

**Apocalypse Now (SCTR 132):**  
**The Book of Revelation in American Culture, Politics, and**  
**Environmental Issues**  
**SUMMER 2017**



This course explores the influence of the book of Revelation upon notions of the END OF THE WORLD in American culture, politics, and environmental issues. Given the recent droughts, oils spills, mass migrations, nuclear disasters, civil wars, and health pandemics around the world, some people have started to prepare for the Apocalypse. But, what does it mean? How does it affect our lives? And why should we strive to understand it? This course helps students to answer these questions and to map the socio-economic, political, and cultural impact of apocalyptic thought upon American culture in particular, and Western cultures in general. Key themes germane to this course include: colonialism, the environment (e.g. Fukushima), UFO religions (e.g. Heaven's Gate), millenarian movements (e.g. Pentecostalism), and the formation of alternative communities (e.g. Jonestown). In

order to prepare students to analyze these themes, the course will introduce various theories and methods from the study of religion. Since apocalyptic thought has significantly influenced American religious traditions, we conclude by reflecting on its impact upon our own spiritualities, notions of social justice, and alternative visions for our world.

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#### CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES:

Students taking this course will:

- 1.1 Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. **[Students will fulfill this core objective through group presentations, reading responses, as well as through midterm and final examinations].**
- 1.2 Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. **[Students will fulfill this core objective through an introduction to the theories and methods from the study of religion, class discussions, reading responses, and both midterm and final exams].**

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce the origins, development, and impact of apocalyptic through the book of Revelation.
2. Explore the influence of apocalyptic views upon contemporary American religious traditions, politics, and culture.
3. Provide tools/frameworks/methods from the academic study of religion to help students interpret the various dimensions of apocalyptic thought.
4. Equip students to engage in global dialogue about the ways in which apocalypticism shapes our understanding of issues and events, such as fundamentalism, migration, genocide, hunger, environmental disasters, and religious violence.
5. Offer students an opportunity to reflect on the impact of apocalyptic thought upon their own religious beliefs, traditions, and experiences, as well as the ways it shapes their views on various contemporary issues.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

K. Kinane, and M.A. Ryan. *End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse From Antiquity to Modernity*. McFarland & Company, 2009.

Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

John Hinnells (ed), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. Routledge Religion Companions. 2, revised, annotated ed. Routledge, 2009.

Additional reading material will be posted on Camino Course Site. There you should also find other course related materials including: reading response questions, field education experience response, drop boxes, online discussions, exam study guides, rubrics and other handouts.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESMENT METHODS:

- **Quizzes (25):** Students will achieve 25 points of their course grade through completion of 5 quizzes (1 x module). Each quiz is worth 5 points. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. Students will describe and compare the central texts, practices, and religious ideas].**
- **Discussion Forums (25):** Students must engage their peers in online discussions of course topics by posting responses to prompt questions as well as by responding to at least two other posts. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through online discussions.]**
- **Creative papers (25):** Students are required to post 5 papers on how they would develop their own religion in conversation with the readings and key aspects of Apocalypse (1-2 page each, single spaced) on Camino throughout the quarter. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through reading responses].**
- **Final Integration Paper (25):** These final integration paper is the summation of your work in the creative papers and describes your newly developed understanding of apocalypse. You simply need to add the following parts: **(1) a title page; (2) an Introduction, (3) a Conclusion, (4) a Works Cited Page, and (5) a ONE-page reflection discussion** of how your social location shaped the creation of your own religious tradition. The paper must employ analytical frameworks from the study of religion and engage the designated contemporary issues, or problems. **[1.2. Students also employ critical tools to reflect on their own faith journeys and to articulate constructive solutions to the issues they identify.]**

#### GRADING SCALE:

95-100 pts	A	75-79	B-	55-59	D+
90-94	A-	70-74	C+	50-54	D
85-89	B+	65-69	C	45-49	D-
80-84	B	60-64	C-	40-44 & below	F

The instructor will provide written feedback on reading responses, readings responses, and presentations. Group project feedback will be communicated via email or during office hours.

