

## **Draft**

### **Theo 7350 Doctrine Topics: Eschatology**

**Professor: Dr. John E. (Jay) Phelan**

**Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:45**

#### *Course Description*

Eschatology, the study of last and ultimate things, is often considered the periphery of Christian faith. Some consider the study of “last things” the esoteric purview of fanatics, or more charitably, scholars (these, of course, may be overlapping categories). It is the burden of this course to suggest this view point amounts to a serious misunderstanding of the nature of eschatology. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that eschatology is the *heart* of Christian faith. The Bible is a narrative that begins in creation and ends in new creation. Jesus came proclaiming the presence of the Kingdom of God and calling his followers to live out of the values of that coming kingdom. Paul insisted that the resurrection of Jesus was the initiation of the great and final resurrection and that through Jesus’ death and resurrection the enslaving “powers” had been defeated. John called the churches of Asia Minor to resist the cultural pressures and cultural compromises of the empire in confidence that God’s final purposes would be realized. Christian faith without eschatology is, in fact, like a car without an engine. This course will explore the Biblical teachings regarding eschatology, engage the theological reflections upon these teachings, and wrestle with the implications for individual and corporate living. It will examine both the universal and personal aspects of eschatology: the ultimate destiny of humanity and creation and the personal destiny of individuals.

#### *Objectives*

1. To learn the eschatological content of the Bible and understand the message and intent of the original prophets, sages, and visionaries.
2. To explore the interpretation of and use of the eschatological content of the Bible within Judaism and Christianity.
3. To explore and understand the contemporary biblical, theological, and ecclesial conversations about eschatology.
4. To develop clarity regarding one’s own understanding of key eschatological questions in light of the Bible, theological reflection, and the church’s tradition.
5. To gain knowledge of the bibliographic and other resources for the ongoing study of eschatology.
6. To gain confidence in presenting and explaining one’s own perspective on questions of eschatology through conversations and presentations in class.
7. To develop a vision for ministry and the mission of the church in light of challenges of Christian eschatology.
8. To discover the eschatological teaching of the Bible as a resource for personal human and spiritual growth.

#### *Approach*

1. Each week will require the reading and study of certain biblical texts. Students are expected to prepare for class by exploring these texts through the methods learned in

their Bible courses. They should explore the texts in critical commentaries. They should come prepared with their own exegetical notes, reflections and questions for discussion. They should explore historical and culture issues, literary factors, genre questions, exegetical and critical questions, theological questions, and key hermeneutical questions rising from the texts. Seminar courses are intended to be ongoing conversations about the material under discussion. An important part of this course is reflection on *texts*. Students with biblical languages should use them in the preparation of this part of the course.

2. Each week will require secondary reading from either the two required texts or other reading as assigned by the professor. These are expected to be read before class and used in class discussions.
3. During the second half of the course a number of secondary works are listed with each class. Each student is required to read one of these additional texts and make a presentation on the book and lead a fifteen to twenty minute presentation of its content. Each student should prepare a single sheet for distribution to the rest of the class describing the contents, approach, and value of the book for pastoral ministry. Students are asked to make their requests to the faculty member between the first and second class. Assignments of texts will be made on a first come, first serve basis. Usually there will be two books per class. The instructor reserves the right to make the final decision. Some books are longer and more difficult than others. That is one of the facts of academic life. *A student is required to read only one additional text during the class.*
4. Excepting the required texts, all other books assigned for this class have been placed on reserve. Students are strongly encouraged to read ahead!
5. The professor will begin certain classes with a lecture/discussion on a topic listed in the assignment for each day.

#### *Requirement*

1. Class attendance: since this is a seminar a student's absence is a serious diminishment of the conversation possibilities. Students are requested to inform the faculty member if there are serious matters requiring an absence.
2. Reading assignments and participating in class discussions. Since this is a seminar class significant attention is given to student participation. Each student is expected to participate in the discussion in each class. All reading assignments are expected to be completed by the end of the term. Grading: Class participation: 10% of final grade; Reading: 10% (students will be asked to turn in a log of their reading at the end of the term).
3. Seminar Paper: Each student is required to do a 15 page seminar paper. The topic for this paper is to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. Each student is to select a seminar partner with whom to share their research and the draft of their paper. Draft of the paper should be to the partner for comments by April 20. The paper is due to the instructor on the final day of class. Grading: 30% of final grade.
4. Additional Text: Each student is to select one book from the ones listed after every class session. The student is to read the book and share its content and offer a critique of it.

They are to then lead a discussion of the book and its topic during the class. Grading: 20% of final grade.

5. There will be a final exam: 30% of final grade.

#### *Required Texts*

1. *Surprised by Hope*, N. T. Wright, Harper, 2008.
2. *The Coming of God*, Jurgen Moltmann, Fortress, 1996

#### *Accommodations*

North Park Theological Seminary provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.

#### *Academic Honesty*

Students are reminded of the regulations concerning Plagiarism and Cheating, which can be found in the Student Academic Handbook. Do not be tempted to plagiarize as a way out of difficulties in completing your assignments. Students are also not permitted to turn in for this class a paper completed for another class. If in doubt, please contact the instructor.

#### *January 15: The Prophets of Israel*

1. Introduction to the Course.
2. Lecture: What is Prophecy?

#### *January 17 Textual Conversations*

Isa. 6:1-13, Jeremiah 1:1-19, Hosea 1:1-11, 3:1-5

#### *January 22: What is Apocalyptic Literature?*

1. Lecture: Apocalyptic Literature
2. Reading: "The Apocalyptic Genre" 1-42 in John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*; Paul D. Hanson, "Old Testament Apocalyptic Reexamined" 37-60 in *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses*.

