

THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATION
JUS/RELI 310
Fall 2013: 9:30-10:45am, Tuesday and Thursday
Hillel Building, Vista Room

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Office Hours: MW 8-10am, TuTh 11am-12pm; at other times by appointment

Course Description

Throughout the centuries individuals from vastly different cultures have sought to answer the question “what is the meaning of life?” through apocalyptic speculation. This survey of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature will explore the sociological significance of this tradition in the history of Western culture. This study will begin with biblical antecedents (Zechariah), cover several early Jewish examples (1 Enoch, Daniel, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Fourth Ezra), and treat some early Christian apocalypses (Revelation and the Apocalypse of Paul). Some attention will also be given to medieval Jewish (Merkavah literature) and Christian (The Vision of Drythelm, St. Patrick’s Purgatory and Dante’s Divine Comedy) texts as well. The study will conclude with a discussion of modern apocalypticism.

*Please note that information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Class Format

This course uses a lecture and discussion format. You are expected to complete the required readings and to consider the study guide questions before coming to each class session. I do not take attendance in this class; instead, I expect that my students are responsible adults who are serious about their academic responsibilities and are inquisitive people driven by a desire to learn. I view learning as a dynamic process in which the student and teacher interact over the material under discussion. You will learn best by asking questions; all questions are welcome and, if they are of interest to the class as a whole, we will stop and discuss them together.

Required Texts

Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Eileen Gardiner, ed. *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante*. New York: Italica Press, 1989.

Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2012.

Online sources for many of the ancient texts can be found at:

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>

http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm

Course Requirements

1. **Readings:** You are expected to complete all required readings before class and to come prepared for the discussion. Those readings outside of the required textbooks will be placed on D2L.
2. **Examinations:** A quiz over key definitions will be given on Thursday, 5 September 2013. The online mid-term exam for this course will be given on Thursday, 17 October 2013. The online final exam for this course will be given during the official exam time scheduled during finals week: Thursday, 19 December 2013 from 10:30am-12:30pm. There will also be four online quizzes during the semester, two before and two after the midterm exam.
3. **Term Projects:** All students will participate in study groups that will submit a group project to the professor no later than the beginning of class on Tuesday, 26 November 2013. Groups may submit their projects before that date. Late projects will not be accepted. Groups will be formed in class during the second week of the semester.
4. **Class Participation:** In addition to completing all required readings prior to class, you are expected to come prepared to participate actively in class discussions.

Performance Evaluation

The student’s grade will be determined on the basis of the following factors.

Class participation	10 pts.
Online Quizzes	20 pts. (4 @ 5 pts. each)
Definition Quiz	20 pts.
Mid-Term Exam	50 pts.
Final Exam	50 pts.

Term Project 50 pts.

These components combine for a course total of 200 points. All grades will be assigned as follows:

92% and above	A
82-91.99%	B
72-81.99%	C
62-71.99%	D
below 62%	E

Copyright for Course Materials

This professor and The University of Arizona take copyright laws seriously. The professor retains the copyright for all lectures and course materials. The professor's copyright includes student notes or summaries that substantially reflect the professor's lectures or materials. These materials are made available only for personal use by students, and may not be distributed or reproduced for commercial purposes without the professor's express written consent. This does not restrict students from sharing notes on an individual basis for personal use. Violation of copyright laws is strictly forbidden by the Student Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course and/or legal sanctions.

Standards of Student Conduct

The professor encourages the use of computers in class for note taking and class-related activities. The use of computers for email, web-browsing, etc, and the use of cell phones and pagers are strictly forbidden. Students violating these rules will be asked to leave the class for the day.

Plagiarism and other forms academic misconduct are strictly forbidden according to the Student Code of Academic Integrity (see studpubs.web.arizona.edu/policies/cacaint.htm). Behavior that could be considered threatening is strictly forbidden according to UofA policy (see policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.shtml).

In keeping with University policy this professor will provide reasonable accommodation of any student's religious beliefs with regard to the scheduling of examinations and other academic requirements for this course. Please consult with the professor at least two weeks in advance of any such scheduling issues.

The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grading policy, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice as deemed appropriate by the professor.

