



Course Syllabus
WYB2701H – Reading Revelation:
Exploring the Mystery of the Apocalypse
Wycliffe College
Toronto School of Theology
Summer 2025

Instructor Information

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Course Identification

Course Number:	WYB2701H
Course Format:	<i>Dual Delivery</i>
Course Name:	Reading Revelation: Exploring the Mystery of the Apocalypse
Course Location:	West Lecture Room, Wycliffe College
Class Times:	Monday–Friday 9:00am – 3:00pm
Prerequisites:	none

Course Description

The Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse of John) is arguably the most perplexing book of the New Testament, full of strange visions and confusing images, many of which are disturbing to read. Those who brave its pages are usually left bewildered, unsure what to make of it, and questioning what benefits or dangers it offers the contemporary world. Perhaps this is why Revelation often remains either neglected or misunderstood, despite its significance in Christian history, its influence on popular culture, and its vital importance for the church today. After some initial discussion of the genre and form of the book, this course will move chapter by chapter, working through the whole text, examining its historical context, literary features, and theological significance. There will also be daily sessions reflecting on the significance of the book of Revelation for today.

Course Resources

Bibliography

Required Texts

Davies, Jamie. *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Smyth & Helwys, 2023)
Gorman, M. J. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness* (Cascade, 2011).

Commentaries

Aune, D. E.. 1998. *Revelation (Word Biblical Commentary)*. Dallas: Word.
Barr, D. L.. 1998. *Tales of the End: a narrative commentary on the book of Revelation*. Salem: Polebridge.
Beale, G. K.. 1999. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Blount, B. K.. 2009. *Revelation: a commentary (New Testament Library)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
Caird, George B.. 1966. *Revelation of St. John the Divine (Black's New Testament Commentaries)*. A & C Black Publishers Ltd.
Davies, Jamie. 2023. *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Smyth & Helwys)
Ellul, Jacques. 1977. *Apocalypse: the Book of Revelation*. Seabury Press.
Koester, Craig R. 2014. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Yale Bible)* New Haven: Yale University Press.
Kovacs, Judith L. & Rowland, Christopher. 2004. *Revelation: the apocalypse of Jesus Christ*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
Mangina, J. L.. 2010. *Revelation (Brazos/SCM Theological Commentary)* London: SCM.
Paul, I. 2018 *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale NT Commentary)* London: IVP
Resseguie, J. L. 2009. *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
Schüssler Fiorenza, E.. 1985. *The Book of Revelation: justice and judgment*. Grand Rapids: Fortress.
Smalley, S. S.. 2005. *The Revelation to John: a commentary on the Greek text of the Apocalypse*. Downers Grove: IVP.
Thomas, J. C. & Macchia, F. D.. 2016. *Revelation (Two Horizons New Testament Commentary)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
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Wright, Tom. 2011. *Revelation for Everyone*. SPCK.
Yong, Amos. 2021 *Revelation (Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.

Monographs

Barr, D. L. (ed) *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003)
----- (ed.) *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: SBL, 2006)
Bauckham, R.. 1993. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: CUP.
----- 1993. *The Climax of Prophecy: studies on the book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
Blount, Brian K.. 2005. *Can I get a witness?: reading Revelation through African American culture*. Westminster John Knox Press.
Collins, J. J.. 1998. *Apocalyptic Imagination: an introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Friesen, Steven J.. 2001. *Imperial cults and the Apocalypse of John: reading Revelation in the ruins*. Oxford University Press.
Gorman, M. J.. 2011. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness*. Eugene, OR: Cascade.

- Hanson, Paul D.. 1979. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: the Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Howard-Brook, Wes & Gwyther, Anthony. 1999. *Unveiling empire: reading Revelation then and now*. Orbis Books.
- Koester, Craig R. 2001. *Revelation and the end of all things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kraybill, J. Nelson. 1996. *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement)*. Continuum International.
- . 2010. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*. Brazos Press.
- Portier-Young, A. E. *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011)
- Rowland, C.. 1982. *The Open Heaven*. London: SPCK.
- Thompson, Leonard L.. 1997. *The book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*. Oxford University Press.

