

NTS 6623/7723 – EXEGESIS OF THE REVELATION OF JOHN
ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
FALL QUARTER, 2020
ONLINE CAMPUS
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Ia. Course Description

This course explores the Book of Revelation as an attempt by the Jewish Christian prophet John to open his congregations' eyes to what Roman imperial politics, economy, and ideology look like in the light of God's claim upon all human beings and God's vision for human community, and thus to guide these congregations into a more faithful response to God and a clearer witness to the world. This reading becomes the basis for our application of John's model and challenge to twenty-first century Christians and congregations.

Ib. Expanded Description

This course offers an exegetical study of Revelation and its pertinent themes. As an alternative to the perennial attempts to subjugate the prophetic word of Revelation to games of "pin the tail on the Antichrist," participants in this course will explore Revelation as a word-on-target to seven very real Christian communities in existence in Asia Minor at the close of the first century AD, and to hear Revelation's message within its original, historical context. Revelation will be seen not only to reveal the unseen and future realities of God's space and coming triumph, but also to reveal the essence and character of the political, economic, and religious systems in which the first-century Christians were being asked to cooperate. Such an understanding will open up new avenues of application, as Revelation becomes more than just an eschatological time-table ever in need of revision and is allowed to speak its own message of uncompromising commitment to God's values and critique of every human institution which calls for the compromise of our allegiance to God and the Lamb.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

John presents a stunning vision of our *identity in Christ* as we stand before God's throne a ransomed kingdom of priests from every tribe, language, nation, and people, as well as urges his readers to think of their Christian identity in terms of their role as "witness." He helps us reflect upon the contours of and motivations for Christian witness, discovering the ways in which our commitment to one and only one God is to be embodied in, and give coherence to, our lives lived in the midst of the domination systems of this world so that we exhibited genuinely Christian *character*. His model challenges us to consider how the *call to ministry* includes the prophetic call to examine and critique the domination systems at work at the global, national, local, and domestic levels of our experience in light of the visions for peace and justice nurtured by the Scriptures of both testaments.

The evaluative instruments of this course primarily seek to assess student progress toward attaining learning outcomes related to *competence in the disciplines and skills relevant to Christian ministry*. Students who successfully engage and complete this course should be able to:

1. Demonstrate critical and faithful interpretation and responsible use of Scripture in appropriate ministry and professional settings.

a. Students will explain the particular challenges posed to Christian faith within the social, cultural, political, and ideological context of late first-century, Roman Asia Minor, and how the rhetoric of apocalypse allows John to position his congregations to respond to these challenges in a manner consonant with their religious commitments.

b. Students will demonstrate the development of a critical hermeneutic of scripture that integrates multi-disciplinary approaches to the New Testament, including analysis of intertexture; lexical analysis; reading in literary context; social-scientific approaches to the Bible; rhetorical analysis; and ideological criticism.

2.-3. Not assessed in this course.

4. Demonstrate critical theological reflection that is biblically faithful, historically grounded, contextually relevant, and integrated with life and ministry

Students will critique and evaluate various interpretative approaches to Revelation, including their own, in light of the historical exegesis of the text.

5. Develop ongoing practices of justice that bear witness to the full scope of the kingdom of God

Students will analyze their own cultural, social, political, and ideological locations and formulate responses informed both by John's message and method on the basis of a thoroughly "embodied" interpretation of Revelation as a prophetic analysis of the domination systems specific to Roman imperialism in Asia Minor.

6. Exhibit effective ministry skill sets related to intended areas of service

Student will articulate the challenge of one passage of Revelation for Christians in their ministry context.

III. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks: Required

1. Craig Koester, *Revelation*. Yale Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. ISBN-10: 0300216912; ISBN-13: 978-0300216912.

2. David deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. ISBN-10: 0-664-22449-0; ISBN-13: 978-0664224493.

3. J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010. 193 pp. ISBN-10: 1587432617; ISBN-13: 978-1587432613.

4. Access to two modern translations of the New Testament (e.g., NASV, ESV, NRSV, NIV 2011, NEB, NJB, CEB, NLT). Please choose two from *different* translation styles, not two from the *same* translational approach: 1. formal equivalent (NASV, ESV, NRSV); 2. mediating (NIV, NEB, NJB); 2. dynamic or functional equivalent (CEB, NLT).

