*

### **Part 1: Creation and Battle in Ancient Mediterranean and West Asian Traditions**

Tues	9/3	Introduction to the Course
Thurs	9/5	Read: Gen 1–6:9; Dan 7; 1 Thess 4:13–5:11; Mark 13; Matt 25:31–46; Rev 1–4; 20–21 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
Tues	9/10	Myths and the Question of Defining “Myth” A non-biblical myth of creation: the Babylonian <i>Enuma Elish</i> (Sakai; read p. 15–17 [intro]; 37–59 [for the text] but skip 18–36) Bruce Lincoln, <i>Theorizing Myth</i> , 141–159 (Sakai)
Thurs	9/12	A Greek Myth of Creation, Battle, and Kingship Hesiod’s <i>Theogony</i> (Sakai, pp. 61–89)

Scholars attach the name Hesiod to the *Theogony* (and to the *Works and Days*, read for 9/7) but these works more accurately compile a body of Greek poetry that likely dates to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries b.c.e. that has no single author.

*Instead of the normal online reading response, write a short 200–300 word analysis if Theogony that applies Lincoln’s theory of myth to some text, them, or motif of the*

Theogony. Print out and bring the reading response to class for in-class peer review during the 1<sup>st</sup> 10-20 minutes of class.

- Tues 9/17 Biblical Accounts and Their Influences  
Genesis 1–12:3  
Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 1–25 (Sakai)
- Thurs 9/19 More Creation, Destruction, and Decline  
1 Enoch 1–36 (Sakai)  
Hesiod, *Works and Days* (a Greek myth of creation and decline), lines 1–425 (Sakai, p. 23–35)  
Glasson, *Greek Influences in Jewish Eschatology*, 69–73 (Sakai)
- Tues 9/24 Heavenly and Earthly Politics in Daniel  
Daniel 7–12  
Collins, *Commentary on Daniel*, 323–324 (on Dan 7); 402–404 (on Dan 10–12); Sakai  
Clifford, “Near Eastern Myth,” 29–35 (Sakai)
- Thurs 9/26 An Apocalyptic “Community” at Qumran?  
*Rule of the Community* (Sakai)  
*War Scroll*, columns 1; 10–19 (Sakai)  
Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 1–11 (Sakai)
- Tues 10/1 Text, Canon, and the Early Christian Texts (the Letters of Paul)  
1 Thessalonians  
Ehrman, “Do We Have the Texts of the New Testament?” 487–500 (Sakai)  
Ehrman, “The World of Early Christian Tradition,” 29–47 (Sakai)
- Thurs 10/3 Paul and Earliest Christianity  
Galatians  
K. Stendahl, “Call Rather Than Conversion,” 1–23 (sakai)  
Recommended (Ehrman, “The Jewish Context,” 49–56, Sakai); for those who have not taken Rel 202, this is required.
- Tues 10/8 Paul and the Corinthians  
1 Corinthians  
Castelli, “Theoretical Frameworks: Foucault and Power,” 35–58 (Sakai)
- Thurs 10/10 Romans 1–11; 1 Cor 15 (again); also compare Romans 6:4–5 with Col 2:12  
Stowers, “What is Pauline Participation?” 1–14 (Sakai)
- Tues 10/15 Apocalyptic Thought in the Gospels  
Gospel of Mark  
Compare also: Mark 9:1 with Luke 9:27; Mark 14:62 with Luke 22:69 and Acts 1:1–9
- Thurs 10/17 Revelation 1–12  
Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Book of Revelation,” 384–412 (Sakai)
- Tues 10/22 Revelation 12–22  
Jan Willem van Henten, “Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12–13,” 181–203 (Sakai)
- Thurs 10/24 First Exam

## Part 2: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Millenarianism

Tues 10/29 Screening: *The Late, Great Planet Earth*

Group activity analyzing use of Biblical passages in th film. Students will split into groups and (working together) reflect on some aspect of the film's use of biblical literature. Students must post their own 200–300 word responses to the Sakai forums and then respond to at least 2 other students. The first post must be completed by 9 pm by 10/30; responses by 9 pm, 10/31.

Thurs 10/31 Charismatic Authority and Religion  
Max Weber, "Charismatic Authority," 358–373 from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Sakai)  
Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, ix–xxxix (Sakai)

Tues 11/5 Charisma and Cargo Cults  
Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 11–48

Note on group work for 11/7: students will split into 4 groups that will focus on Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 221–256 and on the following movements:

Group 1: Early movements in New Guinea, 49–74

Group 2: Vailala Madness, 75–92

Group 3: The Continuity of the Cults Buka, 114–122 (short but complex!)

Group 4: From Millennium to Politics, 170–194

Students must work in groups to read, discuss, and outline group readings for 11/7 and to discuss the ways these movements may reflect Worsley's broader analysis. You should especially think about the following issues raised by Worsley:

1. What kinds of socio-economic issues (discussed in 221–56) set the conditions for the emergence of the movements explored in your groups?
2. Worsley asks "Why do these cults take a religious form?" and insists "the answer lies in the divisions in this kind of society" (237). What does he mean by this and how does it apply to the particular movements explored in your group?
3. Worsley argues that the Cargo Cults tend to foster new forms of morality and social-identifications. In what ways might this apply to the particular movements explored in your group?

