



McMaster Divinity  
College

**The Book of Revelation:  
In View of All This, How Then Should We Live?**

NT 3P1110 (BS/CC/PS)  
NT 5P1080

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Winter 2025 (Term 2)  
Thursdays, 2:00pm–3:50 pm, in person



**Course Description**

Revelation is considered to be one of the most difficult and controversial books in the Bible. The sometime bizarre and often repetitive imagery and narrative has generated a wide variety of interpretations of the various characters and events. The interpretations have sometimes had a dramatic impact on the Christian community, though the outcome has not necessarily been godliness. This course particularly focuses on the overall impact and message of Revelation within its socio-historical and apocalyptic context, with responsible and effective contextualization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will discover a book that leads us into a direct and worshipful encounter with God, helps us to navigate our cultures, and which transforms our lives in the present.

This class is an exegetical and interpretative study of the Book of Revelation in English translation. It involves an acquaintance with structure, content, message, context and other interpretive issues of Revelation as well as its meaning for today in discipleship, community and ministry.

**DPT Course (NT 5P1080)**

DPT students who wish to take the Book of Revelation as an advanced elective will contact the professor ([westfal@mcmaster.ca](mailto:westfal@mcmaster.ca)) and together we will design a syllabus that fits your overall focus so that it will directly contribute to your practice-led research project.

## **Specializations**

This course is an elective for specializations in Biblical Studies (BS), Church and Culture (CC), and Pastoral Studies (PS).

### ***Biblical Studies (BS)***

Students taking Revelation as a Biblical Studies (BS) course will closely study not only one of the most challenging books in the Bible in regards to issues of interpretation and prophecy (eschatology), but it is one that is rich in Old Testament allusion as well as transparent references to the Roman context and Jewish community and background. Therefore, this book is an excellent place to hone your exegetical skills in an interesting genre while being challenged by the relevant messages to the believer and the churches.

### ***Church and Culture (CC)***

Students taking Revelation as a Christ and Culture (CC) course will explore how apocalyptic literature addressed its culture. It will integrate the biblical context and teaching of Revelation with the contemporary world. The course will interface the first century cultural context of Revelation with what is happening in contemporary culture, and relate and apply what was happening with the seven churches to contemporary issues now.

### ***Pastoral Studies (PS)***

Students taking Revelation as a Pastoral Studies (PS) course will be able to equip themselves to preach, teach and answer the inevitable questions that they themselves have and that others will definitely ask about this provocative book of the Bible that continues to interest and confound believers who want to understand Scripture. Even better, this course will focus on the pastoral message and challenge to the churches that run through the book, and highlight the majestic scenes of worship that have inspired many songs of worship.

### ***As an Elective***

Perhaps you have always wanted to study Revelation, but on the other hand, maybe you have been turned off by the way that Revelation has been presented and taught in the church (anyone left behind?). Take this course and you will encounter Revelation's pragmatic call to a holy life of resistance and a response of worship.

## **Course Objectives**

Specific Objectives – Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments the student will:

### ***Knowing:***

- Grasp the message and structure of Revelation as a whole and in terms of its component parts
- Understand Revelation in its social, historical, literary and religious Jewish Hellenistic context
- Become familiar with critical views concerning introductory questions (i.e. authorship, date, settings, etc.) and identify the features in the text that illuminate the option

### ***Doing:***

- Highlight the message and themes, exegete significant passages, and understand the major issues in the text and its interpretive problems
- Apply the text to discipleship, community and ministry formation and consider strategies for its re-presentation in contemporary contexts

### ***Being:***

- Appreciate the distinctive theology and goal(s) of the author
- Allow the text to motivate, form and transform righteousness, hope and worship

## Course Requirements

### ***Class Participation*** (10%)

Student participation will be in a hybrid format involving participation based on the readings for the week. Following the introduction of the first day, students will come to class prepared to discuss their impressions of the portion of the Book of Revelation studied for that day

- Key theological insights
- Items of particular exegetical interest or controversy
- Possible applications to contemporary Christian living

### ***Reading*** (10%)

See the Daily Schedule at the end for the precise dates and pages.