#### **OTHER INFORMATION:**

##### **Disability Accommodation Policy**

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahn Center in Kenna 101, (408) 554-4318; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

##### **Academic Integrity Policy**

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Community Handbook. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action. For more information on the university's policy on academic integrity see the following: <http://www.scu.edu/provost/policies/upload/Academic%20Integrity%20Protocol.pdf>

#### **PEDAGOGY:**

In order to create a collaborative, democratic, and empowering learning environment, this course will implement a form of Border Pedagogy. Such a pedagogical approach acknowledges the shifting borders of power and knowledge, and links the educational enterprise with the struggle for a more just and democratic society. The instructor's version of this approach entails five interrelated stages: Critical Awakening, Journeying, Crossing, Negotiating, and Transforming. Such an approach will translate into the following practical dimensions of our learning practices/experiences: (1) students and the instructor will reflect on their own socio-religious location and the ways it shapes their understanding of the three monotheistic religions; (2) students will collaborate with one another and engage in critical and constructive dialogue for class projects and discussions; (3) students will identify and address key issues/themes/ ritual practices in the three religious traditions; (4) students will learn traditional and non-traditional paradigms for understanding religion, as well as methods of interpretation; (5) students will be prepared to articulate the implications of course content and methodologies for the struggle towards a more egalitarian society.

Week & Date	LECTURE TOPICS and READING ASSIGNMENTS
Wk. 1: June 26-30	Module 1. Revelation: Crisis and Apocalypse
<p><b>Required Readings</b></p> <p>I. VIEW:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Module overview</li> <li>2. Introductory lecture</li> <li>3. Clip of <b>Ben Hur &amp; The Matrix</b></li> </ol> <p>II. READ:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primary Source: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Revelation</i> 1:1-20; 3:10; 16:18</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Secondary Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Casey Starness, "Ancient Visions: The Roots of the Judeo Christian Apocalypse," in <i>End of Days</i>, 27-46.</li> <li>▪ Elaine Pagels, <i>Revelations</i>, 1-36.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Part A: Defining Apocalypse</li> <li>2. Part B: Imperialism and Crisis Context</li> </ol> <p>IV. DISCUSS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What does an apocalypse reveal and how is it framed by the context in which it appears? How may apocalypses be viewed as dreams of the oppressed and disfranchised?</li> </ul> <p>V. CREATE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the content and context of the Revelation you have received?</li> <li>▪ Why is this message of utmost urgency?</li> <li>▪ Who needs to receive the revelation?</li> <li>▪ How are people going to survive the "hour of trial"?</li> </ul>	
Wk. 2: July 3-7	Module 2. The Prophet: From Jesus to Jim Jones
<p>I. VIEW:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Module overview</li> <li>2. Introductory lecture</li> </ol>	

3. Documentary: Jim Jones & David Koresh

II. READ:

3. Primary Source:

- Revelation 13:11-15, 16:13, 19:20, 20:10

4. Secondary Sources:

- David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 1-12
- Gifford, "Religious Authority", 397-410 (in Hinnells);
- Barth D. Ehrdman, "Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium," 125-145.

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

4. Part A: Jesus as a Prophet

5. Part B: Millennial prophets and Charismatic Authority

IV. DISCUSS:

- How does each of the apocalyptic prophets establish their authority? What type of authority is it?

V. CREATE:

- Who is the prophetic figure that receives the divine Revelation for your community?
- How is his/her authority established?
- What name will you assigned to that prophet?
- How does he/she related to the prophets mentioned in Revelation or other biblical prophets?

Wk. 3:  
July 10-14

Module 3: Apocalyptic Communities:  
Branch Dravidians, Heaven's Gate, and Doomsday Preppers

VI. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture
3. Clips

- *Waco: The Rules of Engagement (1997)*
- TV Series: *Doomsday Preppers*, Episode 1

VII. READ:

1. Primary Source:

- Revelation 2-3; 12:13-20
- Acts 2

2. Secondary Sources:

- Baumgartner, "From Jonestown to Waco," in *Longing for the End*, 63-86.;
- G.A Foster, *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*, 20-32.

