

NT1610: The Revelation

Summer 2009: July 13-17, 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Bangor and Portland Video Conference

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Course Description

This course presents students with an historical-literary overview of the last Biblical book, and engages them in exploration of Revelation's relevance for issues facing church and society today. The author's Christology, understanding of life in an empire, and marks of corporate faithfulness are emphasized. The book's liturgical power is explored and interpretive abuses are identified. (3 credit hours)

Prerequisites

None. No previous knowledge is assumed. We begin at the beginning. Auditors are welcomed.

Course Outcomes and Assessment

<i>Upon course completion, a student will be able to...</i>	<i>How will the instructor know?</i>
1. Explain the likely circumstances leading to Revelation's writing (when, where, to whom, why)	Test
2. Recognize the apocalyptic-style of literature and how the genre is read appropriately	Test, Exegesis, Project
3. Notice references to Hebrew scripture in the text, and references to Revelation in liturgy	Test
4. Identify issues of empire and faithfulness facing the first century church in Asia, and parallels today	Test, Exegesis, Project

5. Articulate the author's theological understanding of the Risen Christ	Test
6. Compose a valid exegesis of a passage from Revelation, utilizing the English (or Greek) version	Exegesis
7. Create a project insightfully applying Revelation's teachings within the context of Western culture	Project

Fit with Degree Program Goals

In general, New Testament courses at Bangor Theological Seminary “explore the writings of the earliest Christians with two foci in mind: the function of the texts for the original audience and the significance of those texts for contemporary hearers. Successful students will develop knowledge of the content, historical milieu, literary forms and theological themes found in the New Testament. Furthermore, students will learn how to employ exegetical resources and methods so that they will be able to read the New Testament independently and study scholarly literature competently.”¹

For the Master of Divinity student, this particular course provides:

Knowledge of the book of Revelation as apocalyptic literature; the history of the late first century church in relation to religious and secular institutions within the Roman Empire; the author's theological insights as well as reflections of contemporary scholarship; the use of this Biblical book in the church's lectionary, rites, and hymnody; and a comparison of methods for interpretation;

Ability to incorporate Revelation maturely in worship, teaching, and as an advocate for justice; and

Opportunities for development of a prophetic voice, both in church and society.

For the Master of Arts student, this course provides:

Knowledge of the book of Revelation as apocalyptic literature; the history of the late first century church in relation to religious and secular institutions within the Roman Empire; and the author's theological insights as well as reflections of contemporary theologians;

Ability to engage in critical and constructive theological reflection on Revelation's prophetic content; and

Opportunities for personal and spiritual integration of the competing values of Revelation to those of contemporary Western culture.

Course Requirements

In addition to reading the required texts and attending the intensive class week, students are required to take one test, write a short exegesis regarding a passage in Revelation, and complete one project applying Revelation to contemporary life.

Test: To be completed at home and covering material in the required reading and the classroom presentations, the test will be made available to students no later than Monday, July 27, and is to be returned to the instructor no later than Friday, July 31. This test will constitute 30% of the final grade.

Exegesis: *The Revised Common Lectionary* includes texts from the book of Revelation for six successive Sundays during the season of Easter in Year C, namely:

Revelation 1:4-8	Second Sunday of Easter	April 11, 2010
Revelation 5:11-14	Third Sunday of Easter	April 18, 2010
Revelation 7:9-17	Fourth Sunday of Easter	April 25, 2010
Revelation 21:1-6	Fifth Sunday of Easter	May 2, 2010
Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5	Sixth Sunday of Easter	May 9, 2010
Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21	Seventh Sunday of Easter	May 16, 2010

Each student will write a short exegetical paper (8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced) on one of the texts listed above, to be submitted to the instructor no later than Monday, August 10. This exegesis will constitute 30% of the final grade.

Project: The ability to apply Revelation's teaching to contemporary issues within church and society is to be demonstrated by the completion of one project from the following list:

- a. The manuscript for a 20-minute sermon; or
- b. A set of adult seminar lesson plans involving three sessions (9-12 pages); or
- c. A piece of original visual art accompanied by a 3-5 page written interpretation; or
- d. The writing of two hymns (original lyrics with suggested tunes) with comments; or
- e. A theological essay with social justice implications (8-10 pages).

Any passage from the book of Revelation (including the liturgical texts listed above) may serve as the basis for the project. The project is to be submitted to the instructor no later than Tuesday, August 25. The project will constitute 40% of the final grade.

Required Reading

- _____. Revelation in *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989.
- Griffin, David Ray, John B. Cobb, Richard A. Falk, and Catherine Keller. *The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God: A Political, Economic, Religious Statement*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- Koester, Craig R. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.
- Wink, Walter. *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Disclosure

The class sessions on the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 focus on materials found in a book the instructor currently is writing. If you would like a copy of the manuscript draft (working title: *No Longer At Ease*), please inform the instructor by the end of the first day of class. Every effort will be made to have your copy produced by the last day of class week. The manuscript will be made available to you at cost, and cannot be reproduced without the instructor's permission. This opportunity is optional. Your grade will not be penalized if you do not purchase the book, nor will any extra credit be given if you do.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Before the first class session, read the book of Revelation. It takes approximately one-and-one-half hours. If possible, read in the settings indicated below or their equivalent. If your schedule does not accommodate the suggested dates, choose alternative days. Read it seven times!

