

Fall 2017
Department for the Study of Religion
RLG101 Introducing Religion: It's the End of the World As We Know It
Thursdays 11am-1pm

Professor Laura Beth Bugg
Office Hours: Thursdays 9:30-11 am or by appointment, JHB 314
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Teaching Assistants:



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Course description:

Throughout history, many religious movements have envisioned the end of the world. This course will explore the ways in which different religious movements have prepared for and expected an end time, from fears, symbols, and rituals to failed prophecies and social violence. By examining traditions such as Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts through to fears of nuclear apocalypse and zombies, the course seeks to understand the ways in which ancient and modern claims of “the end” reflect the aspirations, anxieties, and religious concerns of communities.

Course readings:

Readings listed under each topic are **required** readings, which will be discussed during class and tutorials. All course readings (with the exception of the two books listed below) are available as PDFs on the course Blackboard site. To access the readings on the Blackboard site go to “Course Materials” then “Required Course Readings” and you will see all readings organized by date.

There are two required books that are available through the UofT bookstore, on reserve at Robarts Library, or as e-books through various online booksellers:

- 1) LaHaye, T. and J. Jenkins (1995). *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.
- 2) Lindsey, H. (1970) *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Requirements:

1	Class Participation	Weekly	15%
2	Critical Response Papers	4x/semester (15% each)	60%
3	Final Essay Exam	Date TBA	25%

Class Participation (15%)

In order to receive the full participation mark you must make a positive contribution to the class as a whole. This means coming to class prepared and on time, and participating in weekly tutorials. This semester our TAs will lead scheduled tutorials directly after lecture (1-2pm) on designated Thursdays. Attendance at tutorials is mandatory; the only excused absences for tutorials will be for documented medical or family caring obligations. Tutorials will afford you the opportunity to discuss the weekly readings, think about your critical response papers, and prepare for the final exam.

Critical Response Papers (Total = 60%)

This semester you will be asked to write four critical response papers, each 1-2 pages in length and worth 15% of your total grade. You may choose to write a response to ANY four of the papers that are marked on the syllabus with an asterisk (*). Although there are more than four readings listed with an asterisk, you may not write more than four papers to receive extra credit. We will discuss expectations for the response papers in class later, but for now please keep in mind the following:

- You must include your name and student ID on each page of each paper.
- Please provide the full bibliographic citation for each article or book chapter that you review.
- Please proofread your work before you submit it.
- Response papers must be uploaded on Blackboard *by 10am on the due date* on which the reading is assigned. Please submit under the “Assignments” folder (no hard copies).
- Penalties for late assignments are 5% per day unless there is a documented medical or family emergency. The only documentation I will accept is the official UofT illness verification certificate, which you must have signed by your physician (available here: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/undergraduate/forms>). In the case of family emergency, I will accept a letter from your registrar.
- Assignments more than a week late *will not be accepted* unless there is a documented medical or family emergency.

Final Essay Exam (25%)

The final exam will consist of both short and long essay questions. We will discuss the exam format in both lecture and tutorials, and offer strategies for writing the exam (specifically, we will discuss strategies for reading and taking notes in preparation for the exam, as well as strategies for completing timed essay exams). The date and time of the final exam will be announced as soon as it is scheduled.

Student Services

The University of Toronto offers a wealth of resources for students, including help with academic (<http://www.asc.utoronto.ca/>) and personal (<http://www.caps.utoronto.ca/>) issues. Everyone is encouraged to make use of the Writing Centre website (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>). Please contact me directly if you have difficulties navigating University resources.

Accommodations for Disability

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you feel that you may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>.

Academic Integrity

There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. Please refer to the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) found on the website of the Office of Student Academic Integrity (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai>).

Communication

- Email is the best way to reach me. I will do my best to respond within 48 hours of receiving your email.
- As weekends are family time, I do not respond to emails after 5pm on Friday through Monday at 9am.
- I am always happy to meet with students during office hours. If those hours do not work for you, please contact me and we can arrange an alternate time.
- All communication from me will go to your official University of Toronto email. Please check this email even if you use an alternate email address. Please send any email communication from your UofT email address.

Classroom culture

I want our classroom to be a place where we listen deeply to each other and respect the feelings, experience and wisdom behind what we all say. Before speaking, I would ask all of us to consider the positions from which we speak or do not speak (for ex., gender, class, race, sexuality, age, religion, and so on). If you ever have questions or concerns about the class environment or the way in which I facilitate discussion, please do not hesitate to contact me with your concerns.