Special Needs and Accommodations

The appropriate UofA office must document a student's need for academic accommodations. Students who need special accommodation or services should contact the Disability Resources Center, 1224 East Lowell Street, Tucson, AZ 85721, Phone (520) 621-3268, Fax (520) 621-9423, Email uadrc@email.arizona.edu, Website <http://drc.arizona.edu/>. You must register with the DRC and request that the DRC send official notification of your accommodations needs to me as soon as possible. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Course Schedule

Session 1: Tuesday 27 August 2013

Introduction to the Course

Definitions

Apocalyptic Experience as a Religious and Social Phenomenon

Read: Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 1-26.

Session 2: Thursday 29 August 2013

*** Assign Term Project Groups at beginning of class

Emergence of Apocalyptic Thought in Ancient Israel

Read: The book of Zechariah in the Bible. Pay special attention to chapters 9-14.

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 27-66

Preparation Questions:

How does Zechariah 1-8 differ from chapters 9-14? What does the author think about the society in which he lives? Does the author offer any answers for society's ills?

Session 3: Tuesday 3 September 2013

No Class Meeting. Instead meet with your group to begin initial discussion of group project. I ask that you introduce yourselves to one another, state why you enrolled in this course, and suggest some topics that interest you. I also ask that you decide on one

person to serve as the group's administrator. Although you may not arrive at a decision on your topic or how you will treat it, you will need to decide on your next meeting time. You may certainly use the classroom for your meeting place.

Session 4: Thursday 5 September 2013

*****Quiz on Definitions*****

Pseudepigraphy and the Apocalyptic Persona

The Earliest Jewish Apocalypse (1 Enoch 72-82)

Read: 1 Enoch 72-82 (English translations of 1 Enoch is also available online at:

http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm (check under Old Testament Pseudepigrapha).

Preparation Questions:

Assuming that the antediluvian Enoch did not write this work, why would someone choose the name of Enoch for a pseudonym?

What value would the cosmological speculations of 1 Enoch 72-82 have for the author or readers? What is the point of these chapters, and what does this reveal about early Jewish apocalyptic speculation?

Session 5: Tuesday 10 September 2013

History of Heaven: What is it? Who goes there, and Why?

Read: [D2L] Wright, *The Early History of Heaven*, pp. 203-214;

[D2L] "Why We Need Heaven," *Newsweek*, August 12, 2009, pp. 44-51.

Preparation Questions:

This will be an illustrated lecture based on my research and my book *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

We will discuss the origin and evolution of images of the heavenly realm both as a place for the celestial bodies and as the abode of the righteous. Before coming to class, compose a list of as many images of heaven that you can recall. I will ask you to hand-in these lists. Can you identify the origin of some of these images. In your opinion, what social or religious purposes do these images serve?

Session 6: Thursday 12 September 2013

The Conversion of Hell

Read: [D2L] Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, pp. 335-341;

[D2L] "Why We Need Hell, Too," *Newsweek*, August 12, 2009, p. 52.

Preparation Questions:

After reading the material from Bernstein's book, please compose a list of as many images of hell that you can recall. I will ask you to hand-in these lists. Can you identify the origin of some of these images? In your opinion, what social or religious purposes do these images serve?

Session 7: Tuesday 17 September 2013

The Book of Daniel, The Narratives

Read: Daniel chapters 1-6 in the Bible

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 67-92

Preparation Questions:

What kind of a person was Daniel according to these stories? Given that these stories preface an apocalypse allegedly received by Daniel, what purpose do they serve within the overall purpose and structure of the book? What status does Daniel appear to have in these stories? Can you see any recurring themes or structural similarities among these chapters?

Session 8: Thursday 19 September 2013

The Book of Daniel, The Apocalypse

Apocalypse and Oppression

Read: Daniel chapters 7-12 in the Bible.

Preparation Questions:

How do these chapters relate to the first six, or do they? What is the author's view of history: where has it been, where is it going, and who is in control? How specific is this kind of history?