In addition to the three textbooks, we will read several additional articles and essays. **These will be provided as .pdf files within the online course for your convenience.** The instructor reserves the right to add or substitute some articles not currently listed on the syllabus.

B. Attendance

According to the student handbook, attendance at all class sessions is expected unless the professor has been notified and consents in advance. Any student missing the equivalent of six class hours will be required to do additional work, receive a lower grade, or withdraw from the class; this is at the discretion of the professor.

C. Assignments/Assessment of Student Learning

I. Class Engagement

The student's preparation and engagement are critical to attaining the learning outcomes. Students are expected to read all assigned readings thoughtfully and draw upon them in class interactions. In an online course, this translates into diligent engagement of the week's video lectures, group work, discussion forums, and other venues for attaining the learning outcomes each week. One of the benefits of an online format is that, generally, such engagement can be worked in around the other facets of life, even the smaller emergencies that life throws our way.

The following guidelines indicate how class performance will be evaluated:

- A The student has given evidence in his or her interaction of careful reading and critical reflection on the assignments, of integrating the material from the various sources, and of deliberation upon the significance of the material. The student is able to contribute meaningfully both in the information and analysis he or she can provide and in the intelligent questions that he or she brings that have arisen from this reading and reflection.
- B The student gives evidence of having read the assigned readings and giving some attention to "putting it all together." In course engagements, the student can provide the information, and goes far toward contributing also at the level of analysis and integration.
- C The student has read almost all of the assigned readings has the "information" fairly well in mind. *Processing* of this information is rather limited.
- D The gaps in the student's reading and the lack of reflection on and engagement with the material seriously limits his or her contribution to the class.
- F The student's participation has been spotty, reading record poor, contribution poor.

II. Essay Exam

Students will complete a 10-12 page final essay exam to demonstrate their mastery of material taught in the course or encountered in the readings. This will be posted early in the semester so that it may provide a tool for learning and integrating, as well as an evaluative exercise.

III. Seminar Paper

Students will also complete a 12-15 page seminar paper, in which they will analyze the meaning of a passage from Revelation for, and impact upon, its *first-century* hearers. You are free to choose any passage that constitutes a coherent unit (*normally* between eight and ten verses). Your primary goal will be to determine the meaning and impact of that passage on the first century hearers in Asia Minor, about whom you have read so much by this point. Following your completion of the exegetical part of the paper (for which you should allot 75-80% of your paper), provide some indication of how you would apply that text to your current situation together with a justification of your hermeneutical decisions. Application must grow organically out of exegesis. In this paper, be sure to do the following (*note: treating areas 2-9 in succession will not result in a well-integrated and smoothly-flowing paper! These are rather areas for exploration, not an outline for writing*):

1. Begin with a thesis statement presenting your understanding of the passage's meaning for and impact upon the first hearers in the setting of late first-century Asia Minor. Include a few sentences which outline the development of your paper. All material presented in the paper **must** be relevant to the interpretation and application of the passage and should be smoothly integrated into the flow of the paper.

2. Consider how older traditions, especially Old Testament, inter-testamental, and Jesus traditions, inform the interpretation of your passage (e.g., Exodus traditions, Jeremiah's denunciations of Babylon, and so forth) and contribute to its rhetorical force.

3. Discuss how the passage speaks to the historical, cultural, and religious context of the addressees (e.g., how it addresses or resonates with the ideology of Eternal Rome, the imperial cult, idol worship, and the like).

4. Discuss how the passage speaks to the local contexts and specific challenges of one of the seven churches (even if you have chosen one of the seven oracles for your passage; what is said to Smyrna can shame believers in Laodicea, etc.).

5. Consider how literary context informs your passage. How does your text resonate with other parts of Revelation? Where else does Revelation address the themes central to your passage, and how do these cross-references inform your hearing of the text?

6. Consider other literary factors such as genre and structure. How does attention to the genre of and literary forms within your passage guide your interpretation? How does the broader literary structure affect the hearing of your passage? How does your passage fit within the whole? What does it add?