- Students are required to read the portion of Revelation covered in class in Keener. Read the pages for the required reading from Blackwell prior to class on the due dates (see Daily Schedule at the end). Be prepared to interact with the main issues in group discussions.
- Read Revelation three times. Be sure that you read the chapters in Revelation at least once before they are discussed in class.
- At the end of the term, each student will submit a reading report to Avenue to Learn **April 11** indicating the percentage of the reading that has been completed.

## Textbooks and Materials

### **Required Reading**

Blackwell, Ben C. et al. *Reading Revelation in Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.

DeSilva, David. *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. DBT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021.

### **Textbook Purchase**

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

## Written Assignments

### ***Commentary, Research or Exegetical Paper***

**Choose and write either an exegetical paper, a commentary- style paper or a research paper due 11:59 p.m. Friday, February 28 (40%)**

Each student will choose to write *an exegetical paper, a commentary or a research paper*.

**Late papers will lose 2% a day for a week, then 5% a day to a maximum of 30%.**

### ***Exegetical Paper***

Student may choose to write a type of exegetical paper which is the traditional seminary assignment for the preparation of a sermon or a Bible Study.

Approach:

- Choose a text from Revelation according to the course you registered for. It must form a cohesive unit, of 10–15 verses.
- Detailed instructions (“Steps to Exegesis”) will be placed on Avenue to Learn and in the course DropBox.

Length & style: it should be approximately 5,000 words (about 15 pages of text) excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, see the MDC Style Guide. There should be a minimum of 15 good quality sources used in the footnotes and bibliography. For all other matters, follow the “Steps to Exegesis,” including the subheadings.

See Rubric on A2L for Grading

*Commentary-style paper on a selected passage*

Approach:

- Choose a passage from Revelation (up to 15 verses).
- Choose target readers
- Write the paper in commentary form--i.e., preceding sequentially through a discrete passage. Choose a specific commentary style and stick with it.
- Reflect awareness of a wide variety of perspectives as represented in the literature given in the course bibliography.
- Come to clearly articulated positions, however tentative, which are defended and not merely asserted.

Length & style: It should be no more than 4,000 words (about 15 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster style guide. There should be a minimum of 15 good quality sources in the research and documentation

See Rubric on A2L for grading.

*Research paper*

Approach:

- Select one of the rich topics in Revelation
- Watch the PowerPoint presentation on “Writing a Research Paper” available on A2L and (advised) watch the videos on how to write a research paper by Mary Conway (link given)
- Discuss your topic with the professor.
- Write a research paper with research and documentation of at least 15 good quality sources.

Length & style: It should be no more than 5,000 words (about 15 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster style guide:

See the Rubrics on A2L for grading

***Project & Presentation due class time April 10 (30%+10%)***

Each student will complete a paper or project suitable for their specialization and designed to make the discourse, a section or a significant passage accessible in a specific contemporary context. They will do a short presentation of their project during the class.

Late projects lose 2% a day for a week, and 5% each day following (Saturdays and Sundays excluded) up to a maximum of 30%.

Approach:

- Choose your project.  
Creativity is encouraged. Some suggestions include:
  - Write a study guide that will assist young adult learners in exploring or understanding all or part of Revelation. Include questions, explanations, directions and other material that both enlightens the text in its historical context and helps learners to connect the text with life today.
  - Design a movie presentation, critical review and discussion which encapsulates a theme of Revelation with a modern metaphor.
  - Write a parable or allegory that utilizes significant or powerful contemporary imagery, symbols or metaphors that express the message and content of Revelations.
  - Write a collection of poetry or songs that explore thought, themes and/or emotions in Revelation.
  - Design an experience/retreat for a small group that simulates the situation of the recipients and the achievement of the goal(s) of the author.
  - Describe connections between the characters, contexts and themes in your life story and Revelation.
- Identity and profile your target audience. The approach to your projects will largely be determined by what application you choose.

If your project is an artifact, provide an exegetical explanation of its features. Marking will be based on

- The expression of the biblical message/content,
- The quality of the medium
- Appropriateness for the target groups
- The calculated effort expended.

Length & style: If written, it should be no more than 3000 words (about 12 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Style Divinity College Style Guide (above). If it is a project, it should involve somewhat comparable in time and effort to a 12 pg. research paper.

On **March 6**, submit a paragraph to A2L describing the specific contemporary context targeted, the passage that is being re-presented, the goal of the project and the approach. Choose mediums other than the traditional letters or sermons. You will receive timely feedback from the professor.

