



Apocalypse Now? Jewish and Christian Movements and the End of Time (01:840:305:01/02)

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M/W 1:10-2:30 (section 1) SC-205
M/W 5:35-6:55 (section 2) CDL-109

Course Description

From the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to prophecy-like warnings from today's supposed pundits, many texts and leaders threaten a time of global catastrophe and divine judgment. Through appreciation of the religious motivations behind these perspectives, we will seek to understand these claims as products of diverse social-settings and cultural environments. Focusing especially on Jewish and Christian literature, this course aims to understand how ancient and modern apocalyptic traditions reflect the values, aspirations, and anxieties of their writers, editors, and earliest audiences. The first part of the course sets Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature within relevant social, political, and mythic contexts, considers the evidence for apocalyptic or millenarian movements associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the origins of Christianity, and explores relevant historical and social-scientific methods of study. In the second part of the course, we will shift to consider how 19th and 20th century traditions appropriate and re-imagine the thought and imagery of the biblical texts, especially in recent millenarian cults 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 3 ways: 1) in collectively producing and editing an analysis of a film's use of biblical traditions; 2) in peer review of at least one short writing assignment 3) by engaging in peer editing of a final 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 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 paper, 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 paper, and writing assignments focus on teaching students to analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Course Organization and Policies

No use of computers or smart phones is permitted in class. If you have a special need, please consult the instructor.

Students should familiarize themselves with Rutgers' policies on academic integrity and plagiarism: <http://www.academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/> . All work must be your own, and violations will lead to academic discipline and potential failure of the course. Whenever you use someone else's work or argument, even if not quoting, you must cite it. When in doubt, always cite.

Bring a hard copy Bible (no electronic Bibles) to class every day.

A word on studying religion

Studying religion explores matters that are deeply significant and sensitive to many. Be assured that no one will be judged or graded on the basis of his/her personal beliefs or the degree to which these beliefs align with those of the professor. Students are encouraged to express their views honestly throughout the course. Please do not hesitate to approach the professor with any questions or concerns you may have. Classroom conversation will be conducted with respect in a spirit of kindness and humility.

Requirements for the Course:

1. Attendance and participation: Regular attendance and participation is a significant part of your grade. In the case of illness or unavoidable conflicts, please inform the instructor *beforehand* that you will not be able to attend class. Only those absences with such prior notification will be considered excused (barring emergency). In the case of long-term illnesses or other issues, please provide a note from a health-care provider, or, if appropriate, from a dean. More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for attendance, and excessive excused absences will inevitably affect this component (particularly through missed quizzes).
2. Email: Students must maintain a working e-mail account at all times and check this regularly for syllabus updates and announcements. When responses are required, please respond in a timely manner.
3. Daily discussion questions: Each student must come to each class session prepared to share a critical question from the day's reading that can stimulate a brief class discussion.
4. Daily quizzes: On most days there will be a short quiz based on the material in the reading and/or lecture. The lowest three quiz grades will be dropped, and *if you are absent (even if excused) you will receive a zero*.
5. Midterm exam: Essay exam covering the first part of the course, given on March 27. It will consist of questions circulated in advance. Student essays can be prepared beforehand but must be only written in class during the 80-minute exam time. These will be graded on writing (grammar, mechanics, clarity), and content (accurate and in-depth understanding of material, persuasiveness, clarity).
6. Final paper (2000-2400 words) with peer review: A paper on a topic to be selected by the student, **due by 5 pm on May 5 (section 2) or 5pm on May 9 (section 1)**. By 5pm on the due date it must be sent to the instructor as an e-mail; unreadable attachments will not be accepted, and five points will be deducted at the beginning of each 30-minute increment papers are late (e.g., 1-29 minutes late=5 pt deduction). The "Questions to consider" for each session provide potential launch points, and the end of the syllabus contains prompts for a range of paper topics that build on coursework. Students may choose to develop their own topic, but this must be approved well in advance by the instructor. The final paper should be a proofread, carefully argued, well-written essay with a clear thesis and properly cited supporting arguments. Make your thesis statement the last sentence of the first paragraph and underline it. Excessive typos (i.e., more than a couple) will result in point deductions.

