



NT 803: Seminar in New Testament (New Testament Apocalyptic)
Loyd Melton, Ph. D.
John M. Bell Professor of New Testament
Fall, 2010
Due West

Class Meets: Thursdays, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Beginning September 2, 2010

E-mail: melton@erskine.edu

Office Phone: (Office No. 20) (864) 379-8883

Seminary fax: (864) 379-3171

Office Hours: My office hours are posted on my door. It is best to contact me personally by e-mail or phone to arrange an appointment.

Course Description:

In a seminar format, students examine selected topics in N.T. studies. Each time the seminar is offered, it focuses on one of the following areas: methodology of N.T. research, N.T. backgrounds, N.T. literature, N.T. theology, and N.T. Greek. The course involves substantial reading, research, and analysis of primary and secondary sources, as well as both oral presentations and written essays.

The focus of this seminar is N.T. apocalyptic. Students investigate apocalyptic as a literary genre, the possible origins of apocalyptic literature, and the uniqueness of N.T. apocalyptic. Particular emphasis is given to the Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13 and parallels) and the book of Revelation.

Course Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to build on basic knowledge and skills which the student has obtained from his/her study of the Old and New Testaments by introducing the student to Jewish apocalyptic literature and examining Jesus' apocalyptic discourse in Mark 13. Then, attention is given to a careful study of the book of Revelation. The course seeks to show how New Testament apocalyptic is both rooted in Jewish apocalyptic but also has its own uniqueness.

Course Objectives:

“The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church.” (ETS 2009-2010 *Catalog*, p. 6). Central to the mission of the Church is understanding and living out the teachings of the Bible. This course is then a direct expression of the Seminary's mission.

More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Define apocalyptic and related terms;
2. List and describe the typical literary characteristics of apocalyptic literature;
3. Describe the social and political conditions which generally give rise to apocalyptic thinking;

4. Describe the interpretive problems with Jesus' Synoptic apocalyptic discourse and the book of Revelation;
5. Explain the relevance of understanding apocalyptic literature for Christian theology;
6. Identify and describe major scholarly works in the study of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature.

Course Approach:

The purpose and objectives of this class are achieved through lectures, class discussion, student presentations, and a major research paper. The specific work requirements are as follows:

1. 2 written analyses of journal articles
2. short, individual research assignments which require nothing written but an oral report back to the group
3. 1 major research paper (15-25 pages of text, including footnotes/endnotes and full bibliography)
4. 1 oral presentation of the student's research paper

On the first day of class, the professor will give details and specific requirements of the work requirements above. The research paper is a semester-long effort. Progress reports will be called for each week. Due dates for all written work are given below.

Required Textbooks: Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody: Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993) ISBN 9780-9435-5753-7

Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) ISBN 9780-6642-2121-1

John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). ISBN 9780-8028-4371-5

In addition, students will need a copy of the Greek New Testament (either UBS or Nestle) and/or a copy of an English New Testament in any translation. The professor will provide numerous handouts throughout the course.

Course Requirements:

Attendance at each class is vital to the success of each student. One absence is allowed without penalty if the student has an extraordinary reason. Additional absences will require that the student do additional reading and/or writing. A student who misses more than three class meetings cannot pass the course.

Each student is expected to complete the reading assignments on time and to be prepared to offer informed comments in any class discussion. Since this course stresses disciplined and original research, the student should focus his/her efforts on producing a high caliber research paper.

The Seminary grade scale (ETS 2009-2010 *Catalog*, p. 46) will be used. The student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

2 written summary of journal article	=	30%
Class participation and short assignments	=	20%
Final research paper	=	50%

The criteria for grading written submissions (especially the final paper) are:

1. Adherence to instructions, use of both primary/secondary sources
2. Use of journal articles
3. Clear thesis/purpose statement
4. Strong defense of thesis
5. Adequate dealing with critical issues
6. Depth, analysis, and use of sources
7. Proper use of English language
8. Proper form of paper

Drop/Add/and Course Withdrawal

Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course and full tuition charges will apply. **No exceptions will be made to this policy.**

Incompletes

The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional

circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

Language about God and Humanity:

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine language when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men.")

Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. It is the mark of a good communicator to build bridges rather than barriers; therefore, such language should be used in all written work and oral presentations. The Seminary *Catalog* stands as an example of recommended usage.

Conduct in Theological Discussions

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the *Catalog* for more information.

Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements

All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards for All Masters Level Programs" (Erskine Seminary). The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. Plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community. See the current catalog for a fuller treatment of this issue including the specific consequences for violation and the grievance procedures. ANY STUDENT GUILTY OF PLAGIARISM OR CHEATING IS IN VIOLATION OF SEMINARY POLICY AND IS LIABLE FOR DISMISSAL.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: 9-2, 9-9, 9-16, 9-23

Course introduction, procedures, etc.(9-2)

TOPIC: Introducing Apocalyptic Literature

- A. Defining apocalyptic and related terms
- B. The origins of apocalyptic literature
- C. Jewish apocalypses
- D. Jesus and apocalyptic

Required Reading:

Read John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) in its entirety.

Writing Assignment:

Write a summary of a recent (last 30 years) journal article on Jewish apocalyptic literature. Specific instructions will be provided. This summary is due on 9-23.

Part II: 9-30, 10-7, 10-14, 10-21

TOPIC: The Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13 and parallels)

- A. The scholarly discussion on Jesus' apocalyptic discourse
- B. Interpretive problems with Mark 13
- C. An exposition of Mark 13

Required Reading:

Read G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993) in its entirety.

Writing Assignment:

1. Write a summary of a recent (last 30 years) journal article on Jesus and apocalyptic. Specific instructions will be provided. This summary is due on 10-14.
2. The student should submit a preliminary plan of his/her research paper including the topic, the thesis statement, a preliminary outline, and a preliminary bibliography. This plan is due on 10-21.

Part III: 10-28, 11-4, 11-11, 11-18

TOPIC: The Book of Revelation as Apocalyptic

- A. The genre of Revelation
- B. The likely background of Revelation
- C. An exposition of Revelation

D. Revelation as apocalyptic re-interpreted

Required Reading:

Read Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) in its entirety.

Writing Assignment:

The student's major research paper is due on 12-9.

Each student will make an oral presentation of his/her research on 12-2 and 12-9. Specific instructions for this presentation will be given.