Session 9: Tuesday 24 September 2013

*****Online Quiz #1 due by 9:30am*****

1 Enoch and Mysterious Journeys

Read: 1 Enoch 1-36, in [D2L] Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*; and [D2L] Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. This is also available online at wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm under the section entitled "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha"

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 125-143

Preparation Questions:

What did the angelic "Watchers" do that was so wrong? What possible purposes does the ensuing tour of heaven have in relation to the issue with the "Watchers?" What function would a book like this have in society?

Session 10: Thursday 26 September 2013

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Ancient Apocalyptic Community of Qumran

View: Introduction to Dead Sea Scrolls at www.antiquities.org.il/dss_movie_eng.asp

Read: The Manual of Discipline (English translation in [D2L] Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 123-143)
Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 197-226

Preparation Questions:

Assuming you wished to become part of the Qumran community, what would you have to do to demonstrate your qualifications for membership? Briefly outline this process. What were these people's attitudes towards those who lived outside of their group? How do you think others would have viewed these people? Can you think of any modern analogies to this type of situation?

Session 11: Tuesday 1 October 2013

Qumran and Apocalyptic Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Read: Peshar Habakkuk (English translation in [D2L] Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 114-122).

Preparation Questions:

Was the Bible an important document for these people? How did the Bible address their historical situation? Could anyone have arrived at the "true" interpretation of the Bible, or were there some prerequisites for insight into the real meaning of the biblical text? What guided their interpretation of the Bible? Does this type of Bible interpretation have any modern parallels?

Session 12: Thursday 3 October 2013

*****Online Quiz #2 due by 9:30am*****

Apocalypse and Theodicy

Read: 2 Esdras 3:1-9:25 (aka 4th Ezra). 2 Esdras (4th Ezra) is a book in the Apocrypha. This text is also available online at wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm under the section "Old Testament Apocrypha".
Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 143-151

Preparation Questions:

What is Ezra's problem? When he looks at his world and tries to make sense of it, what does he conclude? How do you feel about the tone of this book? Is such an attitude towards God a common feature in Judaeo-Christian religious literature? Have you ever read any other religious text where the holy person tries to indict God so vehemently?

Session 13: Tuesday 8 October 2013

Apocalypse and Theodicy, cont.

Read: 2 Esdras 9:26-14 (aka 4th Ezra). This text is also available online at wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/index.htm under the section "Old Testament Apocrypha"

Preparation Questions:

With respect to their form, how do the fifth through the seventh visions (11:1-14:48) differ from visions one through four (1:1-10:59)? Does Ezra ever resolve his dilemma? If so, how did he resolve it?

Session 14: Thursday 10 October 2013

Reactions to the Destruction of the Temple by the Romans

Read: 2 Baruch (http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/ot/pseudo/2baruch)

[D2L] Wright, *Baruch Ben Neriah: From Biblical Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003, pp. 70-97)

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 151-159

Preparation Questions:

We have already seen how "Ezra" dealt with the issue of the destruction of Jerusalem in 4 Ezra. How did "Baruch" deal with this problem in 2 Baruch? What is Baruch's solution? Does this book evidence the same pathos as 4 Ezra?

Session 15: Tuesday 15 October 2013

ONLINE MIDTERM REVIEW SESSION

**You will find the review under our course's D2L "Discussions" tab.
I will monitor the discussions during our regular class time, from 9:30-10:45am.**

Session 16: Thursday 17 October 2013

ONLINE MIDTERM EXAM

**Exam will be available during our regular class session, from 9:30-10:45am.
Students with DRC accommodations will be given their approved time adjustment.**

Session 17: Tuesday 22 October 2013

Early Judaisms and Their Messiahs

Read: Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 281-305

[D2L] “Gabriel’s Vision”;

[D2L] R.A. Horsley, “‘Messianic’ Figures and Movements in First-Century Palestine,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, edited by James H. Charlesworth. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 276-95 or [D2L]

Michael E. Stone, “The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R.*

Goodenough, edited by Jacob Neusner. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968, pp. 295-312 (available online at