7. Describe the rhetorical impact of your passage upon the first hearers. Does it rouse certain emotional responses in them? If so, to what end? What course of action does it encourage them to pursue? How does it support this exhortation? Does the passage support John's credibility as a speaker, ensuring that he gets an attentive hearing?

8. Explicate the sociological dimension of your passage. What sort of relationship does it envision between the church and the larger society? How does the passage guide the hearers to view political authorities? Other groups within the church (e.g., Nicolaitans)? Other religious groups (synagogue, idolatrous cults)?

9. Analyze the ideological texture of your passage, both in regard to John's ideological agenda (in concert with, and in competition with, other agendas at work among and around the congregations) and in regard to ideological criticism of Revelation and of our

own socio-historical contexts (e.g., post-colonial readings of Revelation, reading Revelation as politico-economic critique).

10. Apply the message of the passage to your current context, being careful to explain how you move from your determination of the challenge and meaning of Revelation in its original setting (the first-century churches of Asia Minor) to your application of the text in your present setting.

Please plan on using three *critical* commentaries (e.g., volumes from the WBC, AB, NIGTC, NICNT, and similar series) and at least three other scholarly resources (journal articles, scholarly books on Revelation, advanced level Dictionary entries, as in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* or the *IVP Dictionary of the Later New Testament*) as you work on your exegetical paper.

Special Note for Students registering for NTS 7723:

Students taking this course as Greek Exegesis of Revelation (NTS 7723) will study and translate selected passages from Revelation in Greek for each session. Their exegetical paper will also be based on the Greek text, including the students' own translations of their passages and critical interaction with Greek-text-based commentaries and resources.

D. Calculation of Grade

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
Class Engagement	1a, 4, 5, 6	25%
Essay Exam	1a, 1b, 4	37.5%
Seminar Paper	1a, 1b, 4, 5, 6	37.5%

Note: Students must receive passing grades on both the exam and the seminar paper to pass the course.

V. Tentative Course Schedule

The following represents our *tentative course schedule*. The professor reserves the right to make adjustments and additions to facilitate successful attainment of the learning outcomes.

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date(s)</i>	<i>Lecture/Topic</i>	<i>Readings/Assignments</i>
1	8/31-9/6	Introduction to Revelation and Its Interpretation; Genres and Reading Cues	Read: 1. Revelation in its entirety, preferably in two different modern translations. (One good option is found in Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 3-25.) 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 1-27 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 27-64, 103-143

			4. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 13-25 View video lectures in Week 1 folder online Participate in discussion forum(s) online
2	9/7-9/13	Revelation in Its Historical Setting	Read: 1. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 28-91 2. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 65-103. View video lectures in Week 2 folder Participate in discussion forum(s)
3	9/14-9/20	Revelation 1-3, part 1	Read: 1. Revelation 1-3 2. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 209-349 3. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 27-40 View video lectures in Week 3 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 1:4-11)
4	9/21-9/27	Revelation 1-3, part 2	Read: 1. Revelation 2-3 (again) 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 117-145, 175-192, 229-255 3. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 156-167 View video lectures in Week 4 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate 2:12-17 or 3:14-22)
5	9/28-10/4	Revelation 4-5	Read: 1. Revelation 4-5 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 93-116, 193-198 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 350-392 4. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 82-107 View video lectures in Week 5 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 5:6-14)
6	10/5-10/11	Revelation 6-9, part 1	Read: 1. Revelation 6-9 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 147-174, 215-222, 286-292 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 392-430 4. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 108-124 View video lectures in Week 6 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17)
7	10/12-10/18	Revelation 6-9, part 2	Read: 1. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 430-474 2. Brian K. Blount, "Can I Get a Witness? An Apocalyptic Call for Active Resistance," pp. 37-67 in <i>Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation Through African-American Culture</i> (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2005). View video lectures in Week 7 folder

			Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate 8:1-5; 9:20-21)
8	10/19- 10/25	Revelation 10-11	Read: 1. Revelation 10-11 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 222-228 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 474-522 View video lectures in Week 8 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate 11:3-13)
9	10/26- 11/1	Revelation 12-13	Read: 1. Revelation 12-13 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i> , 198-203 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 523-606 4. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 41-81 5. Khiok-khng Yeo, "Hope for the Persecuted, Cooperation with the State, and Meaning for the Dissatisfied: Three Readings of Revelation from a Chinese Context," pp. 200-222 in David Rhoads (ed.), <i>From Every People and Nation</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). View video lectures in Week 9 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate 13:1-10)
10	11/2-11/8	Revelation 14-16	Read: 1. Revelation 14-16 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things</i> , 257-286, 294-312 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 606-669 4. D. A. deSilva, "Reading Revelation in Sri Lanka," <i>Asia Journal of Theology</i> 27 (2013) 21-37. 5. Hanna Stenström, "'They Have Not Defiled Themselves With Women...': Christian Identity According to the Book of Revelation," pp. 33-54 in Amy-Jill Levine, ed., <i>A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John</i> (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2010). View video lectures in Week 10 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 14:6-13)
11	11/9- 11/15	Revelation 17:1-19:10	Read: 1. Revelation 17:1-19:10 2. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things</i> , 203-215, 292-294 3. Koester, <i>Revelation</i> , 669-740 4. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i> , 125-155 5. Allan Boesak, <i>Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective</i> (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 108-125.

			<p>6. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Babylon the Great: A Rhetorical-Political Reading of Revelation 17-18," pp. 243-269 (esp. 255-69) in David L. Barr, ed., <i>The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation</i> (Atlanta: SBL, 2006).</p> <p>View video lectures in Week 11 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate 18:1-8, 21-24)</p>
12	11/16-11/22	Revelation 19:11-20:15	<p>Read: 1. Revelation 19:11-20:15 2. Koester, <i>Revelation</i>, 741-793</p> <p>View video lectures in Week 12 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 20:4-6, 11-15)</p>
13	11/23-11/29	Thanksgiving Break	Work on exams and exegesis papers!
14	11/30-12/6	Revelation 21-22	<p>Read: 1. Koester, <i>Revelation</i>, 793-859 2. Kraybill, <i>Apocalypse and Allegiance</i>, 168-193 3. Renate Viveen Hood, "Women and Warriors: Character Development in John's Apocalypse," pp. 72-86 in Gerald L. Stevens, ed., <i>Essays on Revelation: Appropriating Yesterday's Apocalypse in Today's World</i> (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010).</p> <p>View video lectures in Week 14 folder Participate in discussion forum(s) (NT 7723 Students: translate Rev 21:1-8; 22:1-5)</p>
15	12/7-12/13	The Challenge of Revelation	<p>Read: 1. deSilva, <i>Seeing Things John's Way</i>, 313-349 2. Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, "Coming Out of Empire Today," pp. 236-277 in <i>Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now</i> (New York: Orbis, 1999). 3. D. A. deSilva, "Revelation," pp. 215-220 in <i>Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Ethics. Volume 2</i> (gen. ed. Robert Brawley; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). 4. David L. Barr, "Conclusion: Choosing Between Readings: Questions and Criteria," pp. 163-72 in David L. Barr (ed.), <i>Reading the Book of Revelation</i> (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).</p> <p>View video lectures in Week 15 folder Participate in discussion forum(s)</p>
16	12/14-12/17	"Exam Week"	Complete work on Final Exam and Exegesis Paper (both due Thur., Dec. 17, by 9 a.m.)

Essay Exams and Exegetical Papers are due by 9 a.m., Thursday, December 17. NO LATE PAPERS will be accepted without successful petition for an “incomplete” or “extension” PRIOR to the due date.

VI. Recommendations for Life-long Learning

1. Preach or teach a series on Revelation, delving into a different, in-depth commentary or two as part of your preparation (e.g., David Aune or Greg Beale’s commentaries). Two possible resources to put in the hands of lay persons participating in a class on Revelation would be:

a. D. A. deSilva, *Unholy Allegiances: Heeding Revelation’s Warning* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013).

b. Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (revised and updated by David A. deSilva; Nashville: Abingdon, 2019).

2. Read more widely in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature to explore the genre, its conventions, and its rhetorical potential more fully. A list of suggestions would include 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra (= 2 Esdras 3-14), 2 Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, Shepherd of Hermas, and Apocalypse of Peter.

