

A. Course Description

NOBODY in Medieval Europe knew precisely when the world was going to end, but most everyone was sure that it would – and sooner rather than later. This class focuses on some of the dominant trends in medieval apocalyptic thought, beginning with the New Testament and continuing through the early fourteenth century. We will discuss the tension between fear and hope that is central to eschatological expectations, consider the nature of failed prophecy, and study the calculations medieval people made in order to anticipate the Last Days (in 200, 500, 1000, 1033, 1100, 1260, 1300 and beyond). We also will touch upon the social and political dimensions of apocalyptic beliefs, such as the identification of specific contemporary individuals or events with those prophesied in scripture. Saint Francis of Assisi, for instance, was considered by some to be the Angel of the Sixth Seal, or even an *alter Christus* (“another Christ”); others believed Francis and his followers to be the heralds of *Antichrist*. Both the Emperor Frederick II and Pope John XXII were feared to be the Antichrist in person; while non-Christian religious groups, dissent movements, famines, wars, and falling stars routinely were interpreted against the visions of Revelation.

A particular focus will be the different imaginings of the utopian, perfected society that Christian millennialists believed would be established in the wake of the coming apocalyptic conflict. The Book of Revelation prophesies the institution of a homogeneous and exclusionary millennial society, one entirely purged of sinners and non-Christians alike. Some later thinkers, by contrast, focussed chiefly on the sensual rewards of the coming world, relishing visions of resurrection to a “land flowing with milk and honey.” By the thirteenth century, many apocalyptic thinkers were envisioning an integrative New Age in which all known religions were brought into a harmonious whole dedicated to eternal spiritual contemplation. Some even suggested that the social norms of existing society would be inverted in the postapocalyptic epoch: the perfected world would be led by women and centered on a female savior. Not surprisingly, apocalyptic theologies often were highly contentious, and frequently resulted in accusations of heretical deviance.

Though the dominant focus of the class will be textual evidence, we also will consider many visual artefacts such as paintings, allegorical figures, and maps. The format of this class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion: regular attendance, keeping current with the reading, and participation in discussions is expected. Please be aware that we mainly will be reading obscure theological documents written between 700 and 1900 years ago. Many modern readers find these texts difficult and/or boring: do not take this class if you are not prepared to work through the reading carefully.

Please note also that this class focuses on medieval Europe and the history of the Christian thought of that time period, which was Catholic. In particular, please set aside the notion of the Rapture for the purposes of understanding the documents we read: while this doctrine is now prominent within some Protestant denominations, it was unknown to the medieval Catholic Church. If more contemporary apocalyptic ideas are your primary interest, then this may not be the class for you.

Protected: B. Schedule of Readings

Please purchase Bernard McGinn, ed., *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, [here](#). All other readings will be available through this website, either in PDF versions or as links to online texts.

Reading units are numbered and organized by week. Please bring the readings with you to class (as printouts, where applicable), as we sometimes will have group discussions of them in class.

A note on Bible translations: I prefer that everyone use the same translation, so that our discussions are based on a shared text. Therefore please read the assigned Biblical texts in the **Revised Standard Version**. Some of you may already own a print copy; Revised Standard Version Bibles also are readily available second hand (see [here](#) and [here](#), for instance). If you do not own or wish to purchase a copy, then please use the link I provide.

This syllabus is subject to change without notice. While I do not expect to alter the schedule of readings very significantly, I reserve the right to remove, add to, or alter the assigned readings. If such changes occur, I will announce them in lecture and ask you to consult this space for updates.

1: The Story of History

Genesis, chapters 1-4

1 Corinthians, chapter 15

Mark, chapter 13

Matthew, chapters 24 and 25

Luke, chapter 16: 19-31

2 Timothy, chapter 3 through chapter 4:8

1 Thessalonians, chapter 4: 13 through chapter 5: 11.

2 Thessalonians, entire letter

1 John, entire letter

[>Click here for a link to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible](#)

2: Perfection as Social Purification

The Book of Revelation, entire book.

[>Click here for a link to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible](#)

3: Apocalypses, Revelations, and Sybils

St. Peter's Apocalypse [[PDF](#)]

St. Paul's Apocalypse [[PDF](#)]

Oracles of the Tiburtine Sybil [[PDF](#)]

Pseudo-Methodius, *Revelations* [[PDF](#)]

4: Space and Time

[>Click here to visit the Index of Cartographic Images](#) and browse some of the T-O slides (205 series).

