

**COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES
RELIGION PROGRAM: RELI 2840**

APOCALYPTICISM IN FILM

Instructor: Shawna Dolansky

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Office hours: 2a35 PA, Tu/Th 10:20am – 11:20am

Office Phone: 520-2600 ex.(2103) *do not leave messages here*

Lectures: Tu 11:35am-2:25pm, Tory Building 342

The concept of apocalypse is foundational to Western culture. Originating in our oldest Jewish and Christian texts, themes of hidden truths, end times, and battles between good and evil are pervasive to Western literature and art throughout history. The twentieth century saw the rise of a new art form in film, and now the apocalypse has a home on the big screen.

In this course we will examine the origins of apocalypticism in the Bible, early Judaism, and early Christianity. We will try to understand the context and circumstances of its origins and the themes and beliefs that are part of an apocalyptic worldview; in particular, the concept of cosmic justice and how meaning can be found in suffering. Then we will look at a variety of modern films to see the ways in which these ancient ideas have been adopted and adapted to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in North America. In each genre of ancient apocalyptic literature and modern film, what truths do we learn about human nature and what we value most?

Our goals are to understand how apocalypticism has been appropriated in modern culture; what is the same and what is different in modern apocalyptic from ancient, and why; and to determine if apocalyptic films ultimately carry the same meanings and messages for contemporary audiences as ancient apocalyptic literature did for its intended audiences.

Readings:

All assigned readings can be found online at the urls listed in the syllabus, or on CULearn. Readings from the Bible are available at biblegateway.com – choose the NRSV translation.

Evaluation:

Your methods of evaluation for this course will be comprised of: midterm 25% and final exam OR film 25%; and 50% assignments of your own choice. The “choice” assignments could be made up of any combination of the following choices that add up to 50% -

Horror Assignment – 20%

Terminator Assignment – 20%

Matrix Assignment – 20%

Star Wars Assignment – 20%

The Female in Apocalyptic Film Assignment – 20%

Zombie Assignment – 20%

Thought Questions – 10% each

Presentations – 10% presentation, + 10% write-up

You cannot do more than two movie assignments, as they will add to more than 50%; but you could do two of them and one Thought Question; one movie assignment, a presentation, and a Thought Question; two presentations and a Thought Question; etc. If you do a presentation, you must also do a “write-up” of the presentation. Thought Questions and presentation write-ups should be 4-5 pages double-spaced. Movie assignments should be 8-10 pages in length and double-spaced. Please see separate handouts on each type of assignment for more details of what will be expected, and for the due dates. Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances, as you have a choice to do other assignments with different due dates. Please note that you can only hand in Thought Questions on a topic separate from any movie assignments or presentations you are completing.

Final Film Option: This is a major undertaking, and a formal, detailed proposal and annotated bibliography/filmography are required to be handed in to the professor by Feb 25, no exceptions. Please see assignment sheet for more details.

Schedule

Tues. Jan. 7 **Introduction to the course**

Tues. Jan. 14 **Ancient Apocalyptic: Overview**

READ Genesis 3-6 and:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/worldview.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/resilience.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/primary/white.html>

Tues. Jan. 21 **Ancient Apocalyptic: Jewish Texts**

READ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/jews.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/bdaniel.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/primary/bdaniel.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/primary/enoch.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/scrolltranslation.html>

Tues. Jan 28 **Ancient Apocalyptic: Christian Texts**

READ Matt 10-11; 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 10-12; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 11:16-12:10; Rom 5-6; Revelation; and

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/jesusjohnbaptist.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/brevelation.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/revelation/white.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/etc/video.html>

Tues. Feb 4 **Myth & Meaning: Blade Runner**

READ “Moving Shadows: Religion & Film as Cultural Products” from Margaret R. Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies*, on CULearn

READ Karen J. Renner, “The Appeal of the Apocalypse” on CULearn

TQ - What do the Miles and Renner each think is the role of film in society?

Without *summarizing* the articles, discern the authors' main points and write about your agreement, partial agreement, or disagreement with them. Think about what might be useful in their *methods of analysis* of both film and religion, and how these methods might relate to our reading of ancient apocalyptic literature. What are the similarities between analyzing ancient apocalyptic literature and contemporary film, and what are the differences?