- July 4 Watch the parade, take in a political speech, or listen to a CD of patriotic music. Then go to the fireworks while it is still light, open up your lawn chair or spread out your blanket, and read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a first time.
- July 5 Put Revelation aside and take a Sabbath Day's rest.
- July 6 Visit a cemetery. Take in the names and the dates on the gravestones. Pay special attention to any epitaphs. Sit under a tree somewhere on the grounds, and read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a second time.
- July 7 Go to the nearest hospital or medical complex. Notice the architecture. Find a chair in the waiting room. Aware of the body language of the people all around you, read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a third time.

- July 8 Stroll through a shopping mall or around a business district. Concentrate on the ads, overhear customer conversations, and watch the merchants work. Then read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a fourth time.
- July 9 Take a field trip to your local history museum. Peruse the exhibits. Surrounded by the town's memorabilia, sit down at a study table, and read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a fifth time.
- July 10 Volunteer time in a soup kitchen, at a thrift closet, or on a project in a depressed neighborhood. When your shift is through and before going home, read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a sixth time.
- July 11 Go into a religious sanctuary. Read the announcements in the bulletin for tomorrow. Read the monthly newsletter cover to cover. Then read Revelation straight through, in one sitting, without interruptions a seventh time.
- July 12 Put Revelation aside. You're prepared for the week of class. Take a Sabbath Day's rest.

Class Week

July 13, Monday

- 9:00 Introduction to the Course
10:30 Listening to the Spirit
12:00 Lunch break.
1:30 Methods of Interpretation
3:00 The Apocalyptic Genre of Literature
4:30 The Risen Christ (Revelation 1)
6:00 No homework. Enjoy your evening.

July 14, Tuesday

- 9:00 Life in the Roman Province of Asia
10:30 The Letter to Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)
12:00 Lunch break.
1:30 The Letter to Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)
3:00 The Letter to Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17)
4:30 The Letter to Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)
6:00 No homework. Enjoy your evening.

July 15, Wednesday

- 9:00 The Letter to Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)
10:30 The Letter to Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)
12:00 Lunch break.
1:30 The Letter to Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)
3:00 In the Throne Room of God (Revelation 4-5)
4:30 Revelation and the Hymnody of the Church
6:00 No homework. Enjoy your evening, with a song of praise in your hearts!

July 16, Thursday

- 9:00 Principalities and Powers: The Reality of Evil
- 10:30 Judgment: Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls of Wrath (Revelation 6-7, 8-11, 15-16)
- 12:00 Lunch break.
- 1:30 Judgment: Dragons, Beasts, and the Great Harlot (Revelation 12-14, 17-18)
- 3:00 The Final Battle and the Millennial Mop-up (Revelation 19-20)
- 4:30 Revelation as Expressed in the Arts
- 6:00 No homework. Enjoy your evening, if you can after all this chaos!

July 17 Friday

- 9:00 The End: Peace and Joy! (Revelation 21-22)
- 10:30 Revelation's Use in Worship
- 12:00 Lunch break.
- 1:30 Reading Revelation from a Feminist Perspective
- 3:00 An African American Reading of Revelation
- 4:30 Revelation and the American Empire
- 6:00 There are three homework assignments, but they can wait.
Play on Saturday and take a Sabbath Day's rest.

Grading

The final grade will reflect the instructor's evaluation of work submitted to meet the course requirements. It is not a judgment upon your value as a person. If the test, exegesis, and project collectively demonstrate that the course outcomes listed on pages 1-2 of this syllabus have been met in substantial part, you can expect to receive a B. Only if they demonstrate that all the course outcomes have been met with exceptional understanding, critical insight, and excellent application can you expect to receive an A. If they demonstrate that the course outcomes have been met to some degree, you can expect a C. If they demonstrate that the course outcomes have been met minimally, you can expect a D. If they demonstrate that the course outcomes have been not been met, you can expect an F.

Statement of Gender-Neutral Language

The book of *Revelation* contains language and images which may be considered violent, sexist, and anti-Semitic. Sensitivity to the impact of such materials and the use of inclusive language is expected in the classroom and in the assignments, always keeping in mind that:

Bangor Theological Seminary charges its members to minister faithfully against discrimination and oppression. Language may and often does reflect and perpetuate unjust divisions and distortions within the human family of God. Therefore, while respecting the right to express one's faith, the Seminary calls upon everyone to employ only language, written and oral, which affirms the

dignity of all persons and communicates the Gospel as the liberating and healing Word of God.²

Style Guidelines for Essays

Clear writing, good grammar, proper punctuation, and correct spelling are expected. Course requirements submitted deficient in any of these areas will result in lower grading. Remember that at Bangor Theological Seminary:

To maintain consistency in class papers and essays across the spectrum of course offerings, students will use the guidelines presented in the [seventh] edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [2007]...³

Plagiarism

Carefully document information which is not original – including but not limited to quotations, summarized positions, website downloads, cartoons, music, and art. The ethical standard prohibiting intellectual stealing is summarized below, along with the consequences for its violation.

Students are reminded that using others' words or ideas without attribution and citation constitutes plagiarism, an act of intellectual dishonesty. Plagiarism is strictly prohibited by Bangor Theological Seminary, and cases of it may result in a failing grade for a course or other academic penalty...⁴

¹ Bangor Theological Seminary, *2008-2009 Catalog*, 36.

² Bangor Theological Seminary. *Student Guide: 2007-2008*, 29.

³ Bangor Theological Seminary, *Student Guide: 2007-2008*, 5.

⁴ Bangor Theological Seminary, *Student Guide: 2007-2008*, 5.