Before the final draft, however, students must submit an outline and first draft, as well as peer review-editing another student's draft:

*Students will submit an outline AND 1600-2400-word first draft via email by 5pm on April 20, which will count for 5% of the final grade (=1/8 of paper grade). This will be graded mainly on effort.

**On April 20, students will be paired together randomly and provide substantial peer review for each other by 5pm on April 28 (worth another 5%).

Peer review of another student's first draft entails 1) proofreading for typographical and grammatical errors,

2) marginal comments and suggestions for improving style and argumentation, and 3) a paragraph (<150 words) assessing the paper's strengths and areas for potential improvement. Do not include a grade, and always make your critiques constructive. You may do peer review on a hard copy of your partner's paper or via electronic comments, e.g., MS Word (do not use Adobe comments as they cannot be viewed without certain software). Peer review – i.e., your partner's first draft with your comments – must be returned to your partner turned in to the professor via email or hard copy by 5pm April 28.

Assignments will be weighted roughly as follows:

- a. Midterm 25% (possible essay questions will be distributed in advance)
- b. Final Paper 40% (1st draft + outline 5%, peer review of another's first draft 5%, final draft 30%)
- c. Quizzes 20%
- d. Attendance and participation 15%

Books required for purchase:

- 1) David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (rev. ed. 2003)
- 2) You must own a *hard copy* modern translation of the Bible (NRSV, RSV, NIV, ESV, NASB). Please bring a physical (not electronic) Bible to class every day.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS

*Readings other than biblical materials will be posted to the course's Sakai website.

Creation, Battle, and Myth in Ancient Mediterranean and West Asian Traditions

Wed 1/18 Introduction to the Course

Mon 1/23 Read: Gen 1:1–6:9; Dan 7; 1 Thess 4:13–5:11; Mark 13; Matt 25:31–46; Rev 1–4

The above surveys some of the most famous biblical texts about creation and destruction. Pay attention to their similarities and differences. (Differences are often just as important as similarities.) Take notes as you read, especially marking issues that seem clear, confusing, or difficult to understand.

Questions to consider:

1. How does Genesis 1–2 seem to imagine the relationships between God and the world, as compared with Dan 7, Mark 13, or Rev 20–21? (Compare Genesis to at least one other text.)
2. How do these texts imagine divine warrior figures? E.g. how do the texts describe them and how do they relate to other divine or human beings?
3. How do these texts envision the gods, divine beings, or the world of divinity generally? E.g. if you had only these texts to go on, how would you explain the main features of the gods to an alien from outer-space?

Wed 1/25 Myths and the Question of Defining “Myth”

An extrabiblical myth of creation: the Babylonian Enuma Elish (Sakai; read p. 15–17 [intro]; 37–59 [for the text] but skip 18–36)
Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 141–159 (Sakai)

The Enuma Elish is the Babylonian epic of creation and of Marduk's rise to power. This text is helpful for understanding ancient myths about creation and battle; although important in its own right, it has often been used to explore similar patterns in biblical and non-biblical

apocalypses. The Lincoln reading is a theoretical/interpretative piece that begins with an overview of certain important 20th century theories of myth and then develops an alternative and applies this theory to some interesting examples. Try not to get bogged down in the first part; it is important to understand that our theories and interpretations do not come from nowhere, but you should focus on his theory and his application of this theory to myths drawn from Tain Bo, Pindar, Plato, and Empedocles.

