1. Course Description

In our culture, “apocalypse” typically refers to a cataclysmic, catastrophic ending, real or imagined. Often this meaning, in which fear eclipses hope, is traced back to the biblical tradition. But what if the book from which we derive the term, i.e. the “Apocalypse”—or “Revelation”—of John, refers less to the end of the world than to a transition between the two Ages? What if that transition is characterized as double-edged: as both ‘the death throes of the old world order’ and ‘the birthpangs of the new creation’? Attentive to the nature of apocalyptic discourse, this course will seek to develop a key area of systematic theology by exploring the topics of death, judgment, heaven, and hell—the ‘four last things’ of traditional eschatology—as they are portrayed in the book of Revelation. In allowing intertextual and intratextual webs of meaning to emerge, we will pay special attention to the way in which Old Testament echoes, together with the book’s own symbolic coherence and narrative logic, can open up new avenues for exegesis, and for theological reflection. The topic of Final Judgment will be a special focus. How is this to be conceived in the light of the apocalyptic transition? If the first reference to Babylon in the biblical canon, the Babel narrative of Gen 11, refers to a judgment that does not bring history to an end but opens it up once again to the dissemination motif of Gen 1:28, is it possible to detect a parallel ‘judgment unto salvation’ theme in the final book of the New Testament? Our discussions will explore the interface between biblical studies, the “theological interpretation of Scripture,” and contemporary eschatology. Familiarity with New Testament Greek is an advantage but is not a prerequisite.
2. Proposed Reading Schedule

week 1: (Jan 16) Please read the book of Revelation in a language/translation of your choice first, followed by Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 5A), Introduction secs. 1–2 on authorship and date (pp. xlvi–lxx). [Aune, 5A (vol 1 of 3), is in the stacks and reference section at Knox college; also at Regis, St. Michael’s, Emmanuel, Trinity. Know your “fair dealing” copyright rights! Also on order at ICS and on sale at Crux.]

week 2: Aune (as above); Ansell, *Annihilation of Hell*, 391–421.

week 3: Rev 1:1–3:22 {occasional supplementary readings TBD}

week 4: Rev 4:1–7:17

week 5: Rev 8:1–11:19

week 6: Rev 12:1–14:5

week 7: Rev 14:6–16:19

week 8: Rev 16:19–19:4

week 9: Rev 19:5–20:15


week 11: Student presentations of research projects in process

week 12: Student presentations of research projects in process

week 13: Conclusions

3. Course Aims

1. deepened knowledge of the book of Revelation, including its intertextual and intratextual meaning

2. increased facility in relating biblical interpretation to theological reflection and vice versa

3. expanded understanding of key issues in eschatology

4. Description and Weighting of Elements to be Evaluated

**Class participation: 20% (TST: 25%)**--including familiarity with one significant commentary on Rev (each participant will utilize a different commentary in this context), the strengths and weaknesses of which you can refer to in class discussion.

**Seminar leadership: 20% (TST: 25%)**--including at least two presentations on readings (i.e., a specific section of (i) Rev [read by everyone; see schedule above], *plus* the relevant sections from the commentaries of (ii) Aune and (iii) Beale/McDonough [see required readings below]) accompanied by a 2–3pp analysis and discussion-starter distributed to the class.
**Paper: 60% (TST: 50%)**—on any topic/motif/biblical passage that is related to the course; the paper should focus on the textual exegesis and/or “reception history” of Rev.

5. **Required Readings**

(in addition to: the book of Revelation, in Greek or in a translation of your choice)


David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*. Word Biblical Commentary 52A (Dallas, TX: Word, 1997) [selections] [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: ON ORDER ; Knox Library: BS491.2 .W67 v.52A]


6. Some Recommended Readings


Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Student Services as soon as possible.

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