Watch *Blade Runner* in class

Tues. Feb 11 **Midterm Exam**

Watch *Twelve Monkeys* in class (after exam)

Tues. Feb. 18 **BREAK WEEK**

Tues. Feb. 25 **Apocalypse Now**

READ Frances Flannery Dailey “Bruce Willis as the Messiah: Human Effort, Salvation and Apocalypticism in *Twelve Monkeys*” at <http://avalon.unomaha.edu/jrf/Messiah.htm>

READ Jeremy Burns, “Apocalyptic Redux: (Re)Vision and Recognition in Terry Gilliam’s *Twelve Monkeys*” in *Marxism and the Movies: Critical Essays on Class Struggle in the Cinema*, on CULearn

TQ – If *Twelve Monkeys* is representative of the genre, what do Burns and Dailey think are the key elements of apocalyptic film? How do you think this relates to ancient apocalyptic literature? What are the similarities and differences in the uses and meanings of the genres?

Watch *Apocalypse Now* in class

Tues. March 4 **Apocalyptic Eschatology**

Horror Assignment due

Presentations: Lost Souls, End of Days, Bless the Child, Fallen, Pale Rider, The Seventh Sign

READ Conrad E. Ostwalt "Hollywood and Armageddon: Apocalyptic Themes in Recent Cinematic Presentation" in *Screening The Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film*, on CULearn

READ Richard Walsh "Sanctifying Empire: Or the (Hopeful?) Paradox of Apocalypsia" in *Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film*, on CULearn

TQ – What themes do Ostwalt and Walsh identify as apocalyptic? Do they agree? Do you? How does each author define “apocalyptic” in film and, according to their analysis, how do you see this in relation to the genre of ancient apocalyptic literature?

Watch *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in class

Tues. Mar. 11 Alien Apocalypse

Star Wars Assignment due

Presentations: V, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, War of the Worlds, Close Encounters, ET, Starman, the Fifth Element

READ Jon R. Stone, "'A Fire in the Sky': Apocalyptic Themes on the Silver Screen" in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, on CULearn

READ John Lyden "The Apocalyptic Cosmology of *Star Wars*" at <http://avalon.unomaha.edu/jrf/LydenStWars.htm>

TQ - TBA

Watch *Terminator* in class

Tues. Mar. 18 Post-Apocalyptic Dystopia

Terminator Assignment Due

Presentations: Terminator 2: Judgment Day; Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines; Terminator Salvation; Children of Men; Mad Max; The Road; The Book of Eli

READ Gaye Ortiz and Maggie Roux "The Terminator Movies: High-Tech Holiness and the Human Condition" in *Explorations in Theology and Film: An Introduction*, on CULearn

READ Anton Kozlovic "From Holy Aliens to Cyborg Saviours: Biblical Subtexts in Four Science Fiction Films" at <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/cyborg.htm>

TQ - TBA

Watch *The Matrix* in class

Tues. Mar. 25 Technological Apocalypse

The Matrix Assignment Due

Presentations: Wall-E; The Day After Tomorrow; AI; The Matrix Reloaded; The Matrix Revolutions

READ Greg Garrett, "I Saw One Like the Son of Man: The Eschatological Savior in Contemporary Film" in *Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film* on CULearn

READ Joy Bill "Why The Future Doesn't Need Us" <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html>

READ Paul Fontana "Finding God in the Matrix" in *Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and the Religion in the Matrix*, on CULearn

READ Elizabeth Rosen "Apocalypse Reloaded," in *Apocalyptic Transformations* on CULearn

TQ – TBA

Watch *The Handmaid's Tale* in class

Tues. Apr. 1 Sexual Apocalypse
The Female in Apocalyptic Film Assignment Due

Presentations: The Rapture; Alien; Aliens; Contact; Tank Girl

READ Joel W. Martin "Anti-feminism in Recent Apocalyptic Film" at <http://avalon.unomaha.edu/jrf/antifem.htm>
READ Donald Palumbo "The Monomyth in James Cameron's The Terminator: Sarah as Monomythic Heroine," in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, on CULearn
READ Janice Hocker Rushing "Evolution of 'The New Frontier' in *Alien* and *Aliens*: Patriarchal Co-optation of the Feminine Archetype" in *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film*

TQ - TBA

Watch *Night of the Living Dead* in class

Tues. Apr. 8 Zombie Apocalypse

Presentations: World War Z; I am Legend; 28 Days Later; OR George Romero & the zombie genre

READ "Zombie Apocalypse: Plague and the End of the World in Popular Culture," Rikk Mulligan in *End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity*, on CULearn
READ Kim Paffenroth "Apocalyptic Images and Prophetic Function in Zombie Films" in *Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film* on CULearn

TQ - TBA

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 9, 2013**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2014**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 8, 2013** for the Fall term and **March 7, 2014** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery. If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept. Deferrals of assignments must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor. Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library