Between 10/31 and 11/7 all students must post their own proposed outlines of the Group-readings on the Sakai discussion forums and respond to other members of their group; the aim will be to arrive at a single outline to be sent to Prof. Wasserman on 11/4 (by noon) and to be distributed to the class by Prof. Wasserman. Students will be graded based on their responsiveness to others and level of engagement with the project. These projects will provide the basis for essay questions on the exam.

Thurs 11/7 Cargo Cults: Group Presentations  
All students must read: Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 221–56 (Sakai)

In class we will devote time to discussion of *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 221–56 and 10–15 minutes each to group outlines (see 11/5).

No reading responses due but you will want to read *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 221–56 carefully.

- Tues 11/12 Jonestown  
David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*, xvii–11, 51–78
- Thurs 11/14 Jonestown  
Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 79–128
- Tues 11/19 Jonestown and Its Aftermath  
Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide* 129–169
- Thurs 11/21 Apocalypse, Crisis, and Global Capitalism  
Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture* 12 (2000) 291–343 (Sakai)
- Tues 11/26 In-class screening: Left Behind
- Paper drafts due to working groups and to Prof. Wasserman by 9 pm via e-mail; no late submissions. Peer responses are due by 9 pm Dec. 13 (last day of reading period), sent to other members of the group and prof. Wasserman via e-mail.
- Thurs 11/28 No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday
- Tues 12/3 Left Behind  
Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 13–37; 106–129 (Sakai)
- Thurs 12/5 Left Behind  
Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 175–187 (Sakai)  
Jim Jones, “Eternal Warfare: Violence on the Mind of American Apocalyptic Christianity,” in *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, 91–103 (Sakai)
- Tues 12/10 Second Exam
- Fri 12/13 Responses to drafts due to working groups and Prof. Wasserman (via e-mail) by 9 pm
- Sat 12/21 Final papers due, uploaded to Sakai by 5 pm and e-mailed to the instructor; unreadable files will not be accepted. Extensions may be granted in unusual circumstances but only with advanced permission.

### **Paper Topics**

1. Using the theory of myth developed in the Lincoln reading and in Debra Scoggins Ballentine, “Theorizing Myth in Ancient West Asian Studies,” 1–31, relate these proposals to at least one of the following: *Theogony*, *Gilgamesh*, *Anzu*, or the *Baal Cycle*.
2. Drawing on Mark Smith’s *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 167–178 (a brief but complex chapter), explore Smith’s argument about the ways that Genesis and Dan 7 draw on, change, and adapt motifs familiar from texts such as the *Enuma Elish* and the *Baal Cycle*. You should draw on at least one primary text not assigned as reading for the course and on one other scholarly work he cites.

3. Use Amar Annus, “Ninurta and the Son of Man,” 7–17 (a short but complex essay) and Collins, *Commentary*, 72–89 to explore the “son of man” figure in Dan 7:52–87 and a subset other literature discussed by these writers (e.g. from the Epic of Anzu; Qumran texts; titles for Jesus in the Gospels, etc.).
4. Explore some aspect of the way later Jewish and Christian interpreters use the image of the “son of man,” discussed in Adela Collins, “The History of Interpretation,” 90–123. You may choose to focus on a subset of the literature that is of particular interest to you.
5. Explore Collins’ arguments about messianism and eschatological war in Qumran literature, using *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 71–109. You should focus on evaluating Collins’ arguments with reference to the most important primary texts he uses (where relevant, you should read these texts independently).
6. Critically analyze Stowers, “What is Pauline Participation?” (a course reading) and compare it to the very different approach taken by Hays, “What Is ‘Real Participation in Christ’? A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline Soteriology,” 336–351. Pay particular attention to the different interests and methodologies they use and the ways these shape their very different interpretation of the primary texts. Note also Stowers’ direct criticism of Hays’ essay.
7. Analyze Elizabeth Castelli’s argument about the use of imitation motifs in Hellenistic literature and in Paul (*Imitating Paul*, 59–117). You should focus on evaluating the strengths (and possible weaknesses) of her interpretation and pay particular attention to the most important primary texts she uses to advance her arguments.
8. Critically evaluate the arguments of Richard Horsely, “Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 and 2 Corinthians,” 72–102 with particular attention to his theory of imperial rule and the way he applies this theories to the primary texts.
9. Explore John Gager’s interpretation of early Christian movements as types of “Millenarian movements” in, *Kingdom and Community*, 20–65. You should evaluate his theory carefully and explore the way he applies this theory to one or two early Christian texts.
10. Explore the arguments about the “Q-source” for Jesus teachings in the gospels of Matt and Luke that suggest a strata of Jesus teaching may have been non-apocalyptic. Use John Kloppenborg, “Symbolic Eschatology and the Apocalypticism of Q,” 287–306 and at least one other scholarly essay that he discusses in this article. You may also want to consider the critical responses to his books on Q by Cameron, “The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Response to John S. Kloppenborg,” 351–354 and Koester “The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Response to John S Kloppenborg,” 345–49.
11. Explore Johnson-DeBaufre’s arguments about the Q-source and the construction of early Christian identity in *Jesus Among Her Children, Q, Eschatology, and the Construction of Christian Origins*. You should focus on p. 1–25 (her introduction) and evaluate her arguments about at least two of the texts in the subsequent book (e.g. Q 7:18–35; Q 11:14–26). You should also draw on at least one other essay she uses or cites that is of particular interest to you.
12. Drawing on Steven Friesen, “Sarcasm in Revelation 2–3: Churches, Christians, True Jews, and Satanic Synagogues,” 127–146; and Paul Duff, “The ‘Synagogue of Satan’: Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John,” 147–169, explore some aspect of the “synagogue of Satan” of particular interest to you. You should focus on evaluating the strength of these arguments with reference to the most important primary texts they use (which you should read/consider independently as relevant to your paper).
13. Critically evaluate the arguments of Barr in “The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterizing Jesus in John’s Apocalypse,” 205–220. You should focus on evaluating the strengths (and possible weaknesses) of his arguments with particular attention to the most important primary texts he uses (which you should read independently). You should also use at least one other scholarly essay that he cites that is of particular interest to you.
14. Drawing on Koester’s overview of the diverse interpretations of the Book of Revelation in ancient, medieval, and modern contexts (*Revelation and the End of All Things*, 1–40), choose at least one later interpreter and further explore their appropriation of the text, imagery, and ideologies of Revelation. Where relevant, you should also do independent research on the primary texts.