Out of respect for the learning process I ask that all students observe the following:

- Please show up on time.
- Do not disrupt others by leaving early.
- Please refrain from using cellphones and other electronic devices unless it is part of our learning exercise.
- If you use a laptop to take notes, please do not use it for other activities.
- If you have caring or medical obligations that mean you must arrive late or leave early, please speak to me.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

September 7 Introduction: What in the World is “The End of the World”?

Required Readings:

- Carey, G. (2005) “Encountering Apocalyptic Discourse (Introduction)”. In *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, pp. 1-18.

September 14 Monsters, Visions and Revolt: Jewish Apocalypse

Required Readings:

- The Book of Daniel (NRSV)
- Collins, J. (1998). “Daniel (ch. 3). In *The Apocalyptic Imagination: an Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, pp. 85-115.

September 21 Beasts, Bloodshed and Empire: Early Christian Apocalypse

Required Readings:

- Book of Revelation (NRSV)
- *Pagels, E. (2012). “John’s Revelation: Challenging the Evil Empire, Rome (ch. 1)”. In *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation*. NYC: Penguin Books, pp. 1-36.

September 28 Resistance, Conquest and Islamic Prophecies of the End

Required Readings:

- Alvarez, L.M. (2007). “Prophecies of Apocalypse in Sixteenth-Century Morisco Writings and the Wondrous Tale of Tamīm al-Dārī”. *Medieval Encounters* 13(3): 566-601.
- *Sahin, K. (2010). “Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour”. *Journal of Early Modern History* 14(4): 317-354.

October 05 Millerites, Adventists and Abolitionists

Required Readings:

- *Harper, M. (2013). “Emancipation and African American Millennialism”. In B. Wright and Z. Dresser, eds., *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press: pp. 154-174.
- O’Reggio, T. (2006) “Slavery, Prophecy, and the American Nation as Seen by the Adventist Pioneers, 1854-1865”. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17(2): 135-158.

October 12 The Atomic Bomb, Nuclear Panic and the First Cold War

Required Readings:

- Lindsey, H. (1970) *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. (Read chs. 1, 4-8, 11-13)
- Strozier, C.B. and L. Simich (1991). “Christian Fundamentalism and the Nuclear Threat”. *Political Psychology* 12(1): 81-96.

October 19 Evangelical Christians and Rapture Prophecy

Required Readings:

- LaHaye, T. and J. Jenkins (1995). *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. (Select chapters)
- *Monahan, T. (2008). “Marketing the Beast: Left Behind and the Apocalypse Industry”. *Media, Culture and Society* 30(6): 813-830.

October 26 New Religious Movements and Apocalypse: The People’s Temple and the Branch Davidians

Required Readings:

- Hall, J. (2000). “The Apocalypse at Jonestown”. In J. Hall, et al, eds., *Apocalypse observed: religious movements and violence in North America, Europe, and Japan*. London: Routledge: pp. 15-43.
- Kelley, D. “Waco: A Massacre and Its Aftermath”. *First Things* (May, 1995) Available from <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1995/05/waco-a-massacre-and-its-aftermath>

November 02 The Mayans and Prophecies of 2012 as the End of the World

Required Readings:

- *Bell, E. (2012). “‘Pirates of our Spirituality’: The 2012 Apocalypse and the Value of Heritage in Guatemala”. *Latin American Perspectives* 39(6): 96-108.

- Hoopes, J. (2014). “Mayanism Comes of (New) Age”. In *2012: Decoding the Countercultural Apocalypse* (ed. J. Gelfer). NYC: Routledge, pp. 38-59.

November 9 – NO CLASS – READING WEEK

November 16 Prepping for the Apocalypse: Survivalists & the Militia Movement

Required Readings:

- Barkun, M. (1997). “Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement (ch. 1)”. In *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (eds. T. Robbins and S. Palmer). NYC: Routledge.
- Osnos, E. (2017). “Doomsday Prep for the Super Rich”. *The New Yorker* January 30, 2017.

November 23 Zombie Apocalypse

Required Readings:

- Kirkman, R. and T. Moore (2006). *The Walking Dead*. Berkeley, CA: Image Comics. Read first issue, available online at <http://www.newsarama.com/11938-full-free-issue-the-walking-dead-1-mature.html#s26>
- *McAlister, E. (2012). “Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies” *Anthropological Quarterly* 85(2): 457-486.

November 30

Conclusions: Thinking about the end of the world

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