

**POLITICS IN THE AGE OF ANTICHRIST:  
PROPHECY AND SOCIETY, 1500-1800**

Today few people would accept the notion that the world is about to end through a prophesied, supernatural act. Despite Jimmy Swaggert, Hal Lindsey, and even former President Reagan, the Judeo-Christian apocalypse, at least literally understood, is normally discounted as a creed for cranks.

And yet that has not always been the case. Between 1500 and 1800 many of Europe's and America's most creative minds (Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish) believed that they were living in the latter days of the world and the culmination of human history. In fact, the apocalypse underwrote the Reformation in the 16th century, the English Revolution in the 17th century, and the American Revolution in the 18th century. Moreover, it proved a crucial catalyst in the emergence of liberal values, political democracy, and even modern science. There is nothing in the least liberal, democratic, or scientific about the apocalypse, but none of these phenomena would have developed without it. Even so, whether liberal or otherwise, apocalyptic ideas exercised the European social imagination quite literally from Moscow to Mexico City, from Scotland to the Yemen. They would shape the world in profound and enduring ways.

This course explores such themes through an examination of some of the more important texts of the period--drawn primarily though not exclusively from the anglophone cultures. Among the individuals considered will be: the scientists Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Joseph Priestley; the poets Edmund Spenser, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, John Dryden; the political philosophers Thomas Hobbes, James Harrington, Gerrard Winstanley, and the American founding fathers. The course is intended to deepen students' understanding of the processes of secularization. Why is the apocalypse--so alien to us today--so crucial to the creation of our culture and to what we are?

Only by seeing the apocalypse's central -- and often highly creative -- role historically within Western civilization, can we meaningfully assess its significance today. Only by grasping "Apocalypse Then" can we ever truly understand "Apocalypse Now."

Accordingly, the course will conclude with reflection on the persistence of apocalyptic traditions within the secular world after 1800. Topics ranging from the Taiping Rebellion in 19th-century China to the politics of the Cold War to contemporary phenomena like Jonestown, David Koresh, and the great rapture, will be considered. Why has Antichrist followed us into the Post-Apocalyptic Age? Why has the Apocalypse turned on the world it did so much to

create?

Books (on reserve and most also available for purchase):

Arthur Williamson, Apocalypse Then: Prophecy and the Making of the Modern World

Arthur Williamson, Apocalypse Wow!: Selected Readings

Bernard McGinn, Apocalyptic Spirituality

Francis Bacon, New Atlantis

Tommaso Campanella, City of the Sun

John Milton, Areopagitica

Andrew Marvell, Complete Poems

Gerrard Winstanley, The Law of Freedom

Blaise Pascal, Pensées

Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More

Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a dream" and Other Writings

Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth

Note: On reserve in the library is also an unabridged version of Apocalypse Then. It may be useful to students wishing to explore any of these topics in greater depth or in preparing a research paper.

**Course Requirements:** Members of the seminar will write four précis of apocalyptic texts (each of about four pages) and one analytical essay of about 5 pages (about 2000 words).

The **précis** will summarize the central argument in each of the following:

1. Francis Bacon, New Atlantis (1624?) **OR** Tommaso Campanella, City of the Sun (1612)
2. John Milton, Areopagitica (1644)
3. Gerrard Winstanley, The Law of Freedom (1652)
4. Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (1970, best seller 1974)

Each précis will be due in the class in which the text is scheduled to be discussed. Guidelines will be provided a week before the précis is due.

The **analytical essay** constitutes an analysis of an appropriate primary or secondary text. The essay will consider the text's thesis, assumptions, argument, and implications. If the analysis is of a primary text, the essay will also consider the text's historical significance and the reading given it by contemporaries. If the analysis is of a secondary text, the essay will also locate and analyze the critical response to it. Appropriate texts are indicated with a "+" in the syllabus.

Members of the seminar should feel free to propose other texts as subjects for a critical essay. *Such texts need to be approved by the instructor in advance.* **DATE DUE:** an analytical essay is due one week before its theme is scheduled to be discussed by the seminar. Each essay will be duplicated by the student and distributed to the class at that time, and will form part of the following session's discussion.