15. Using the essay by Otto Ton, “What Ever Happened to Cargo Cults?” 82–102 and one or two other essays that he cites, explore some aspect of the interpretation of the Cargo Cults of particular interest to you.
16. Explore a subset of the essays in Barker, ed. *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond* on morality and reciprocity in the Cargo Cults. E.g. use Barker (a helpful overview) and then relate this bigger picture to Robbins excellent essay. You will want to focus in on one or two particular arguments, interpretation, or subsets of issues of particular interest to you.
17. Drawing on the Comaroffs, “Millennial Capitalism,” further explore a topic or argument developed here that is of particular interest to you. You should draw on at least two other interpreters they cite that are relevant to your interests.
18. Drawing on Worsley’s work on the socio-economic conditions for millenarian movements, explore Norman Cohn’s work on millenarian movements among the “disoriented poor” in the Medieval period in his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. You should read his broader analysis in 37–70 and then focus on one or two of the many figures and movements he treats in this work (e.g. Peter the Hermit, Joachim of Fiore, etc.).
19. Hall writes: “because of culturally programmed failure to learn from Jonestown, cultural opponents of David Koresh could invoke and rework narratives about mass suicide form Jonestown and bring them to bear on the Branch Davidians in ways that proved central to how the tragedy at Mt. Carmel unfolded” (46). Drawing on his work in *Apocalypse Observed*, 1–43 (on Jonestown); 144–175 (on Waco) explain what he means here and outline the supporting arguments he offers.
20. Compare some aspect of the interpretations of Jonestown in Hall, “Apocalypse at Jonestown,” 15–43 and in Chidester’s work that is of particular interest to you. Pay particular attention to their use of theoretical models and their application of these models to different aspects of Jonestown.
21. Drawing on the course readings by Frykholm, Lee Quinby, “The Unsettling of the Fundamentalist Mindset: Shifts in Apocalyptic Beliefs in Contemporary Conservative Christianity,” 120–135, and at least one other source they cite, explore some aspects of their arguments about religious and gender identity in apocalyptic forms of Christianity. Pay particular attention to the subtle and complex ways that they depict evangelicalism and conservative/fundamentalist Christianity.
22. Explore some aspects of the way Lee Quinby treats Christian apocalypticism in her book *Millennial Seduction: A Skeptic Confronts American Apocalyptic Christianity*. You should pay particular attention to her feminist approach (outlined in the introduction) and focus on one or two later chapters that are of particular interest to you.
23. Explore the apocalypticism of Christian Zionism using Spector, *Evangelical and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. You should treat his overview of evangelicalism in (p. 36–49) and relate this to at least one argument in the subsequent chapters, e.g. on the interpretation of biblical texts, notions of war against “the Arab enemy,” or to Middle Eastern politics under George W. Bush. Pay particular attention to his careful use of data to construct a complex picture of evangelical thought and beliefs.
24. Explore the psychology of religiously motivated violence in Jim Jones, *The Blood that Cries Out from the Earth*. You should especially focus on his theorization in “Religion and Terrorism: The Need for a Multidimensional Model,” 3–28 and then explore his application of this theory in the subsequent chapters on American apocalyptic Christianity, Jihadism, and Aum Shinrikyo (you may focus on only one). You should also evaluate at least one of the other sources he cites critically in the “Religion and Terrorism” chapter.