

Exegesis of Revelation (NT 2093)

Revised 2-13-08

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Spring 2008

Professor: Dr. Susan R. Garrett

Wednesdays and Fridays, 11:00 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

Gardencourt 206

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

Course Description:

Revelation poses a great challenge to interpreters today. The New Testament exegete's usual difficulties in trying to bridge twenty centuries are amplified here, because John's apocalyptic style is inherently ambiguous, misconceptions about the book abound in the church and in the popular culture, and vastly different interpretive models for the book are promulgated by both scholars and popular preachers. The course will enable students to become familiar with the content of Revelation, to work through its various interpretive challenges as well as competing interpretive models, and to formulate their own constructive ideas about the relevance and possible applications of the book for the church today. The usual format for class sessions will be discussion, with all students expected to participate in an informed and energetic way and to lead on one occasion; the instructor will from time to time provide overview and summary. Exegesis will be based on the English text, though reference to the underlying Greek will be made.

Intended Major Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, each student will be able to:

1. Identify the likely circumstances surrounding the composition of the book of Revelation: who its author was, when and where it was written, who its initial audience was and what their issues were;
2. Sketch important features of the apocalypse-genre and explain how knowing this information helps in the interpretation of Revelation;
3. Explain the major models for interpreting Revelation that have been popular down through the centuries (including premillennial dispensationalism), and explain how their underlying assumptions differ from those of a literary-historical approach;
4. Converse (or write) in an informed way about the shape and content of Revelation and its major movements and message;
5. Offer detailed exegetical analysis of a passage from Revelation; and
6. Speak cogently about ways to preach or teach Revelation in order to benefit the church.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular class attendance and active and informed participation. For each class session: careful reading and study of the assigned verses of the text; also reading (*prior* to the session) of assignments for that day. *Worth @20% of final grade.*
2. A mid-term essay-type take-home examination, to be distributed before reading week. Due at midnight on April 9 (submit **electronically**, by email or Blackboard drop box). *Worth @30% of final grade.*

3. Leadership of one class session (choosing from session #'s 10-22). Student should come prepared to guide the discussion on the assigned passage for that day. No formal presentation is required, but preparation of a handout identifying key issues, questions, or theories about the passage is highly recommended. (Handout must be submitted to professor electronically **at least three days prior to the session** in order to allow sufficient time for it to be duplicated; otherwise, the student should bring enough copies of the handout to class for all class members.) Sign-up for this assignment will be done on February 13. In the event that there are more students than there are sessions, two students may be assigned to a single session. *Worth @20% of final grade.*
4. An exegesis paper (@12 double-spaced pages) on a passage from Revelation selected in consultation with the professor, due at midnight on April 25 (submit **electronically**, by email or Blackboard drop box). Should include a section on how the passage would be preached in the church or on its pertinence for the life of the church today. *Worth @30% of final grade.*

Textbooks:

Keck, Leander E. (ed.). *The New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes. Vol. XII: Hebrews – Revelation.* Abingdon, 1998.

Peterson, Eugene. *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination.* HarperOne, 1991.

Rossing, Barbara. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2004.

Other readings will be available on the Blackboard Web site for the course.

Policy on Inclusive Language:

In speech and in written assignments, please avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. Do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary.

Policy on Plagiarism

Be careful to document fully any information included in your papers that is not original. Also be aware that when you summarize information, even when you give the complete documentation information, your summaries should be in *your words* and not retain too much of the original author’s wording. A paper that presents the ideas or writing of someone else (including ideas from a Web site) as if they were your own is considered plagiarism, and school and departmental policies on academic honesty will be followed. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary. In citations of other people’s work, students should follow the format outlined in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; or 7th ed., 2007).

Schedule

1. February 8: Introduction to course

Reading:

- Rowland, 503-517
- [Apocalypse Now](#) (read also sidebar articles: “The End: How It Got That Way” and “Is It Good for the Jews?”)
- Peterson, 1-10

2. February 13: Introduction to apocalyptic thought and literature

Reading:

- Rowland, 517-28
- 2 Esdras 3:1–14:48 along with the introduction to 2 Esdras (the text and an introduction will be found in study Bibles with the OT Apocrypha)

3. February 15: History of interpretation of the Apocalypse

Reading:

- Rowland, 528-56
- M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 47-51.

4. February 20: Premillennial dispensationalism

Reading:

- Rossing, ix-46

5. February 22: Israel and the End Times

Reading:

- Rossing, 47-80
- Donald E. Wagner, “Short Fuse to Apocalypse? In *Sojourners* (July-August 2003): 20ff.

6. February 27: Thinking about Prophecy and the Future

Reading:

- Rossing, 81-102

7. February 29: Where’s the meaning?

Reading:

- Boring, *Revelation*, 51-62
- Dale B. Martin, *The Pedagogy of the Bible*, manuscript, chaps. 1–2

8. March 5: The social context of Revelation

Reading:

- Leonard L. Thompson, "Ordinary Lives: John and His First Readers," in *Reading the Book of Revelation* (ed. David L. Barr; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 25-47.
- Robert M. Royalty, "Dwelling on Visions: On the Nature of the So-Called 'Colossians Heresy,'" *Biblica* 83 (2002): 329-57.

9. March 7: The opening vision: Revelation 1

Reading:

- Rowland, 557-70
- Peterson, 11-41

10. March 12: The letters to the seven churches: Revelation 2–3

Reading:

- Rowland, 571-89
- Peterson, 42-56

11. March 14: Revelation 4–5

Reading:

- Rowland, 590-607
- Peterson, 57-71

12. March 19: Revelation 6–7

Reading:

- Rowland, 608-626
- Peterson, 72-86

[March 21: Easter Recess]

[March 26: Research and Study]

[March 28: Research and Study]

[April 2: Sue away]

13. April 4: Revelation 8–9

Reading:

- Rowland, 627-36
- Peterson, 87-101

14. April 9: Revelation 10–11***Reading:***

- Rowland, 637-46
- Peterson, 102-116

15. April 11: Revelation 12***Reading:***

- Rowland, 647-54

16. April 16: Revelation 13***Reading:***

- Rowland, 655-62
- Peterson, 117-34

17. April 18: Revelation 14***Reading:***

- Rowland, 663-70

18. April 23: Revelation 15–16***Reading:***

- Rowland, 671-78
- Peterson, 135-50

19. April 25: Revelation 17–18***Reading:***

- Rowland, 679-95

20. April 30: Revelation 19–20***Reading:***

- Rowland, 695-717
- Peterson, 151-67

21. May 2: Revelation 21–22***Reading:***

- Rowland, 718-36
- Peterson, 168-94

22. May 7: A feminist reading of Revelation***Reading:***

- Susan R. Garrett, "Revelation," in *Women's Bible Commentary* (expanded edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992, 1998), 469-74.

23. May 9: An African American reading of Revelation***Reading:***

- Brian K. Blount, "Revelation," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (ed. Brian K. Blount et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 523-58.