Essays/Journal Articles

- Aune, David E.. 1986. "The Apocalypse of John and the problem of genre" *Semeia* 36
- Barr, D. "John's Ironic Empire" *Interpretation* (January 2009): 20–30
- Bauckham, R. 1978. "The Rise of Apocalyptic" *Themelios* 3: 10-23.
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- Blount, Brian K.. 2000. "Reading Revelation today: Witness as active resistance" *Interpretation* 54: 398-412.
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- Koester, Craig R.. 2009. "Revelation's Visionary Challenge to Ordinary Empire" *Interpretation* 63: 5-18.
- O'Donovan, O. "The Political Thought of the Book of Revelation" *Tyndale Bulletin* 37 (1986): 61–94
- Ruiz, J.-P. "Taking a Stand on the Sand of the Seashore: A Postcolonial Exploration of Revelation 13" in Barr, D. L. (ed) *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003)
- Yarbro Collins, A.. 2000. "The Book of Revelation" In: Collins, J. J., McGinn, B. Stein, S. J., eds. *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*. Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 384-414.
- . 1979. "The Early Christian Apocalypses" *Semeia* 14: 61-122.

Course Website(s)

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> . Students who have trouble accessing Quercus should contact the registrar's office for further help.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (Not all categories will be required for all courses.)

(A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS

Students will demonstrate the ability to do close analytical reading of texts in their historical contexts, form arguments about their interpretation, and critically appraise alternatives. Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in respectful classroom dialogue. This will be assessed through the final paper and book review tasks, and classroom participation.

(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES
Students will demonstrate competency in the discipline of New Testament studies through close readings of canonical texts in their historical context, as well as drawing constructive connections to systematic theology and pastoral theology. This will be assessed through the book review and final paper tasks.

(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Students will be able to reflect on their own personal and spiritual formation in relation to this question, comparing and contrasting these charitably with those whose positions are experiences are different to their own. This will be assessed through the learning journal task and classroom participation.

(D) IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Students will formulate an understanding of the implications of how these texts are interpreted in relation to the debate about the role of women in contemporary church ministry. This will be assessed through the learning journal and book review tasks.

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas:

(1) Participation (10%)

In addition to attendance and participation in the regular activity of the class, including the reading of the required texts, students are expected to engage in discussion activities

(2) Exegetical paper (30%)

Due date: 24th June '25

Students will write an exegesis paper of no more than 2,500 words on one of the following passages:

- Revelation 1.9–20
- Revelation 4.1–11
- Revelation 12.1–12
- Revelation 17.1–18
- Revelation 21.9–27

(3) Bible Study Notes (30%)

Due date: 8th July '25

Design a six-session study series on the book of Revelation and produce study notes amounting to 2,500 words. The aim of the series should be a close engagement with the text of Revelation, with six sessions of around 90 minutes each. It can be chapter-by-chapter or thematic, or some other approach: the arrangement and design of the material is up to you, and you are encouraged to be creative – though of course this should be rooted in solid scholarship on the themes/structure of Revelation, avoiding gimmicks. A small proportion of the material can involve 'application' to our lives and our contemporary context, but this should not be the main focus. The notes should be presented in a format you would give to a small group leader. You can provide additional handouts/worksheets/visual materials, which don't count in the word limit and may be included as an appendix.

The study notes should include at least the following:

- The title of each session, indicating the passage or theme for discussion
- A brief overview of the teaching content, with enough detailed information to help your group leaders teach the session
- Suggested discussion questions for each session
- A short list of suggested additional resources for your small group should they wish to read further (this could be divided into 'beginner' and 'more advanced' material, for example)

(4) Topical paper (30%)

Due date: 29th July '25

Write a 2,500 word essay on one of the following questions:

1. *Is the Book of Revelation an irretrievably violent book?**
2. *How does Revelation use the Old Testament? Answer with reference to a specific passage of your choice.*

3. *What does it mean to 'conquer' in Revelation, and what might this teach the church today?*
4. *Examine Revelation's depiction of the Roman empire, with reference to how the church might faithfully read this in our contemporary world.**
5. *Examine Revelation's portrayal of Jesus and discuss the implications for its Christology.*
6. *How does Revelation depict the Devil/Satan?*

**see supplementary bibliography on Quercus*

Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

Grading System - Graduate Degree Students

5000, 6000 and 7000 level courses use the following alpha grading scale;

A+	(90-100)	Profound & creative
A	(85-89)	Outstanding
A-	(80-84)	Excellent
B+	(77-79)	Very Good
B	(73-76)	Good
B-	(70-72)	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level
FZ	(0-69)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Under exceptional circumstances a student may request a short extension to be negotiated with the instructor. Instructors are not obliged to accept assignments that are late. If the instructor chooses to accept an assignment, where an extension has not been requested and approved before the due date, then **one percentage point per day will be deducted**. The absolute deadline for the submission of assignments is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner.