Questions to consider:

1. Interpreters have often characterized the Enuma Elish as a myth about creation as well as about divine kingship and rule (i.e. the eventual rise of Marduk as king of the gods). In what ways does the text make Marduk central?
2. What are the most characteristic features of the gods in the Enuma Elish? How do they relate to one another and to the cosmos as a whole? Can you see any hints of how this might be interpreted as “taxonomy in narrative form,” to use Lincoln’s term?
3. What does Lincoln mean by theorizing myth as “a taxonomy” in narrative form? Try to develop a clear, concise statement of his theory. You may quote directly from his text at times but do not over-use direct quotes; you should be trying to understand the theory by putting it into your own words.
4. Discuss the most important features of Lincoln’s interpretations of the myths of Táin Bó, Pindar, Plato, and Empedocles (consider at least 2).

Mon 1/30

****No class meeting. Bring hard copy of response (below) to class Wednesday.**

A Greek Myth of Creation, Battle, and Kingship
Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Sakai, pp. 61–89)

Scholars attach the name Hesiod to the *Theogony* (and to the *Works and Days*) but these works more accurately compile a body of Greek poetry that likely dates to the 8th or 7th centuries bce and may have no single author.

Analysis/response: *Write a short 200–300-word analysis of Theogony that applies Lincoln’s theory of myth to some text, theme, or motif of the Theogony. Print out and bring analysis to Wednesday class for in-class peer review during the first 20-30 minutes of class.*

Wed 2/1

Biblical Accounts and their Influences

Genesis 1–12:3

Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 1–25

Chapters 1–12:3 of Genesis give an account of creation, decline, and restoration in various forms, e.g. the expulsion of Adam and Eve; their descendants; Noah and the flood; and the selection of Abraham, who will become the patriarch of Israel. The Levenson readings understand these myths, especially the creation account and the flood, in light of other ancient near eastern myths; he also argues that many of these motifs are relevant to other biblical texts (e.g. Isa 51, 54; Ps 74, 82, 104; Job 40). As you read, try to pay particular attention to his careful ways of relating the biblical and non-biblical materials, especially his concerns about understanding the biblical texts as evidence for some uniform, linear, and unambiguous theology.

Questions to consider:

1. In what ways is Genesis similar to and different from myths about Baal and Marduk, according to Levenson? (You may choose only one or two of the most important texts or issues for comparison.)

2. According to Levenson, what is the “combat myth” and how does it influence the creation story of Genesis and at least 2 other later biblical texts he discusses (e.g. Isa 51, 54; Ps 74, 82, 104; Job 40)?
3. Comment on some aspect of the way gender/sex and lineage/reproduction function in this text. E.g. To what extent does the text make Eve responsible for the expulsion from the garden? Does the text attribute responsibility to gender/sex? In what ways does the text make lineage and reproduction important? (You can focus on the expulsion of Adam and Eve if you choose but should also discuss issues that arise later in the text.)

Mon 2/6

Jewish and Norse non-Canonical Myths: Fallen Watchers, Giants, the Flood, Dying Gods
 The Book of the Watchers: 1 Enoch 1–36 (Sakai)
 “Baldrs Draumar,” “Tegnér’s Drapa”; Osiris myth (*Pyramid Texts*) (Sakai)

This section of 1 Enoch is likely written around 300 bce by an unknown author and tells the story of the fall of some heavenly beings (Watchers) and its results for world and cosmic history. The text is occasionally repetitive and confusing, in part because it weaves together at least two different traditions about the Watchers.

Questions to consider:

1. Compare how the writers of 1 Enoch and the Norse and Egyptian myths characterize the world of divinity. How do they portray the major divine characters, e.g. what are their personalities like and what powers do they have? Select a few important features rather than describing every aspect of the gods in these texts.
2. How does the picture of God in 1 Enoch compare with that of Gen 1-12? How do the gods in the Norse and Egyptian myths compare with the God described in Genesis?