Evaluation:                      Analytical Essay 50%  
    Précis 30%  
    Participation 20%

Students also have the option of writing a **Research Paper** instead of the analytical essay and the précis. The research paper will normally concern a theme or problem within one of the syllabus topics. Such students who undertake this option will need to be familiar with the period of their topic and with the requirements of graduate research. The research paper will be due at the end of the semester. The research paper topic will need to be worked out with the instructor early on in the term. Several areas of inquiry are provided at the end of the syllabus. The research paper will replace the précis and the analytical paper (70% of grade).

Each week the seminar will read the selections indicated for the scheduled topic. "Further Readings" are intended for those whose interest is exceptionally robust.

\* = item on reserve (hopefully)

+ = good text for analytical essay (maybe)

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 12:00-3:00, 3061 Tahoe Hall (278-6914).

1st Week:

**MEET THE BEAST** (An Introduction);

Arthur Williamson, Apocalypse Then, pp.1-17.  
Selections from Scripture (SR)  
Lactantius, Divine Institutes (SR)  
Early Image of the Apostles (SR)

Further Reading:

\*Bernard McGinn, Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil, pp. 9-56.

\*Norman Cohn, Pursuit of the Millennium (revised edition), pp. 19-36.

The Bible (King James or Revised Standard)

Daniel esp. 2, 7, 12

Revelation (entire)

Bernard McGinn, "Early Apocalypticism," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, ed.

Patrides and Wittreich, pp. 2-39 (hereafter Patrides & Wittreich).

E.L. Tuveson, Millennium and Utopia, pp. 1-112.

D.C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus," in J.J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume I (The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity)*, pp. 267-302.

## 2nd Week:

**MEDIEVAL FORMULATIONS** (Meet Jesus Christ, Jr.): From Joachim of Fiore to Christopher Columbus

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, pp. 17-36.

\*Bernard McGinn (ed), Visions of the End, pp 117-121, 277-285.

Medieval Epistemology Documents (SR)

Luca Signorelli, "Antichrist Preaching," late 1490s (SR)

Sandro Botticelli, "Magdalene at the Foot of the Cross" with Florence in the background, 1502 (SR)

Joachim of Fiore, "Tree Circles" and "The New Order of the People of God," 12<sup>th</sup> century (SR)

## Further Reading:

\*Bernard McGinn, Antichrist, pp.114-199.

\*Bernard McGinn (ed.), Apocalyptic Spirituality, pp. 97-112, 118-124, 129-130, 142-148, 183-191.

\*Marjorie Reeves, "The development of apocalyptic thought: medieval attitudes," in Patrides & Wittreich, pp. 40-71.

Richard K. Emmerson, Antichrist in the Middle Ages, esp. pp. 3-20, 206-221.

+Marjorie Reeves, Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future

Bernard McGinn, "Apocalypticism in the Middle Ages: An Historiographical Sketch," in Medieval Studies, 37 (1975), pp. 252-286.

+Donald Weinstein, Savonarola and Florence

## 3rd Week:

## IMPERIAL SPAIN, THE LAST WORLD EMPIRE? – AND ITS ANGLOPHONE COMPETITOR

- \*P.J. McGinnis and A.H. Williamson, "Britain, Race, and the Iberian World Empire," in A.I. Macinnes et al. (eds.), The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 70-93.
- \*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapters 3.

### Further Reading:

- \*A.H. Williamson, "An Empire to End Empire: Empire and Anti-Empire in the Dynamic of Early Modern British Expansion," in P. Kewes (ed.), The Uses of History on Early Modern England, pp. 227-56.
- A.H. Williamson, "Scotland, Antichrist, and the Invention of Great Britain," in New Perspectives on the Society and Culture of Early Modern Scotland, ed. Dwyer, Mason, and Murdoch, pp. 34-52.
- \*Frances A. Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the 16th Century, pp. 29-87.
- +William Haller, Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation
- Richard Bauckham, Tudor Apocalypse
- K.R. Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645
- +Paul Christianson, Reformers and Babylon
- Robin Barnes, "Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: ca. 1500-1800," in B. McGinn (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume II (Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture), pp. 143-84.

### 4th Week:

## APOCALYPSE REVIVED: THE REFORMATION

- \*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 2.
- Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Bk. I (depending on class interest)

### Further Reading:

- \*W.M. Lamont, Godly Rule, pp. 7-9, 13-55.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Week:

## PROPHECY AND SCIENCE: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledgeshall be increased."

- \*Francis Bacon, New Atlantis (1624?)
- \*Tommaso Campanella, The City of the Sun (1602)

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 4.