See the Rubric on A2L for grading

### ***Grading Summary***

➤ Participation	10%
➤ Reading	10%
➤ Commentary/Paper	40%
➤ Project	30%
➤ Presentation	10%

All papers must be turned in by April 11 to receive a grade.

### **Classroom Behavior**

#### ***Attendance***

- This course does not have a livestream option.
- Students should be on time to class or on site. If there are any issues, e-mail an explanation to the professor (copy GA Namhyo Kim: [kimn34@mcmaster.ca](mailto:kimn34@mcmaster.ca) in advance.
- Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
- Partial attendance (due to significant lateness or early departure) will be counted as an absence.
- More than 2 absences may result in a penalty. More than 4 absences will result in a failure of the course.

### **Participation**

- Please respect the opinions of others without disrespect or ridicule, even if you do not agree with them. However, feel free to respond logically and critically in an orderly manner.
- Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except what is appropriate in the course outline.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class or while they are livestreaming.
- Students are not to access e-mail, take or make phone calls, send or receive text messages, surf the net, etc., while class is in session.
- Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines may lose participation points impacting their grade and/or be dismissed from the class.

### **Bookstore**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

**A special note about AI:** You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

### ***AODA***

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

### ***Gender Inclusive Language***

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

### **Style**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>  
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

### **Appointments**

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via e-mail (most effective): [westfal@mcmaster.ca](mailto:westfal@mcmaster.ca)  
Or...friend me on Facebook and send me a message!

### **Office hours (Rm 242):**

Tuesday 11–2

Thursday 11–2

### **Disclaimer**

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

### MS 3XR3 Weekly Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Passage</i>	<i>Reading</i> Passage from Revelation DeSilva on the passage/material Revelation in Context on the passage
Jan 9	Syllabus & Introduction	DeSilva: 1–54 RRC: 19–36
Jan 16	Opening vision Revelation 1	DeSilva: 55–68 RRC: 37–44
Jan 23	Letters to churches Revelation 2–3	DeSilva 69–88 RRC: 45–51
Jan 30	Scene in Heaven Revelation 4	DeSilva 89–105 RRC: 52–58
Feb 6	Seals Revelation 5–8:1	DeSilva 106–24 RRC: 59–79
Feb 13 On campus	Trumpets Revelation 8:2–11:19	DeSilva, same as 2/9 RRC: 80–108
Feb 20	<b>MDC Reading Week</b>	
Feb 27	Cast of Characters Revelation 12–14 <b>Papers due Feb 28 11:59 p.m.</b>	DeSilva 125–45 RRC: 109–30
March 6	Bowls Revelation 15–16 <b>Paragraph describing Projects due</b>	DeSilva same as 2/27 RRC: 131–37
March 13	Babylon Revelation 17–18	DeSilva 146–66 RRC: 138–52
March 20	Armageddon & Millennium Revelation 19–20	DeSilva 167–82 RRC: 153–67
March 27	New Heaven, New Earth Revelation 21–22	DeSilva 182–97 RRC: 168–80
April 3	Conclusion: The Theology and Eschatology of Revelation	
April 10	<b>Projects due 2 p.m.</b> <b>Presentation of Projects during class</b> <b>Reading reports due April 11 at 11:59 p.m.</b>	



*Select Bibliography on Revelation Commentaries*

- Aune, David. *Revelation*, 3 vols. WBC. Vol. 1--Dallas: Word, 1997. Vols. 2-3CNashville: Nelson, 1998.CDetailed commentary on the Greek text
- Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Beale, G. K. and David Campbell. *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *The Book of Revelation*. NCB. London: Oliphants, 1974.
- Beasley-Murray, George R., Herschel H. Hobbs and Ray F. Robbins. *Revelation: Three Viewpoints*. Nashville: Broadman, 1977.
- Beckwith, I. T. *The Apocalypse of John*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.
- Blackwell, Ben C. et al. *Reading Revelation in Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.
- Boring, M. Eugene. *Revelation*. [Int] Louisville: John Knox, 1989.
- Boxall, Ian. *The Revelation of St. John*. BNTC. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006.
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- Caird, G. B. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. HNTC. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Charles, R. H. *The Revelation of St John*, 2 vols. ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920.
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