Wed 2/8

Daniel 7–12

Daniel is the only apocalyptic text found in the canon of the Hebrew Bible. It contains strange visions, monstrous creatures, and sometimes elusive allegories for historical events in the author’s time, especially the events surrounding the Maccabean revolt (167 bce). The larger political-religious history of the preceding centuries is important for understanding this revolt. In outline, Judeans had a period of monarchic self-rule in Palestine that ended decisively with the Babylonian exile in 586 bce and the destruction of their (only) temple. The Jews were eventually allowed to return and rebuild the Temple (roughly 70 years later), but they never achieved self-rule again except for the ca. 100-year rule under the Hasmoneans (ca. 164 bce–63 bce). The Jews in Palestine are a subject people of a series of larger empires, first the Persians (who conquer the Babylonians and allow the Jews to rebuild the Temple), the Greeks (after Alexander the Great, Judea falls under two competing Greek empires, the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid), and the Roman (beginning in 63 bce). The Maccabean revolt was a successful revolt in the 160s bce against foreign rule (specifically a Seleucid ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes IV), led by Judas Maccabeus in response to the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem. Certain Hellenizing reforms under Antiochus seem to have led to the revolt, but this was sparked by something that Antiochus did in the temple which made it impure (perhaps sacrificing a pig on the altar) and therefore meant that sacrifices and offerings to God could not continue. The revolt was successful and in 164 the temple was rededicated (Hanukkah). Judea, for the next 100 or so years, was ruled by a Jewish monarchy descended from the Maccabeans known as the Hasmoneans.

Questions to consider:

1. Who does the “one like the son of man” seem to be? What is the role of the archangel Michael in Dan 12?
2. How does Dan 7-12 compare to previous “myths” we have read?

Mon 2/13 An Apocalyptic “Community” at Qumran?
Rule of the Community (aka 1QS or *Serekh ha-Yahad*) (Sakai)

The *Community Rule* is one of many texts found in the caves of Qumran, these texts being called Dead Sea Scrolls. The collection (and this text) appears to be part of a library belonging to an apocalyptic separatist group living in the desert on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The settlement probably dates from ca.159 bce to 70 ce, when it is destroyed in the Roman-Jewish war. (The war was an uprising of the Jews against Roman Rule that resulted in the defeat of the rebels, the burning of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the temple). The library contains copies of biblical texts, commentaries on them, and original texts such as the Community Rule and War Scroll. Among the original texts scholars have noticed certain prominent ideas such as their opposition to the Jerusalem temple and specifically the legitimacy of its calendar and priests. This is especially important because the Jerusalem temple was the very center of Jewish religious practice. Many of the texts suggest that at least some of the leaders expected an imminent apocalypse, that they focused authority on a particular leader of the community (the teacher of righteousness), and expected two Messiahs—a military figure and an interpreter (probably the teacher of righteousness).

Questions to consider:

1. Pay attention to the admissions process for new members. How does the admission process work, according to 1QS? What do you make of the intensive examination this involves and the giving up of property?
2. How does this text imagine the community members spending their time? What kinds of events organize and regulate time and social relationships?

Wed 2/15 Deuterocanonical Jewish Apocalyptic and Wisdom Literature
 4 Ezra 3:1-5:20; 11:1-12:51 (4 Ezra=2 Esdras 3-14; found in some study Bibles)
 Wisdom of Solomon 13-14

The book known as 4 Ezra is equivalent to chapters 3-14 of 2 Esdras, the latter being found in the apocrypha (books in neither the New or Old Testaments) of the Bible in some Christian traditions. The author assumes the identity of Ezra after the destruction of the first Jewish temple by the Babylonians (587 bce), but the text has been dated to the years following the destruction of the second temple by the Romans (70 ce). Wisdom of Solomon also appears in the apocrypha and is typically dated to the 2nd or 1st century bce, or possibly the 1st century ce.

Questions to consider:

1. For whom does Ezra seem to be speaking? If the author writes after the destruction of the second temple, why does he assume a fictional identity and setting?
2. People tend to distinguish wisdom literature from apocalyptic literature, sometimes sharply. How do the worldview and purposes of these two works compare? If the two authors met and spoke, what would they argue about, and what would they agree on?