[http://books.google.com/books?id=gLI3AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA295&lpg=PA295&dq=The+Concept+of+the+Messiah+in+IV+Ezra&source=bl&ots=CprQX7C40J&sig=dG-](http://books.google.com/books?id=gLI3AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA295&lpg=PA295&dq=The+Concept+of+the+Messiah+in+IV+Ezra&source=bl&ots=CprQX7C40J&sig=dG-LJ2uABMZK6gaZ5zxZXzHBtFQ&hl=en#v=onepage&q=The%20Concept%20of%20the%20Messiah%20in%20IV%20Ezra&f=false)

[LJ2uABMZK6gaZ5zxZXzHBtFQ&hl=en#v=onepage&q=The%20Concept%20of%20the%20Messiah%20in%20IV%20Ezra&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=gLI3AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA295&lpg=PA295&dq=The+Concept+of+the+Messiah+in+IV+Ezra&source=bl&ots=CprQX7C40J&sig=dG-LJ2uABMZK6gaZ5zxZXzHBtFQ&hl=en#v=onepage&q=The%20Concept%20of%20the%20Messiah%20in%20IV%20Ezra&f=false)).

Preparation Questions:

Is there a single messianic expectation in Early Judaism? What, in your estimation, are the Messianic ideas in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Peshar Habakkuk, and Daniel? All of these are said to be apocalyptic, but do they indicate any consistency regarding the idea of a Messiah? How do these images fit with your understanding of the term/figure “messiah?”

Session 18: Thursday 24 October 2013

The Apocalyptic Imagination in Early Christianity

Read: The Book of Revelation in the New Testament. This text is also available online at

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=REV%201&version=31>. On this site you have to advance through the book chapter by chapter by clicking on the “Next Chapter” button at the bottom of the page.

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 93-124

Preparation Questions:

Using the text alone, try to define the sociological setting and the purpose of this book. If there is a problem this book is addressing, what is the answer it proposes? How does a Christian apocalypse differ from a Jewish one?

Session 19: Tuesday 29 October 2013

Christian Apocalypses Without Otherworldly Journeys

Read: 2 Esdras 1-2 (aka 5th Ezra) in the Apocrypha;

Apocalypse of Peter (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/apocalypsepeter.html>);

Shepherd of Hermas (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/shepherd.html>);

First Apocalypse of James (<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/1ja.html>)

Preparation Questions:

How are these apocalypses alike or different from the Jewish ones we have already read? What does this say about the literary heritage of Early Christianity? Identify a couple of themes or ideas that you find interesting? What views of women and men do these texts exhibit?

Session 20: Thursday 31 October 2013

*****Online Quiz #3 due by 9:30am*****

Christian Apocalypses With Otherworldly Journeys

Read: Ascension of Isaiah, chapters 6-11 (<http://www.eagle-net.org/shulemna/isaiah.htm>) and Apocalypse of Paul

(<http://wesley.nnu.edu/noncanon/apoc/apcpaul/htm>). The Apocalypse of Paul is also available as Saint Paul’s Apocalypse in Gardiner, pp. 13-46.

Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 307-354

Preparation Questions:

What does the cosmos look like according to these texts? Do they share a common celestial map? What purpose do these journeys serve? When ancient people read these texts, what did inspiration do you think they derived from them?

Session 21: Tuesday 5 November 2013

Hekhalot and Jewish Mysticism

Read: [D2L] The Four Rabbis Who Entered “Pardes,” *Babylonian Talmud*, Hagigah 14b, and parallels.

Preparation Questions:

What is the general idea that this text communicates regarding the attempt to “enter Paradise?” What attitude towards this type of mystical practice does this text indicate? What range of attitudes would society at-large have towards this activity and why?

Session 22: Thursday 7 November 2013

The Inspired Leader

Read: “Inspired Leader” text on D2L.

Preparation Questions:

How does the public respond to people who claim to speak authoritatively from God? Can you describe the sociological setting of these texts and the attitude of the people to the one claiming to speak the word of God?

Session 23: Tuesday 12 November 2013

The Vision of Drythelm

Read: Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys*, pp. 11-25, 31-34;
Gardiner, *Visions*, pp. 57-63. Text available on D2L from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bede/history.txt> (Saint Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, Book 5, chapter 12).

Preparation Questions:

What is the purpose of this otherworldly journey? What values or ideals does it seek to promote? What does the cosmos look like according to this tale? Why must the hero return to his natural realm?

