REL395

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Description
Revelation is perhaps the most widely used biblical book and yet the least understood. This module will introduce the main historical, literary, and theological issues of the Book of Revelation using other early Jewish apocalypses to provide context.

Outcomes
By the end of the module, a diligent student will:
- be able to discuss critically the political, religious and geographical background of the worlds of apocalyptic literature, and of the seven Asia Minor churches of Revelation in particular;
- understand the major thematic elements at play in Revelation;
- be familiar with major scholarly debates and methods for the study of Revelation;
- develop skills in clear, concise formal academic communication.

Teaching Types
Interactive lecture; small group discussion; text-based classes.

Planned Study
The module requires a workload of 200 hours, of which 5 are devoted to lectures and 15 to seminars. A further 40 hours each are assigned to the research and writing of a 4000-word essay. The remaining 100 hours will be required for the reading of prescribed texts, recommended reading, use of the Internet, where appropriate, and preparation for class discussions, presentations, and debate.

Assessment
- Thinking Pieces 10%
- Research Paper 60%
- Presentation 20%
- Response 10%

Focused Thinking Pieces
Each week at the start of class, you will hand in a reflection piece responding to a particular question or reading. These reflection pieces are low-stress—grammar, syntax, spelling, etc., will not be marked, nor are you required to have a formal argument. Instead, you will be rewarded for the process of thinking rather than for the effectiveness of the writing. This should be “exploratory” writing—more like thinking out loud than a formal essay. The purpose of these pieces is for you to engage with the primary readings more directly, to deepen your thinking, and to get you into the habit of writing regularly. To receive full marks for a thinking piece, it must address the assigned text and/or question; show that you have done the required reading; reveal interesting, engaged thinking; and be about one single-spaced page long. Late thinking pieces are not accepted.
Presentation
At the beginning of the semester, each student will sign up to give a 10 minute presentation on a chosen topic, with a short, 3-4 minute discussion period after. The presentation is an opportunity to research a particular topic further and to explore key scholarly questions together with your colleagues. The presentation should engage directly and critically with one or more of the texts (including material evidence) covered in the course. Further information will be made available on MOLE.

Final Essay
The final essay is an opportunity to develop the chosen topic of the presentation into a formal research essay. Topics for the presentation and the essay will be distributed on MOLE. The essay is due on 15 December.

Resources
Students will be expected to study scholarly issues relating to the Book of Revelation and other apocalypses. In order to do this, students must identify and use appropriate Library and IT resources.

At the very least, you should have access to the following works, and consult them as necessary throughout the module:


A list of further resources is given below.

Schedule of Readings

29 September: The Genre of Apocalypse
Read:
- Daniel 2, 7-12; Zechariah 9-14; Ezekiel 38-39
- 1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 1 Cor 15; 2 Thess 2:1-12; Rom 8:18-30; Mark 13; Matthew 23-25; Luke 21, 17:22-37
6 October: Revelation: Author, Date, Provenance
Read:
- Revelation, in toto
- Irenaeus, Haer. 5.30.3
- Koester, Revelation, 65–85.

13 October: Structure
Preparation Assignment: Before attempting the secondary readings, read Revelation three times: 1. in NRSV translation in a single sitting, noting big sections that capture your attention; 2. in another, significantly different translation (KJV, NJB, JSB, etc.); noting sections that capture your attention; 3. in NRSV again, this time outlining the text (try to ignore subject headings in your own Bible).

Read:
- Revelation, in toto

20 October: Social Setting of Revelation
Read:
- Revelation, in toto
- Koester, Revelation, 86–103
27 October: Empire and Violence
Read:
- Mark 13; Matthew 25–26

3 November: “True” Jews and “True” Christians
Read:
- Revelation 1–3
- Romans 2:17–29; 1 Corinthians 10:23–30
- *2 Baruch* 41–42

17 November: Christology and Messianism
Read:
- *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18
- Qumran, *The War Scroll* (1QM) 1, 15-19

**Note: There will be no class on 24 November as I will be attending the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA**

1 December: Symbolism: Throne, Lamb, Jerusalem
Read:

- Ezekiel
- Animal Apocalypse; 4 Ezra
- The Shepherd of Hermas

8 December: Symbolism: Beast, Whore, Rome

Read:

- Revelation 12-15; 17:1–6
- 4 Ezra (review)
- Wes Howard-Brooke and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999) 197-222

15 December: Contemporary Uses of Revelation

Read:


Watch: Barbara Rossing, “Debunking the Rapture:”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frqIH5eATWg

Listen to *This American Life*, "Apocalypse," Episode 125. Podcast found at http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/125/apocalypse

Other Resources (NB: Koester [2014]’s bibliography is also useful):


Buchanan, G. W. The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy. MBCNT.