Mon 2/20 Text, Canon, and Early Christianity
 1 Thessalonians
 Ehrman, “Do We Have the Texts of the New Testament?” 487–500
 Ehrman, “The Greco-Roman World of Early Christian Tradition,” 29–47

Questions to consider:

1. What does Ehrman mean by “textual criticism of the Greek New Testament”? E.g. what are the problems that TC tries to solve? How does it try to solve them?
2. What is the NT canon?
3. What are the most important features of Greco-Roman religion, according to Ehrman, and why does he use the term “Greco-Roman” in this way?

Wed 2/22

An Apocalyptic Type of Judaism: 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.

The letters of Paul are our earliest source for the movement that becomes Christianity. The Christian tradition believes that Christianity begins with the Jesus of the canonical Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke, and John). Yet the Gospels were likely composed 40-65 years after Jesus’ death, in the wake of the catastrophic Roman-Jewish war (66-73 ce). On the other hand, all of Paul’s letters pre-date the war. Many scholars hold only 7 or 8 of the canonical letters to come from Paul himself, but these remain multiple texts from a single early Christian leader working in the decades just after Jesus’ death. The letters say little about Jesus’ life and teachings but rather address groups or churches of mostly Gentile Christ-followers scattered around the ancient Mediterranean in cities like Corinth, Thessalonica, and Rome.

Many hold 1 Thessalonians to be the earliest letter by Paul with the others being written in the 50s ce (and possibly the early 60s). Jesus died around 30 ce, while the gospels (with the possible exception of Mark) all post-date the Jewish war in 66–73 ce that destroys the central institution of Judaism, the Temple. Paul is famously known as the apostle to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, and a major concern of some of his letters – esp. Galatians and Romans – is to negotiate the inclusion of non-Jews into the chosen people of God.

Questions to consider:

1. According to 1 Thess, how does Paul view his work as a leader, and what are the new beliefs he claims to have taught the Thessalonians? Can you get a basic sense of his core teachings about God and Christ?
2. What is the significance of the coming wrath in general? According to 1 Thess 5, what are his expectations about when Christ will be returning? To what extent does 2 Thess 1–2 seem to tell a different story? (Note, many scholars think that 2 Thess may be pseudonymous, but the more interesting question is whether the apocalyptic views in the two letters are coherent.)
3. What is the difference between a “call” and a “conversion” according to Stendahl? You should be able to clearly define these terms. Does Gal 1-2 suggest a call or conversion? (This reading will be important for the exam.)
4. Gal 1–2 is the earliest source we have for understanding the leadership of the earliest Christian movement. What do Paul’s brief comments here suggest about the early movement?

Mon 2/27

1 Corinthians

Questions to consider:

1. 1 Corinthians discusses a (dizzying) range of issues that Paul seeks to address. What is the logic of Paul’s arguments about factionalism, wisdom, the Spirit, etc.?

2. Although Paul explores important aspects of the apocalyptic future in 1 Cor 15, esp. 15:23–28, how do expectations of Christ’s imminent return shape other parts of the letter? E.g. see language about the “day of Christ” or think about the way the letter evokes time and immediate expectations to discuss Paul’s rivals or ethical norms.

Wed 3/1 Romans 1–11; 1 Cor 15 (again)

Questions to consider:

1. Romans is Paul’s most famous, difficult, and theologically dense letter. Where do you find apocalyptic ideas coming out most directly (focus on chs. 1-11) and how do they seem to be shaping his thinking? E.g. in what ways do temporal expectations (e.g. the broad unfolding of a divine plan for history) shape Paul’s claims in chaps. 1–2, 4, 6 or 8?
2. What writer/text does Paul most sound like, from among those we have read?