Session 24: Thursday 14 November 2013

St. Patrick's Purgatory

Read: Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys*, pp. 34-42; Gardiner, *Visions*, pp. 135-148.

Preparation Questions:

What is the purpose of this otherworldly journey? What values or ideals does it seek to promote? How do the real and visionary worlds intersect in this text? What is it that causes the hero to change his way of life?

Session 25: Tuesday 19 November 2013

Dante's Divine Comedy

Read: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*. Dante is available online at http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html

Preparation Questions:

Read part one, "Inferno." What is the view of society and the universe in this text? Can you determine any thematic or literary links with the earlier apocalyptic materials we have already read in class?

Session 26: Thursday 21 November 2013

Dante's Divine Comedy, cont.

Read: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*. Dante is available online at http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html

Preparation Questions:

Read part two of the *Divine Comedy*, "Purgatory/Purgatio." What view of the cosmos (cosmology) does Dante use? What is the purpose of movement through "Purgatory?" How would you characterize the emotions of the text as it describes this region? Some have suggested that Dante was a cruel or vindictive man. Would you concur with this opinion? Why or why not? We will discuss the *Purgatio* and the *Paradiso* in class on Tuesday.

Session 27: Tuesday 26 November 2013

Online Quiz #4 due by 9:30am

Dante's Divine Comedy, cont.

Read: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradise*. Dante is available online at http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html

Preparation Questions:

Read part three of the *Divine Comedy*, "Paradise/Paradiso."

Send your responses to the following three questions to the professor (edwright@email.arizona.edu). How would you compare the tone of this section of the *Divine Comedy* with that of the first two? What is the overall value or purpose of this text? How does this material related to our definition of "apocalypse"?

Thursday 28 November
Thanksgiving Holiday
No Class Meeting

Session 28: Tuesday 3 December 2013

The Apocalyptic Imagination Today

Read: [D2L] Bill Lawren, "Apocalypse Now," *Psychology Today* May 1989, pp. 41-45;

[D2L] Gibbs, "Apocalypse Now," *Time*, July 1, 2009, pp. 40-51;

[D2L] Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 193-222; and select other readings listed under modern apocalypse on our D2L site.

Preparation Questions:

During what periods is apocalyptic speculation especially rampant? Can you list three apocalyptic groups of your generation? Given what we have learned in our historical overview of the apocalyptic imagination in Western culture, would you expect that we have

seen the end of such visionaries? What forms of apocalypticism have been popular in America in recent years? Could the current spate of extremist Islamic terrorists be considered “apocalyptic” in any way?

Session 29: Thursday 5 December 2013

Read: [D2L] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*. Revised and Expanded Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 19-52.

Preparation Questions:

How does ancient Israelite prophecy differ from early Jewish apocalypticism according to Cohn? What, according to Cohn, fanned the flames of apocalypticism during the period of the procurators? Was Jesus an apocalypticist? What was the wellspring of Christian apocalypticism. Were all Christians millennialists? Why or why not? How and why did some Christians de-historicize millennialism? What aspects of apocalyptic texts consistently appealed to medieval Christians? What model of life was held up as the most noble? Why would apocalyptic millennialism appeal to these people? Describe the life and activities of a would-be Messiah? Be prepared to name and date two of these would-be Messiahs. What strata of society followed these people? Why?

Session 30: Tuesday 10 December 2013

The Apocalyptic Imagination Today

Read: Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, pp. 379-386.

Preparation Questions:

How influential has apocalypticism been in Jewish, Christian and Islamic history and thought? What dangers might an involvement in or commitment to apocalypticism pose for individuals and society? In what three ways does John J. Collins think that apocalypticism remains relevant today? Now that you are an expert in apocalyptic affairs, why in your opinion do people gravitate toward such a theory?

Course Summary and Review for Final Exam

We will summarize the course and review the Final Exam Study Guide in preparation for next week’s Final Exam.

ONLINE FINAL EXAM
10:30am-12:30pm, Wednesday, 12 December 2013
The Exam will be active under the “Quizzes” tab on our course’s D2L site.