

BRIERCREST

BLST 729 Revelation: Jesus' Letter to the Church

Winter 2019

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Course Dates: February 25-March 1, 2019

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In a world that has become increasingly unstable, the message of Revelation is more relevant than ever. Revelation begins with an important promise about what is to follow: "Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it" (1:3). But how can we respond to its message if we do not understand it? What exactly is the message of the book of Revelation? To answer this question, we examine the genre of Revelation and its likely function and carefully consider the merit and implications of various approaches to interpretation, including futurist (dispensationalist), preterist, historicist, and idealist approaches.

COURSE TEXTS

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Gorman, Michael. *Reading Revelation Responsibly. Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011.

Pate, C. Marvin, ed. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- be able to articulate clearly their own sense of Revelation's chief rhetorical purposes

- be able to sketch the main contours of the prophetic drama that unfolds in Revelation and be able to locate any text from Revelation within that drama
- be able to discuss with insight several of Revelation's recurring motifs
- be able to discuss critically the primary interpretive options in selected texts in Revelation
- have been introduced to apocalyptic literature in general and to the genre of Revelation in particular
- be able to assess the relative strengths of the major interpretive approaches to Revelation
- have been introduced to several key moments in the reception-history of Revelation
- appreciate the distinctive theological contribution that Revelation makes within the canon
- have begun to recognize the important resources that Revelation offers both for personal spiritual formation and for the Church's pursuit of its mission

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Date	Text/Class Topic	Primary Text Reading
02-25	An Introduction to Revelation: Its Reception and Influence	
	Revelation 1.1-8	Revelation 1.1-8
	Revelation in Its Historical Context	Daniel 7-12
	Revelation 1.9-2.7	Revelation 1.9-2.7 1 Enoch 85-90
	Revelation in Its Historical Context	1 Enoch 1-36; <i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> (excerpts in Reddish, 255-65)
	Revelation 2.8-29	Revelation 2.8-29
02-26	Revelation 3.1-22	Revelation 3.1-22
	Revelation 4.1-11	Ezekiel 1-2; Daniel 7 Revelation 4.1-11
	Revelation 5.1-14	Revelation 5.1-14
	Revelation 6.1-17	Zechariah 6.1-8 1 Enoch 47.1-4 Revelation 6.1-17
02-27	Revelation 7.1-8.5	Ezekiel 9 Revelation 7.1-8.5
	Revelation 8.6-9.21	Joel 1-2 Revelation 8.6-9.21
	Revelation 10.1-11.18	Ezekiel 2.8-3.3 Zechariah 4 Revelation 10.1-11.18
	Revelation 11.19-12.17	Revelation 11.19-12.17
	Revelation 12.18-13.18	Daniel 7 Revelation 12.18-13.18

02-28	Revelation 14.1-15.4	Joel 3 Revelation 14.1-15.4
	Revelation 15.5-16.21	Exodus 15.1-18 Revelation 15.5-16.21
	Revelation 17.1-18	Revelation 17.1-18
	Revelation 18.1-19.10	Ezekiel 27 Revelation 18.1-19.10
	Revelation 19.11-20.15	Ezekiel 38-39 Daniel 7 Revelation 19.11-20.15
03-01	Revelation 21.1-8	Revelation 21.1-8
	Revelation 21.8-22.5	Ezekiel 40-48 Revelation 21.8-22.5
	Revelation 22.6-21	Revelation 22.6-21
	Revelation in Retrospect	

ASSIGNMENTS

Pre-Course Assignments:

Primary Text Reading: Read the entire book of Revelation three times in the months leading up to the class. The first reading is due January 18, the second February 1, and the third February 15 (on or before these dates, you can simply upload a Word document to Canvas that states you have completed the reading). This reading is designed to help students become familiar with the broad outlines of John the seer's drama, but also provides an opportunity for preliminary work on the structural outline and term paper. Failure to complete the reading will result in a loss of 1/3 letter grade (for each incomplete reading). If only two of the three readings are completed, an A in the course would become an A-, etc.

Structural Outline (10%): Due February 18, 2019

Each student is responsible to submit a 1-page structural outline of the book of Revelation. Expectations for the assignment will be posted to the course website (Canvas).

Reading Responses (30%): Due February 22, 2019

Each student is responsible to read each of the course texts in their entirety.

- For both Bauckham and Gorman, students will choose three chapters of particular interest to them and, for each chapter, write a 300-word précis that summarizes its argument. The assignment here is not to evaluate but to summarize as clearly and concisely as possible. In total, you will write six précis (worth 15%).
- In a review essay (worth 15%) of no more than 1800 words, students will briefly outline the distinctives of the four interpretive approaches to Revelation presented in Pate (ed.) and briefly assess what they judge to be strengths and weaknesses of these approaches.

Mid-Course Assignments:

Primary Text Reading. In preparation for class discussion, students will read Revelation in smaller units, following the course outline, along with short excerpts of other texts. Readings from extra-biblical texts will be posted to Canvas.