Students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) who are unable to submit their work by the end of the term are requested to consult with their instructor and request an SDF. The form is available on our website at this link

<https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/sites/default/files/Basic%20Degree%20Request%20For%20Extension.pdf> or can be collected from the registrar's office. An SDF request must be submitted, with instructor approval and with an agreed deadline, to the registrar's office no later than the last day of the exam week or the last day of class in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond one year. If a student has not completed work and has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be calculated that reckons a grade of zero for that component of work that was not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>. A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges: <https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing/>

Use of AI. Students are not to submit work generated by AI chatbots such as ChatGPT. If students are found to have done so, they will receive a mark of 'zero' for the assignment concerned.

Recording Policy. Students may not create audio or video recordings of classes with the exception of those students requiring an accommodation for a disability (as identified by the Accessibility Services). These students should speak to the instructor in advance of the class.

If a course is to be recorded (either by a student or the instructor), the following guidelines apply:

- Students must be given notice that lectures or a lecture will be recorded, preferably well before the recorded class. Consent forms are available from the Registrar's office.

- Students must be given the option to opt out of recorded classes without penalty. Students who wish to remain anonymous in a recorded lecture will not be penalized for this choice – if, for example, participation is a required component of the course, students will be given another option to earn participation credit that will not be recorded.

Students creating unauthorized audio and/or video recording of lectures violate an instructor's intellectual property rights and the Canadian Copyright Act. Students violating this agreement will be subject to disciplinary actions under the Code of Student Conduct.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

Course Schedule

Day 1: Reading Revelation

Monday, May 26th

preparatory reading: Revelation (in toto); Gorman Ch 1–4

- Lecture 1 Revelation's purpose and genre (Rev 1.1–8)
- Lecture 2 Revelation's structure
- Lecture 3 Revelation's use of imagery and intertextuality
- Lecture 4 Reading Revelation in the ancient world and ours
- Discussion

follow-up reading: Davies 1–30

Day 2: Oracles to the Churches (Revelation 1–3)

Tuesday, May 27th

preparatory reading: Revelation 1–3; Gorman Ch 5

- Lecture 5 A vision of Christ (Rev 1.9–20)
- Lecture 6 The messages to the churches (Rev 2–3)
- Lecture 7 The messages to the churches (Rev 2–3)
- Lecture 8 Reading Revelation 1–3 in our contemporary world
- Discussion

follow-up reading: Davies 53–82

Day 3: Visions of Heavenly Worship (Revelation 4–11)

Wednesday, May 28th

preparatory reading: Revelation 4–11; Gorman Ch 6–7

- Lecture 9 The Throne-Room vision (Rev 4–5)
- Lecture 10 The Seven Seals (Rev 6–7)
- Lecture 11 The Seven Trumpets (Rev 8–11)
- Lecture 12 Reading Revelation 4–11 in our contemporary world
- Discussion

follow-up reading: Davies 83–114

Day 4: Visions of Cosmic War (Revelation 12–16)

Thursday, May 29th

preparatory reading: Revelation 12–16; Gorman Ch 8

- Lecture 13 The Woman, the Dragon, and the Beasts (Rev 12–13)
- Lecture 14 The Lamb, the 144,000, and the Harvest (Rev 14–15)
- Lecture 15 The Seven Bowls (Rev 16)
- Lecture 16 Reading Revelation 12–16 in our contemporary world
- Discussion

follow-up reading: Davies 145–182

Day 5: Visions of Cosmic Victory (Revelation 17–22)

Friday, May 30th

preparatory reading: Revelation 17–22; Gorman Ch 9–10

- Lecture 17 Babylon and Her Judgement (Rev 17–19)
- Lecture 18 The Rider on the White Horse and Beast's defeat (Rev 19–20)
- Lecture 19 The New Heaven and New Earth (Rev 21–22)
- Lecture 20 Reading Revelation 17–22 in our contemporary world
- Discussion

follow-up reading: Davies 189–208; 227–248