

NT 620/720 Exegesis of the Book of Revelation
Winter, 2007
Ashland Theological Seminary
Cleveland Campus

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Catalog Description

Revelation will be read as a sample of apocalyptic literature, a vision which transcends everyday spaces and time in order to motivate specific responses from the intended audience. A close exploration of Revelation's challenge to first-century believers in Asia Minor will lead to discussion of its ongoing challenge and encouragement to churches.

Course Purpose

The Revelation, or Apocalypse, of John has long caused certain consternation in the Christian Church. It was among the last books of the New Testament to be accepted into the canon. Its popularity among dissident and/or heretical groups in the Middle Ages, such as Joachim of Fiore, as well as its importance to the Radical Reformation in the 16th century have added to an uneasiness with John's vision, especially within the so-called mainstream of Christianity. This discomfort may be noted in Luther's rejection of Revelation as authoritative, the fact that it is one of the two books, along with 2 Peter, Calvin did not comment on, and Wesley's blunt confession of incomprehension.

Yet, Revelation has remained a comfort to many believers, especially in settings of persecution. It is a book written by outsiders for outsiders. As we enter a more and more post-Christian world, the book challenges us to reconsider our allegiances, to declare our true loyalties as believers and to avoid compromises with world systems that are all so enticing.

To use Revelation properly, the interpreter must understand John's original purpose and goals in penning his vision. Where this procedure has been neglected, the results have the potential of being tragic, as in the case of Jan of Leiden and the "Kingdom of the New Jerusalem at Munster." The burden upon us as Christian leaders is to be responsible interpreters of this powerful, but potentially dangerous vision. The purpose of this course is to provide the tools for effective exegesis, preaching and teaching of this powerful book.

Course Goals

At the end of this course the student will be able:

1. To know and define the literary genre, "apocalypse."
2. To be able to read Revelation as an apocalypse that utilizes traditional images characteristic of the genre.

3. To be able to isolate the central meaning of the Book of Revelation.
4. To recognize the historical, literary and rhetorical situation of the seven churches.
5. To articulate Roman Provincial ideology, and John's opposition to it.
6. To analyze John's alternative to Roman imperial ideology.
7. To apply the above in a coherent understanding of the relevance and challenge of John's vision for the 21st century.

Texts.

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

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

Murphy, Frederick J. *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John*. New Testament in Context. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998.

Enabling Activities

To achieve the above goals, students will be required to complete the following projects.

1. Class attendance and participation (10%). Class participation includes:
 - a. Demonstration of critical and careful reading of the text and readings.
 - b. Positive participation in group assignments.
 - c. Student presentation.

Students missing more than 6 hours (2 class sessions) will have one letter deducted from their grade.

2. A 3-5 page book review of Brian Blount, *Can I get a Witness* (20%). Due at the beginning of the 5th week.
3. A midterm exam, covering the character of apocalyptic literature, the course lectures to that point, and readings of Koester. (30%). 6th week. In class. The test will be essay. Students will be asked to answer three of five to six questions. The questions will be handed out at the end of the 4th week of class.
4. A 10-12 page exegetical paper. (30% for students in NT 620; 20 % for students in NT 720) Due at the beginning of the 9th week of class. Since the focus of this class is, in part, using Revelation within the context of the church, the paper may

be in the form of a sermon. Students choosing this option will be required to write out the sermon. Sermon outlines will not be accepted. For requirements for exegetical papers, see below.

5. Presentation of findings (10 percent). The last week of class will provide students an opportunity to present findings before the class. Presentations will be graded on coherence and strength of presentation.
6. For students in NT 720: Starting with the second week of class, students in NT 720 will translate a brief portion of the week's passage from the Greek. The translation will be turned in at the beginning of class. Students in NT 720 are also expected to show evidence of use of the Greek text in their exegetical papers.

Requirements for exegetical papers.

The exegetical paper or sermon will be on a relatively short passage (10-15 vv ideally). For longer or shorter passages, the professor must be consulted. Sermons, like exegetical papers, must include notes and bibliography. Papers **must** possess the following characteristics:

- a. A thesis statement. This is a statement after the first or second paragraph, introducing the topic, or point to be proven. This is the statement of the hypothesis.
- b. Consideration of how John has utilized earlier traditions, including the Hebrew Bible and apocalyptic traditions.
- c. Consideration of how literary context informed the original hearers.
- d. Consideration of how the social/political/rhetorical contexts impacted the original hearers.
- e. Consideration of how John posits an alternative universe for his readers.
- f. Application of the passage to the present. The application will flow from the determination of the John's message to the original readers and how it addresses the situation for today.
- g. Bibliographical soundness. This feature includes no less than 3 critical commentaries, exclusive of texts and 3 articles from approved journals (see below).
- h. Proper presentation, including spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Schedule

| Date | Topic | Reading |
|-----------------|--|---|
| March 22, 2007. | Introduction to Apocalyptic. Authorship. Social setting Outline | Murphy, pp. 1-56 Koester. pp. 1-40. Blount, pp 1-36 |

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| April 4 | Rev. 1-3 Greek reading: 1:9-20 | Murphy, pp. 83-166. Koester, pp. 41-69. Blount, pp. 37-67. |
| April 11 | Rev. 4-5 Greek reading: 4:1-11 | Murphy, pp. 167-200 Koester, pp. 71-92 Blount, pp. 69-89 Additional reading: R. Morton, "Glory to God and to the Lamb: John's Use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting His Theology in Revelation 4-5," <i>JSNT</i> 83 (2001) 89-109. Available online via ATLAS |
| April 18 | Rev. 6-9 Greek reading: 7:9-17 | Murphy, pp.201-249 Koester, pp.192-113 Blount, pp. 91-117. |
| April 25 | Blount review due Rev. 10-13 Greek reading: 10:1-11 | Murphy, pp. 249-313 Koester, pp. 93-135 |
| May 2 | Midterm | Review questions |
| May 9 | Rev 14-16 Greek reading: 15:1-8 | Murphy, pp. 313-347 Koester, pp. 135-154 |
| May 16 | Rev 17:1-19:10 Greek reading: 19:1-10. | Murphy, pp. 348-385 Koester, pp.154-173 |
| May 23 | Rev 19:11-22:21 Greek reading: 21:5-14 | Murphy, pp. 386-444 Koester, pp.174-205 |
| May 30 | Student Presentations | |

Disability Statement

For students who have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let the professor know early in the quarter (preferably the first week) so that your learning needs can be appropriately met. In order to receive accommodations, documentation concerning your disability must be on file with Classroom Support Services, 105 Amstutz Hall, Ashland University, 419-289-5953. Please contact them with any questions you may have.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Ashland Theological Seminary seeks to model servant leadership derived from biblical standards of honesty and integrity. We desire to encourage, develop, and sustain men and women of character who will exemplify these biblical qualities in their ministry to the church and the world. As members of the seminary community, students are expected to abide by the academic integrity standards outlined in the Student Handbook.

ATS grading scale.

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| 97-100 | A | 4.0 | 83-85 | B- | 2.7 | 71-73 | D+ | 1.3 |
| 92-96 | A- | 3.7 | 80-82 | C+ | 2.3 | 68-70 | D | 1.0 |
| 89-91 | B+ | 3.3 | 77-79 | C | 2.0 | 65-67 | D- | 0.7 |
| 86-88 | B | 3.0 | 74-76 | C- | 1.7 | -64 | F | |