\*\*\*\*\*(**FIRST PRÉCIS DUE IN CLASS**)\*\*\*\*\*

Further Reading:

\*M.C. and J.R. Jacob, The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution, pp. 31-8.

\*Charles Webster, The Great Instauration, pp. 1-32.

Frances A. Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, esp. pp.238-260 (translations of the Rosicrucian tracts).

6th Week:                   **THE BRITISH REVOLUTIONS, 1638-1662**

### **PROPHECY, OBLIGATION AND AUTHORITY, PART I: JOHN MILTON**

John Milton, Areopagitica (1644)

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 5.

\*\*\*\*\*(**SECOND PRÉCIS DUE IN CLASS**)\*\*\*\*\*

Further Reading:

+Christopher Hill, John Milton and the English Revolution

Michael Fixler, John Milton and the Kingdoms of God

Derek Hirst, Authority and Conflict: England, 1603-1658, chs. 7-12.

Lamont, Godly Rule, pp. 78-186.

Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down

Juliet Cummins (ed.), Milton and the Ends of Time

7th Week:                   **THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION II**

### **NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH: PROPHECY AND RADICALISM**

\*Gerrard Winstanley, The Law of Freedom (1652)

\*\*\*\*\*(**THIRD PRÉCIS DUE IN CLASS**)\*\*\*\*\*

Further Reading:

Christopher Hill, "The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley,"  
in Past and Present Supplement 5 (1978)

Lamont, Godly Rule, pp.82-178.  
A.S.P. Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty  
Gerrard Winstanley, Works, ed. G. Sabine  
+M. Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints  
+T. Wilson Hayes, Winstanley the Digger  
G.E. Aylmer, ed., The Levellers and the English Revolution  
G.E. Aylmer, "Gerrard Winstanley's 'Englands Spirit  
Unfolded,'" in Past and Present, 40 (1968)  
Keith Thomas, "Another Digger Broadside," in Past and  
Present, 42 (1969)  
+George M. Shulman, Radicalism and Reverence: The Political  
Thought of Gerrard Winstanley  
Christopher Hill, "Gerrard Winstanley and Freedom," in  
A Nation of Change and Novelty

8th Week:                    **THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION III**

**PROPHECY, OBLIGATION, AND AUTHORITY II: ANDREW MARVELL**

Andrew Marvell, "The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the  
Lord Protector, 1655"

Further Reading:

Marvell, "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from  
Ireland" (1650)  
S.N. Zwicker, "Models of Governance in Marvell's 'First  
Anniversary,'" Criticism, 16 (1974).  
J.M. Wallace, Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell  
Michael Wilding, "Marvell's 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland,' the  
Levellers, and the Junta," Modern Language Review, 82.1 (1987), pp. 1-14.  
J.A. Mazzeo, "Cromwell as Davidic King," in Renaissance and 17th Century Studies

9th Week:

**ANTI-ANTICHRIST: Catholic Response**

\*Michel de Montaigne, Of Cannibals (Frame Edition)  
\*Blaise Pascal, Pensées (Penguin edition), #23, 24, 25,  
26, 33, 44, 45, 60, 66, 83, 86, 90, 114, 125, 126,  
131, 188, 200, 228, 242, 520, 533, 750, 781.  
\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, Chapter 7 (review Chapter 4).

Further Reading:

Popkin, "Skepticism and the Counter-Reformation in France,"  
Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 51 (1960):58-87.

10th Week:

**PROPHECY AND SCIENCE II: The Newtonian Revolution and Beyond**

+\*Margaret Jacob, The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution, pp. 73-135.

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 6.

Further Reading:

+Betty-Jo Teeter Dobbs, The Janus Faces of Genius

+Betty-Jo Teeter Dobbs and M.C. Jacob, Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism

11th Week:

**ANTICHRIST AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS: From the Age of the Spirit to the Age of Enlightenment**

Denis Diderot, "Definition of an Encyclopedia" (Handout)

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, Chapter 8.

Further Reading:

+Theodore Olson, Millennium, Utopianism, and Progress, esp.  
pp. 3-10, 191-235.