Examine the entire 223 series (Psalter mappamundi); the entire 226 series (Hereford map); and entire 224 series (Ebstorf Map).

Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, in *Apocalyptic Spirituality*

5: The Eschatological Refusal

Augustine, selections from *The City of God* 18: 53-54; 20: 1-14

[>Click here for a link to Book 18, chapter 53 & 54](#)

[>Click here for a link to Book 20, chapters 1-14](#)

(These links take you to the beginning of each selection; click on “next” to move forward in the text.)

6: The Antichrist, Son of Perdition

Adso of Montier-en-Der, “Letter on the Antichrist,” in *Apocalyptic Spirituality*
Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* 3:11 [\[PDF\]](#)

7: Pilgrims, Crusaders, and the Holy City

Raoul Glaber, selections from *The Five Books of Histories*. [\[PDF\]](#)

Fulcher of Chartres, *Chronicle of the First Crusade*. [\[PDF\]](#) Skip chapters IV & V.

8: The Age of the Father ~ Age of the Son ~ Age of the Holy Spirit

Joachim of Fiore, selections from various texts, in *Apocalyptic Spirituality*

9: The Angel of the Sixth Seal ~ New Christ ~ Anti-Christ

Bonaventure, selections from *The Life of Saint Francis* ~ read the Prologue; chapters 1-3; 13.

[>Click here to link to an e-book version of this text.](#)

Salimbene, selections from his *Chronicle* [\[PDF\]](#)

Peter John Olivi, selections from *Apocalypse Commentary* [\[PDF\]](#)

Bernard Gui, selections from his *Inquisitor's Manual*. [\[PDF\]](#)

10: A Messiah for Women, Heretics, and Other Outsiders

Caciola, trans., “Inquisitorial process against the Guglielmites” [\[PDF\]](#)

Finals Week: Final paper due at exam time.

C. Assignments & Policies

In accordance with university policy, students must complete all formal course requirements and consistently attend class meetings, in order to receive course credit.

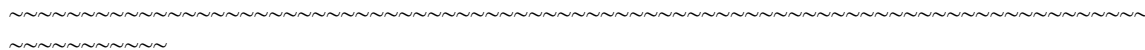
University policy also requires me to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Office of Academic Integrity. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism, and for avoiding it: “I didn’t know...” is not an acceptable excuse. If you are unsure how plagiarism is defined, please consult with me in advance of the paper deadline.

The assignments for this class are as follows:

>Class attendance/discussion @ 15% . Class only meets 20 times and since there is no textbook, the information relayed in lecture is an integral part of the class. I will take attendance every day. You have one “free miss;” after that, this portion of your grade will decline precipitously. If you miss five or more classes in total (1 free + 4), you will receive an “F” for this portion of your final grade calculation. If you are not present when I take attendance, then you will be considered absent, whether or not you were present for some other portion of the class. It is up to you to respond to the attendance call with sufficient volume such that I hear you: If I do not hear a response the first time I call your name, I will repeat it once, giving you a second chance to be heard if you are present. If I still do not hear you respond, you will be marked absent. **I will not alter attendance records for any reason.**

>One five-page paper @ 35% . This paper will ask you to assess one or two sources in relation to a specific question or theme. Your writing should be focused and terse.

>Eight-page final assignment @ 50% . Your final paper will be graded on how well you integrate together the readings from class, in order to compose an historical argument with a clear thesis, reliant on primary-source evidence. This paper is due during finals’ week.



What should we expect of one another?

What I will do: I will strive to present informative lectures that build upon one another, are reasonably entertaining, and are well-organized. I will try to establish a class atmosphere that is open and informal; at the same time, however, I will try to challenge you intellectually. I will listen carefully when you have questions and comments about the material, and I will offer appropriate answers or feedback. I will hand out assignments with sufficient advance time for you to think about the topic and compose your written work, and I will hand back your graded work in a timely manner. In keeping with basic principles of equity and fairness, I will apply the same rules and standards to everyone enrolled in this class.

I expect that you will act with integrity and professionalism as well. I expect you to follow directions, whether written down or explained verbally in class. I expect that you will complete all the reading listed on the schedule in a timely manner, attend class, and be on time for class. I expect you to be attentive during lectures, sometimes to respond to questions when I ask them, and to come to office hours if you would like to discuss the class material further. I expect you to submit your assignments on time, unless you have experienced an unexpected crisis of some significance. I expect that you will treat me, and your fellow-students, with courtesy and honesty.

D. Contact

Winter, 2014 office hours:

Mondays, 3:30-4:50

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