#### *January 24 Textual Conversations*

Daniel 7-12; Mark 13; Revelation 4-6: Discussion: How do these texts illustrate the character of apocalyptic literature? How are they similar? Different?

#### *January 29 Jesus and the Kingdom*

1. Lecture: The Kingdom of God in the Bible
2. Reading: "Stories of the Kingdom" 198-319 and "Jesus and Israel" 477-539 in N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*.

### *January 31 Textual Conversations*

Isaiah 9:1-7; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Mark 1:1-14, Matthew 13:24-53; Luke 6:20-49. What expectations of the kingdom of God are found in these verses? What was Jesus expecting?

### *February 12 Jesus' Eschatological Teaching*

1. Lecture: Jesus and the World to Come
2. Reading: "Stories of the Kingdom" 320-368 in N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*; "The Eschatological Proclamation on the New Testament" 61-103 in Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*.

### *February 14 Textual Conversations*

Mark 13, Matthew 24:1-25:46, Luke 20:27-44. What did Jesus expect the future to hold for his disciples and for Israel?

### *February 19 Paul and the New Creation*

1. Lecture: The Eschatology of Paul
2. Reading: *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, J. Beker, 29-77

### *February 21 Textual Conversations*

Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11. What was Paul expecting for the church?

### *February 26 John and the Empire*

1. Lecture: Introducing the Book of Revelation
2. Reading: Read the introduction to the book in two critical commentaries listed in the bibliography. What are the varieties of interpretation and approaches?

### *February 28 Textual Conversation and Book Discussions*

1. The Revelation to John
2. Book Discussion #1: *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, R. Bauckham; *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, Michael J. Gorman, or *Can I Get a Witness*, B. Blount.

### *March 5 Body and Soul*

1. Lecture: The Nature of Human Beings
2. Reading: *Surprised by Hope (SBH)*, 3-51; *Coming of God (COG)*, 47-71.

### *March 7*

1. Texts: Do a word search on the English words soul and spirit in the Bible. What Greek and Hebrew words are used? What do they mean in the various contexts? What does this suggest?
2. Book Discussion #2: *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, Joel Green; *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Pope Benedict XVI.

*March 19: Life, Death and Resurrection*

1. Lecture: What is Death and Resurrection?
2. Reading: *SBH* 53-76 147-159; *COG* 77-126.

*March 21: Textual Conversation and Book Discussions*

1. Texts: 1 Cor. 15; Luke 24; Daniel 12:1-5; Rev. 20:11-15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
2. Book Discussion #3: *Resurrection*, Kevin J. Madigan and Jon D. Levenson; *Raised Immortal*, M. J. Harris

*March 26: Heaven, Hell and Judgment*

1. Lecture: What are Heaven and Hell?
2. Reading: *SBH* 79-106, 165-183; *COG* 77-128, 235-255.

*March 28: Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: Do a word search for words used for "hell". Look at both Greek and Hebrew terms. What is the meaning and background of these various words? What do they suggest for our understanding of hell?
2. Book Discussion #4: *Love Wins*, Rob Bell; *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis.

*April 2: Parousia*

1. Lecture: What is the nature of Jesus' Return?
2. Reading: *SBH* 123-142; *COG* 1-46.

*April 4: Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: 1 Thess. 4:13-5:9; Mark 13:14-37; Rev. 19:1-16; Acts 1:12. Explore each of these texts in two critical commentaries from the bibliography and come prepared to discuss them.
2. Book Discussion #5: *Life After Death*, Anthony Thiselton; *The Rapture Exposed*, Barbara Rossing.

*April 9: Millennium*

1. Lecture: Is there a Millennial Reign of Christ?
2. Reading: *COG* 129-202.

*April 11: Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: Rev. 20:1-15; Isa. 62, 66:18-24. Explore each of these texts in two critical commentaries from the bibliography and come prepared to discuss them.
2. Book Discussion #6: *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, Bock, ed.; *The Millennial Maze*, S. Grenz.

*April 16 New Heavens and New Earth*

1. Lecture: What is the final destiny of creation and human beings?
2. Reading: *SBH* 165-186; *COG* 259-339.

*April 18: Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: Isa. 25, 61, 66; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Romans 8:18-39; 2 Cor. 5:1-10, Rev. 21:1-22:7.
2. Book Discussion #6: *The God of Hope and the End of the World*, John Polkinghorne; *In the End—The Beginning*, Jurgen Moltmann.

*April 23 Ethics of the Kingdom*

1. Lecture: Living in God's Kingdom in the Midst of Human Empires
2. Reading: *COG* 192-235.

*April 25 Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: Matthew 5-7; 25; 1 Thess. 5:1-11, Rev. 1:1-3:2, 13, 18.
2. Book Discussion #7: *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, N. Kraybill; *Ethics of Hope*, Jurgen Moltmann

*April 30 Community of the Kingdom*

1. Lecture: What is the church to be in light of the coming Kingdom of God?
2. *SBH* 189-289

*May 2: Textual Conversation and Book Discussion*

1. Texts: Amos (Justice); Matthew 10 (Healing and Witness); Colossians 3 (Community); Revelation 4, 5 (worship/resistance).
2. Book Discussion #8: *Practice Resurrection*, E. Peterson; *Reversed Thunder*, E. Peterson.

*May 7: Review and Conclusions*