

From Prophecy to the Apocalypse

Religion 226

Classroom: 111 Comenius Hall

Class Times: TTh 1:10–2:20 pm

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Office: 202 Comenius Hall, ext. 1314

Office Hours: MW 11am-12 noon
and by appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the phenomenon of prophecy as a social institution as known in the ancient Near East as well as prophetic literature in biblical texts. The development of apocalyptic thought in Judaism and Christianity will be studied, up to and past the book of Revelation.

Course Goals

Prophetic and apocalyptic thought form a significant and influential part of western religion, and this course will examine them as both religious and literary phenomena. A taxonomy of different types of predictive beliefs will be developed, that will allow for a clearer understanding of the interaction of these types. Assumptions about prophecy and apocalyptic thought will be questioned, and the relationship between performed and literary prophecy will be given particular attention.

Assignments and Grading

Grading will be based on an average of three essay examinations and three 5 page papers. Plagiarized papers will result in a one-letter course grade reduction at least and a failing grade for the course overall at most. Attendance will be taken in each class day, and more than two unexcused absences will result in a 1/3 of a letter course grade reduction. Assigned readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned.

Required Reading

- 1) The New Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible, with Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books (Oxford University Press).
- 2) *A History of Prophecy in Israel, Revised and Enlarged*, by Joseph Blenkinsopp, Westminster John Knox Press.
- 3) *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader*, edited by Mitchell G. Reddish, Hendrickson Publishers.
- 4) *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., by John J. Collins, Eerdmans/Dove Publishers.

- 5) *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, Semeia 36, edited by Adela Yarbro Collins, Society of Biblical Literature.

Class Schedule

Ancient Near Eastern Background

Introduction, Magic and Divination January 19th

Ancient Near Eastern Background January 21st
Readings: Handouts, Blenkinsopp 3, 4, 5.

Biblical Prophecy

Prophecy in Biblical Narrative January 26th–28th
Readings: Blenkinsopp 5, 6, 1, 2, biblical passages TBA

Eighth-Century Prophecy February 2nd–4th
Readings: Blenkinsopp ch. 8-12; Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah 1–39.

Late-Monarchic Prophecy February 9th–11th
Readings: Blenkinsopp 13–15, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah

Exilic Prophecy February 16th–18th
Readings: Blenkinsopp 16–19, Ezekiel, Isaiah 40–66.

Post-Exilic Prophecy February 23rd–25th
Readings: Blenkinsopp 20–24, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah

Jewish Apocalypticism

Background and Genre March 2nd–4th
Readings: J.J. Collins 1

Early Enochic Literature March 16th–18th
Readings: J.J. Collins 2, Enoch readings from Reddish

Daniel March 23rd–25th
Readings: J.J. Collins 3, Daniel

Related Genres and Qumran March 30th–April 1st
Readings: J.J. Collins 4, 5, Reddish: 2nd half of 2, all of 3.

Similitudes of Enoch and Other Works April 6–8th
Readings: J.J. Collins 6–8; Reddish readings TBA

Christian Apocalypticism

Jesus and Paul

April 13th

Readings: J.J. Collins 9

Revelation, Apocalypse of John

April 15th–20th

Readings: J.J. Collins 9, Revelation, A.Y. Collins, Hellholm, Aune, Thompson.

Other Christian Apocalypses

April 22nd–29th

Readings: Reddish Part 3, Himmelfarb, Osiek, Schüssler-Fiorenza

Final Exam

1:30pm

May 7th