3. Take a tour of the major cities of Roman Asia Minor (make sure to hit Ephesus, Pergamum, and Laodicea, the three best-excavated sites) to immerse yourself in the archaeological and geographical context of Revelation. Prepare for the tour by reading the appropriate sections of guides to biblical cities written by Mark Wilson (*Biblical Turkey: A Guide to the Jewish and Christian Sites of Asia Minor* [Ege Yayinlari, 2010]) or by Clyde Fant and Mitchell Reddish (*A Guide to Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey* [Oxford University Press, 2003]).

VII. Seminary Guidelines

A. ATS Academic Integrity Policy

Ashland Theological Seminary expects each student to uphold the Seminary’s core value of academic excellence by contributing to an environment that is both challenging and supportive. In such an environment a student will neither seek nor offer improper assistance. All students have an obligation to be forthright in their academic endeavors and to respect ethical standards. The work that one submits for academic evaluation must be one’s own, unless an instructor expressly permits certain types of collaboration. Academic integrity requires that each student will use one’s own capabilities to achieve one’s fullest potential and will neither offer nor accept aid that is not in keeping with regularly accepted standards of academic integrity. Failure to conform to this conduct shall constitute academic dishonesty. The full Academic Integrity Policy statement may be found in the *Student Handbook*.

B. Seminary Writing Consultation Service

The Seminary Writing Consultation Service can help you brainstorm, draft, and revise your writing assignments in your graduate Seminary classes. Masters and doctoral qualified Consultants can advise you online or in person.

To schedule an appointment, visit [Writing Center Online](#) and select “Online and Graduate” from the schedule menu.

C. Accessibility Resources and Accommodations

It is Ashland University’s goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please contact the Student Accessibility Center at [419-289-5904](tel:419-289-5904), or send an email to dservices@ashland.edu. The Student Accessibility Center office and the course instructor will work together in order to establish accommodations and to meet your learning needs.

D. ATS Grading Scale

Grade	Quality	Percent	Description
A	4.0	97-100	Superior achievement of course objectives, diligence and originality, high degree of freedom from error, outstanding evidence of ability to utilize course knowledge, initiative expressed in preparing and completing assignments, positive contributions verbalized in class.
A-	3.7	92-96	
B+	3.3	89-91	
B	3.0	86-88	Good work submitted, commendable achievement of course objectives, some aspects of the course met with excellence, substantial evidence of ability to utilize course material, positive contributions verbalized in class, consistency and thoroughness of work completed.
B-	2.7	83-85	
C+	2.3	80-82	
C	2.0	77-79	Acceptable work completed, satisfactory achievement of course objectives, demonstrating at least some ability to utilize course knowledge, satisfactory class contribution.
C-	1.7	74-76	
D+	1.3	71-73	
D	1.0	68-70	Passing but minimal work, marginal achievement of course objectives, poor performance in comprehension of work submitted, inadequate class contributions.

D-	0.7	65-67	
F	0.0	Below 65	Unacceptable work resulting in failure to receive class credit, inadequacy of work submitted or of performance and attendance in class.

Interpretation of the ATS Grading Scale (I am indebted to Dr. L. Daniel Hawk for this rubric)

A Signifies work that generally exhibits a depth of research, thought and critical thinking, and may include an insight we haven't thought of before or information we haven't encountered. Sparks are flying. You've got us thinking!

B Signifies work that exhibits thoughtful integration, a direct and careful engagement with the assignment, and sound critical thinking. We experience a deep sense of fulfillment that learning has taken place.

C Signifies a minimal engagement with the assignment characterized by a perfunctory or hackneyed response and shallow critical reflection. We yawn.

D Signifies gaps in thinking or a deficient response to the readings or written work. We reach for our Tums.

F Signifies failure to address the core components of the reading or written assignments. We watch an episode or two of Monty Python in a vain attempt to restore our cheery disposition.

VI. Course Bibliography

For more extensive bibliography, see deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 351-364; Koester, *Revelation*, 153-206.

* = recommended for use as a "critical commentary" for the minimum of three to be engaged for the exegetical paper.

*Aune, David E. *Revelation 1-5*. WBC. Dallas: Word, 1997.

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Barr, David L., ed. *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. SBL Symposium 39. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006.

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*Beale, Gregory K. *Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

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- Morton, Russell S. *Recent Research on Revelation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014.
- *Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Rev. ed. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- *Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.
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