Mon 3/3

Apocalyptic Thought in the Gospels

Gospel of Mark

Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 105–112 (on the Synoptic Problem, Sakai)

This is the basic timeline for the gospels and Paul: first the letters of Paul (possibly the only NT texts prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 that survive), then Mark writing during or just after the war and the destruction of the Temple, then later Matthew and Luke (who both know and use Mark’s gospel plus some other material). Mark is the earliest gospel but lacks many famous portions of the gospel narratives and teaching, esp. a birth and infancy story about Jesus’ early life and large chunks of teaching material like the Sermon on the Mount.

Questions to consider:

1. The motifs of secrecy, misunderstanding, and abandonment appear prominent in the gospel of Mark, but are sometimes omitted in Luke and Matthew (see the Ehrman reading for discussions of the relationships between these texts). How do these motifs shape the broader image of who Jesus was and what he did?
2. What are Jesus’ teachings about the end time (see esp. Mark 13)? Are there other texts in Mark where these expectations appear on the horizon?
3. If you were going to make a film out of the Gospel of Mark, what would be the challenges of doing so?

Wed 3/8

Jesus and myth

Luke 10:25-37; Luke 15:11-32; Acts 1-2; Acts 17

Tolkien, “Mythopoeia”; Lewis, “Myth Became Fact”

Compare also: Mark 9:1 with Luke 9:27; Mark 14:62 with Luke 22:69 and Acts 1:1–9

Questions to consider:

1. In what ways do Jesus’ teachings about the end time shape the images of Jesus in Luke? E.g. in what contexts do such expectations appear on the horizon?
2. Scholars have often noted a shift away from imminent expectations of Christ’s return in the gospel of Luke and Acts. Judging from the above passages, does this view seem to have merit?
3. What about Jesus’ words or actions in Luke could be considered mythic?
4. Do the pieces by Tolkien and Lewis resonate with the Gospels or other texts we have read?

****Spring Recess 3/11 – 3/19 (no class)****

Mon 3/20 Revelation 1-12

As you read Revelation, you may find it helpful to consult the introduction in a study Bible as well as the footnotes. Here is a brief outline that you may find helpful:

I. Introduction and letters to the 7 churches (1–3)

II. What is to come: chapters 4–22

- o prophet taken up to heaven through window in sky
 - § God worshipped by hundreds of heavenly beings
 - § scroll scene: no one able to open, then lamb opens
- o 7 seals: each seal broken brings catastrophe: war, famine, death
 - § 6th seal: sun turns black, moon turns to blood, stars fall
 - § 7th seal: silence before 7 more disasters
- o 7 angels and trumpets: natural disasters, dreaded beasts, terrible suffering
 - § 7th trumpet: beginning of end; coming of antichrists and false prophets
- o 7 more angels with bowl of wrath: disease, misery, and death
- o whore of Babylon destroyed in chap. 17 (18–19, rejoicing in heaven)
- o final cosmic battle between Christ and the antichrists (thrown into lake of fire)
 - § Satan imprisoned in a pit
- o Christ and saints rule for 1000 years followed by judgment
- o new heaven and earth, new Jerusalem

Questions to consider:

1. What are the major concerns raised in the opening letters to the 7 churches? How does the writer characterize his relationship with the implied readers of the text? How do these letters fit (or not fit) with the subsequent texts?
2. What kinds of persons can you imagine writing this text or being interested in hearing/reading it?
3. If you were going to make this into a movie, what might be some of the challenges?

Wed 3/22

Revelation (reprise)

Jan Willem van Henten, “Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12–13,” 181–203

Questions to consider:

1. According to van Henten, what are the potential problems of other interpretations of Rev 12–13? How does his alternative attempt to fix these problems?
2. Evaluate the strength of van Henten’s basic argument (or set of arguments), especially focusing on how he tries to shed light on the text of Rev 12–13.
3. What is “imperial ideology” according to van Henten, and in what ways might this be important for understanding Revelation?