Working Paper¹ (20%)

Each student will prepare an exegetical working paper, *not to exceed three pages in length, single-spaced*. These papers will focus on one of the textual units we are scheduled to discuss (e.g., Revelation 1.1-8; see Course Outline) and serve as a basis for initiating class discussion on the texts with which they deal. Students should inform the instructor in writing of the text they prefer to work on, which will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Your paper should follow this format:

- **Literary Context.** What role does this text play in structure of the wider book? Does our author anticipate, or return to, important themes?
- **Outline of the passage.** Not just a listing of the contents (“and then...and then...”). Try to sketch a short outline that illumines the *structure and function* of the text. How are its parts related to one another and how do they work?
- **Optional: Text-Critical Issues.** If you read Greek, you may choose to include a very brief survey of the textual issues in the passage; where you judge them significant, include a brief discussion of the relevant evidence.
- **Key exegetical issues.** Identify the major exegetical problems in the passage. Do not labor over every jot and tittle; labor over only those jots and tittles that materially affect the interpretation of the text. Seek to identify the crucial particulars of the text which either demand interpretation or facilitate it. Having identified them, briefly enumerate possible resolutions to the problems and indicate how one might choose among the possibilities.
- **Significance of the passage.** Here you have scope for theological reflection and originality. What are the important questions (theological, pastoral, personal) raised for you by the passage? How might the text be used (or misused) in preaching? Students with an interest in the history of theological interpretation or in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the text might want to include here some reflections on how the text has been read and applied by interpreters who have preceded us in the faith (patristic period, Reformation, etc.).
- **Discussion questions.** Formulate *three* incisive questions about the text that might be used to initiate and guide class discussion.
- **Sources Consulted.** Include a working bibliography. If you find secondary material that is especially helpful to you in reading the text, please draw that to our attention.

These papers are due (and will be posted to Canvas) 24 hours before we are scheduled to discuss the text in class, so that I can bring copies for everyone to read in preparation for our discussion. Students will be given 5 minutes at the beginning of class to introduce the passage. (This means, of course, that they will have to choose to discuss only part[s] of their working paper.)

¹ This assignment, with its instructions, is adapted from C. Kavin Rowe, NEWTEST 870, Duke Divinity School. Although these papers are not due until the week of class, it would be wise to have the majority of the work done prior to our week of class.

Post-Course Assignments:**Term Paper (40%): Due April 26, 2019** (and submitted via Canvas)

Each student will write an essay (of 3500-4000 words) that gives evidence of careful reading of the relevant texts in Revelation and thoughtful interaction with secondary literature. The list of suggestions that follows is not intended to be exhaustive, but essay topics not on the following list must be approved by the instructor.

- The Death of Jesus in the Apocalypse
- John the Seer's Use of Israel's Scriptures: An Examination of Selected Texts
- The Identity and/or Meaning of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11
- The Theology of Suffering in the Book of Revelation
- The Dating of the Book of Revelation
- Israel, the Nations, and the People of God in Revelation
- Revelation among the Apocalypses: A Comparative Study
- The Depiction of Wealth in the Apocalypse
- Revelation and the Rapture of the Church
- The Symbolic Use of Numbers in Revelation
- The Beatitudes of the Apocalypse
- The Nature of the New Heavens and the New Earth
- Worship in the Book of Revelation
- The Christology of the Apocalypse
- The Justice of God in the Book of Revelation
- A Close Reading of Revelation _____ (a text approved by your instructor)

Whatever topic you choose, the following considerations apply:

- Begin with your own careful research on the text of Revelation itself. This stage of your research should take you to the point where you draft a preliminary thesis.
- While the primary basis for my assessment will be the care with which you work with the text of Revelation, you should plan to consult with no less than 12 *academic* sources (quality and diversity is important). Your aim in engaging in this secondary research is chiefly to let this research point you to evidence in Revelation itself that you otherwise might have missed. You should of course read these works critically, accepting only what you are confident makes good sense of what you see in Revelation.
- Remember that a good paper not only arrives at solid conclusions, but also provides solid evidence for those conclusions. An argument that is built on assertions rather than evidence will fail to convince.
- Be careful not to confuse *authorities* with *evidence*. While it is important that you show an awareness of important treatments of your subject (i.e., of who thinks what), demonstrating that an expert in the field agrees with your conclusion does not in itself offer support for your conclusion. What counts is not *who* agrees with your conclusion but *why anyone* should find your argument convincing.

- Strive for clear, concise, accurate and engaging prose (see, e.g., Christopher Lasch, *Plain Style*).
- Your paper should follow the conventions set out in Briercrest's Chicago-Style Format Guide.
- Carefully proofread your essay, aiming to eliminate spelling and grammatical errors.
- Write and re-write your essay.

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend 100% of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible, arrangements must be made with the course professor. A maximum of 1 full day of class can be foregone. Students should request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit if additional time is missed.

Course Schedules

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or illness who may need academic accommodations should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Student Success Centre in person (Room #215), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email (studentsuccesscentre@briercrest.ca).

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