- Benjamin E. Zeller, "Apocalyptic Thought in UFO-Based Religions" in *End of Days*: 228-248.

VIII. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

4. Part A: Apocalyptic Beliefs
5. Part B: Bunker Mentality

IX. DISCUSS:

- \* What is the role of Apocalyptic beliefs in the creation of a bunker mentality among Doomsday preppers.

X. CREATE:

- What is the name of your apocalyptic community and how does it frame the boundaries between outsiders and insiders?
- How does it read the content of the book of Revelation?
- Why is this apocalyptic community necessary and how does it distinguish itself from other religious communities?
- What is the relationship between the community and the State?

**Wk. 4:**  
**July 17-21**

**Module 4: Apocalypse:  
Fracking, Plague, Climate Change, and Nuclear Disasters**

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture
3. Film: *The Left Behind* (2014); *World War Z*, *Displaced in Calais*

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - 2.Thessalonians 2:4
  - Revelation 13, 5:9, 7:9; 16:1-17; 20.
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Johna Pautz, "End-Times Narratives of the American Far-Right," in *End of Days*, 265-286.
  - Baumgartner, "The Antichrist has The Bomb," in *Longing for the End*, 213-233.
  - David Redles, "Nazi End Times: The Third Reich as Millennial Reich," 173-198 (in Kinane).
  - Jonathan Hall, *Apocalyptic War*, (PDF).
  - Edwin Black, "The United States of Sterilization," in *War Against the Weak. Eugenics and Americas Campaign to Create a Master Race*, 87-125.
  - Rikk Mulligan, "Zombie Apocalypse: Plague and the End of the World in Popular Culture" in *End of Days*, 349-368. Tetsunari Iida, "Fujushima Nuclear Disaster" *Sustainable Energy* (2013): 84-105.

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

3. Part A: Religious Apocalypses (Rapture, Anti-Christ, and Judgment Day)
4. Part B: Political Apocalypses (Third Reich, Eugenics, and Isis)
5. Part C: Environmental Apocalypses (Fracking, Fukushima, and The Drought)

IV. DISCUSS:

- How do end-times narratives of Judgment day shape contemporary culture and political agendas in relation to climate change, fundamentalism, and racial strife?

V. CREATE:

- What is the judgment day, crisis or end-times scenario that your community is facing, trying to avert or survive?
- How can believers survive your version of judgment Day?
- Why should contemporary American communities hear about Judgment day?

**Wk. 5:**  
**July 24-26**

**Module 5: Apocalyptic Utopias:**  
**Alternative visions for our World**

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture
3. The Mission, Jonestown, "I have a dream" speech

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Revelation 21, 22.
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Baumgartner, "Beyond the Millennium," in *Longing for the End*, 253-266.
  - Evelyn Stiller, "Gaming Armageddon: Leaving Behind, Race, and Gender," in *End of Days*, 308-327.
  - Keller, Catherine. *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World*, 273-290. John R. Hall, *Modernity and The Apocalyptic (Anticolonial Messianic Movements, Terrorism, and Guerrilla Warfare)*. In *Apocalypse*, 142-147.
  - Maya Todeschini, "The Bomb's Womb" In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery*, 102-56. David Redles, "Nazi End Times: The Third Reich as Millennial Reich," 173-198 (in Kinane).
  - Marita La Palm, "Concerning Features of an Apocalyptic Cult in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)." *Foreign Policy Journal*, October 28 (2014).

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

1. Part A: Religious Utopias: Inter-religious Dialogue
2. Part B: Socio-political hopes
3. Part C: Post-apocalyptic Worlds

IV. DISCUSS:



- Describe the alternative world order or Apocalyptic utopia envisioned by your community and its Revelation?

V. CREATE:

- What is your apocalyptic your apocalyptic utopia or alternative world order?
- How is structured and accessed by the faithful and the unfaithful?
- Who has access to it?
- Where will be located?
- Why is your apocalyptic utopia necessary for our contemporary world?

Wk. 10: Nov  
27-29

Final Exams