Mon 3/27

Midterm Exam – Essay exam responding to questions circulated in advance. Students may prepare notes beforehand but must write the entire essay during the 80-min class period. The questions will be focused on primary texts (i.e., biblical and apocryphal texts, *Enuma Elish*, *Theogony*, *Rule of the Community* [=1QS], Book of the Watchers [=1 Enoch 1-36]).

Part 2: 19th and 20th century Millenarianism

Wed 3/29 In-class screening: *The Late, Great Planet Earth*
Group activity analyzing use of biblical passages. Students will split into groups and (working together) reflect on some aspect of the film's use of biblical literature. Students must post their individual 200-300-word responses to Sakai before 9 pm on 3/30.

Mon 4/3 Charismatic and Other Forms of Authority
Max Weber, "Charismatic Authority," 358–373 from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Sakai)
Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, ix–xxxix (Sakai)

Warning: Don't become theory panicked! Many students find reading theory intimidating because it tends to be abstract, use unfamiliar terms, and engage in debates with other theorists that may not be fully explained. If you find the readings difficult, just try to take it slow and figure out the main ideas he is raising; we can work much of this out in class.

Questions to consider:

1. According to Weber, how do charismatic forms of authority establish their legitimacy? What is charisma and how does routinization tend to transform the early phase of the charismatic movement? What basic social and economic factors does he see as driving routinization?
2. How does Worsley attempt to refine Weber's theory? What does Worsley mean when he writes, "Charisma, therefore, sociologically viewed, is a social relationship, not an attribute of individual personality or a mystical quality" (xii)? Why does Worsley stress the idea that the relationships between leader and followers are more important than the claims of the leader alone?

Wed 4/5 Jonestown
David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*, xvii–11, 51–78

Questions to consider:

1. What does Chidester mean by trying to "humanize" the Jonestown movement and in what ways does this contrast with other responses?
2. Chidester writes: "A religion, in this sense, is a way of being a human person in a human place" (xix). What do you make of this definition? What does he mean by "a culture of redemptive sacrifice"?
3. Chidester writes: "The classification system of the People's Temple created a symbolic universe within which superhuman resources could be located that could elevate victims of a subhumanizing social system into a fully human identity" (51). What do you make of this? What are the three strategies he finds in Jones' negotiation of the idea of salvation?

Mon 4/10 Jonestown
Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 79–128

Questions to consider:

1. Chidester writes: "Human beings do not simply occupy space. They live in a meaningful space that is ordered, organized and experienced through a variety of strategies of spatial

orientation” (79); these allow people (Downs and Stea) to “acquire, code, recall, and manipulate information about the nature of their spatial environment” (79). What do you make of this? What is "body space"?

2. What does it mean to claim (as Hubert and Mauss do) that “there is no universal timescale” (105)

Wed 4/12

Jonestown and Its Aftermath

Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide* 129–169

Questions to consider:

1. According to Chidester, how does Jones seek to control time for his followers? To what extent do you find the other cases of religious suicide helpful for understanding the Jonestown event?
2. Chidester writes: “What a fluid thing is a *human*. Located in a network of classification, carved out of space, synchronized in time, a human identity is a detailed process of negotiation. A religious worldview sets the terms and conditions with which a human identity may be negotiated. Religions are irreducible experiments in being human; they are enterprises of meaningful and powerful symbolic negotiation—generating, appropriating, manipulating, rejecting, and inverting symbols of classification and orientation that locate human beings as human” (169). What do you make of this?

Mon 4/17

Apocalypse, Crisis, and Global Capitalism

Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture* 12 (2000) 291–343 (Sakai)

A few notes on the terms used in this essay: Comaroff and Comaroff (a husband and wife team of anthropologists) often use "interrogate" in place of "analyze" or "explain." Economic analysis: They focus on material issues (i.e. those having to do with money, goods, and the economy) and especially some of the core insights of Marxist analysis. (Many scholars find some of Marx's basic analysis quite convincing while eschewing his thoughts on revolution.) Neoliberalism: Neoliberal capitalism typically refers to economic systems that idealize the freedom and autonomy of markets, the free-flow of capital (i.e. free of government regulation), and the central role of private enterprise in generating economic stability and order rather than states and laws. By "subject position" they mean something like, "one of the many ways that we come to experience ourselves as 'ourselves' e.g. as mother, wife, athlete, bad singer in the shower, etc; instead of being singular and stable, we have long noted that they tend to be multiple, multi-determined, and fluid.