+Margaret Jacob, Living the Enlightenment

E.L. Tuveson, Millennium and Utopia, pp. 113-203.

\*Jack Fruchtman, Jr., The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley

+Thomas Altizer, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake

+Christopher Burdon, The Apocalypse in England: Revelation Unraveling, 1700-1834

12th Week:

**THE DEATH OF ANTICHRIST? PART II: The Age of the American**

Revolution--"novus ordo saeculorum"

\*N.O. Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, pp. 21-54.

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 9.

Further Reading:

\*E.L. Tuveson, The Redeemer Nation

N.O. Hatch et al., The Bible in America, ch 3.

+Ruth Bloch, Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800

13th Week:

**ANTICHRIST IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC AGE I: Radical Reform, Democracy, and Post-Millennialism – from the Civil War to the 1960s**

\*Martin Luther King, "I have a dream" (1963)

\*Williamson, Apocalypse Then, chapter 10.

Further Reading:

+James Moorhead, American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War

+Lewis Perry, Radical Abolitionism: the Government of God in Antislavery Thought

E.L. Tuveson, The Redeemer Nation, ch. 6.

+Donald Hodges, Sandino's Communism

+Marco Aurelio Navarro-Génie, Augusto "César" Sandino: Messiah of Light and Truth

+James Moorhead, World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things.

R.M. Levine, "Apocalyptic Movements in Latin America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume III (Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age), pp. 140-78.

Harry S. Stout, Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War.

14th Week:

**ANTICHRIST IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC AGE, PART II: From the Rise of Pre-Millennialism to the Cold War**

Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More Prophecy Belief and Modern American Culture, ch. 3 ("The Premillennial Strand"), ch. 5 ("Ezekiel as the First Cold

Warrior").  
Norman Cohn, Pursuit of the Millennium (selection in SR)  
\*Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth

\*\*\*\*\***(FOURTH PRÉCIS DUE IN CLASS)**\*\*\*\*\*

Further Reading:

- \*A.H. Williamson, "Lapses in Reason" (MLK's apocalyptic vs Farrakhan's)
- +Michael Barkun, Crucible of the Millennium: the Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s
- +William A. Christian, Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ
- S.J. Stein, "Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream," in The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume III (Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age), pp.108-39.
- +Ernest Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930.
- +A.J. Magida, Prophet of Rage: A Life of Louis Farrakahn
- +Mattias Gardell. In the Nation of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakahn and the Nation of Islam

15th Week:

**ANTICHRIST IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC AGE, PART III:** The Persistence of Traditional Belief

- \*Bernard McGinn, Antichrist, ch. 10 ("Antichrist Our Contemporary").
- \*Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, Prologue ("The Hidden World of Belief"), ch. 10 ("Apocalyptic Portents in a Post-Cold War World").

Further Reading:

- +Billy Graham, Approaching Hoofbeats
- +Michael Barkun, Religion and the Religious Right: the Origins of the Christian Identity Movement
- +Robert Fuller, Naming the Antichrist: the History of an American Obsession
- Dominic Pettman, After the Orgy: Toward a Politics of Exhaustion (libidinal millenarianism?)

Film:

- "The Rapture" (Michael Tolkin, 1991).
- "The Matrix" (Wachowski Brothers, 1999).
- \*A.H. Williamson, "'The Matrix': The Other Men in Black"

16th Week:

THE END OF THE WORLD????

BEFORE THEN...

POSSIBLE RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS

**1. Enter Stage Left, Enter Stage Right: The Apocalypse and Its Critics in Elizabethan and Jacobean Theater**

How do reforming (“puritan”) dramas present the apocalyptic program? How do conservative dramas respond?

Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess* (1624)

Thomas Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon* (c. 1606)

John Webster, *The White Devil* (1612)

Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* (1614; revived 1661)

Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607)

Further Reading:

Middleton, *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1607)

Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1599)

Richard Helgerson, “Writing Empire and Nation,” in A.F. Kinney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500-1600* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 310-29.

**2. How secular is Gerrard Winstanley (really)?**

G.H. Sabine, *Works* and other readings. See instructor.

**3. How does the “Rapture” connect with and differ from “Dominion Theology”?; how do both connect or fail to connect with mainline Protestant eschatology?**

See instructor for initial readings.