Questions to consider:

1. What is the basic argument of the Comaroff essay?
2. In what sense do they understand global capitalism as messianic or millenarian in nature?
3. How has consumption functioned in Western nation states and in what ways has it “eclipsed” production? How has consumption become a site “for the fabrication of self and society?”

Wed 4/19

In-class screening: Left Behind

Paper Drafts Due to peer review partner and to Dr. Dixon by 5 pm on April 20.

Mon 4/24 Left Behind
Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 13–37; 106–129

Questions to consider:

1. What does Frykholm mean by ‘broader mythological structures’ that *Left Behind* participates in?
2. What is dispensationalism? What is the significance of the fact that the readers of the *Left Behind* books tend to identify themselves as ‘evangelical’ Christians?
3. How do believers treat the books in relation to the Bible and how does this relate to other reading practices and to consumer culture and technology, according to Frykholm?

Wed 4/26 Left Behind
Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 129–151.
The Fundamentals (selections) (Sakai)

Questions to consider:

1. What does Frykholm mean by writing “truth is ideological”? How does this shape her interpretation of LB?
2. Discuss some of the ways that LB readers deal with the “truth of fiction” versus the “truth of the Bible” as explored by Frykholm.
3. Would the original Fundamentalists consider LB a faithful representative of their religious or social perspective?

Responses to paper due to peer review partner and Dr. Dixon (send via e-mail) by 5pm April 28.

Mon 5/1 Martin Luther King, Jr.
“Our God is Marching On,” “MIA Mass Meeting,” “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” (Sakai)

Questions to consider:

Based on definitions we have explored in this course – and not based on popular stereotypes of the term – would you consider Dr. King an “apocalyptic” thinker? What are some specific examples from his speeches that persuade you one way or the other?

Final Paper due by email before 5pm on Friday, May 5 (section 2), or Tuesday, May 9 (section 1)

Final paper extensions granted in only unusual circumstances and with prior permission.

Potential paper topics from Part 1 of the course:

1. Drawing on reading from Jon Levenson’s *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, critically evaluate 2-3 ways in which other ancient Near Eastern myths inform Genesis.
2. Critically analyze the theorization of myth in Lincoln’s work on myth and relate this proposal to one of the following: *Theogony*, *Enuma Elish*, or the Baal Cycle.
3. Critically evaluate C. S. Lewis’ essay, “Myth Became Fact,” and apply his perspective to one or more of the mythic figures we have studied.
4. Critically evaluate the arguments of David L. Barr, “The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterizing Jesus in John’s Apocalypse.”

5. Compare and critically analyze Stowers versus Hays (“What Is ‘Real Participation in Christ’? A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline Soteriology,” 336–351) on the issue of “Participation in Christ.”
6. Critically evaluate the arguments of Richard Horsley, “Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 and 2 Corinthians,” 72–102.

Potential paper topics from Part 2 of the course:

1. How does Alexandre Koyré (*From the Closed to the Infinite Universe*, 5–27) characterize ancient cosmologies as different from modern ones?
2. How might the gods in the *Enuma Elish* be interpreted as “taxonomy in narrative form,” to use Lincoln’s term?
3. Compare Martin Luther King, Jr.’s use of biblical texts with one or two apocalyptic figures or texts (ancient or modern) we have examined in this course. How are they similar or different? Cite specific biblical texts and their interpretation by these figures in order to support your thesis.

**You may also consult individual sessions’ “Questions to consider” for paper topics.