The End of the World
IDSEM 1701, Fall 2012

MW 11-12:15
Gallatin building 527

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The idea of the world coming to an end is a characteristic and fundamental part of the western tradition. The course will examine the emergence of the idea of end-time thinking, often called apocalypticism, and consider its persistence and influence through religious, psychological, sociological, and literary lenses. We will examine Jewish and early Christian apocalypticism, its revival in the middle ages and nineteenth century America, the rereading of Biblical narratives as atomic destruction during the Cold War, and the development of science-based apocalypses. The course will close with deep investigation of the Mayan calendar and the modern eschatological movements inspired by it.

Students will write regular reading responses, two short projects, and one large final project.

Our goals are:

* To historicize an important part of Western culture

* To learn about the complex interactions between religion, culture, and history

* To learn to critically read and analyze texts

The course grade will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard responses</td>
<td>20% (combined)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make-your-own-apocalypse</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persistence of apocalypse paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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It is expected that you know how to write clearly. Everything you write for this class should have an argument, a thesis statement, and sources cited with quotations marks and footnotes. If you are not confident in your ability to do these things, contact me right away.

**Do not plagiarize.** If you take more than two or three words directly from a textbook or another source (including the Internet), you must put them in quotation marks and cite their source in a footnote. You are expected to be familiar with Gallatin’s policy on academic integrity: [http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html)

Late policy: Late assignments will lose a full letter grade for every 24 hours they are late. Assignments five days late will not be accepted.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon.

**Required books:**

**Suggested books:**
a Bible, any version

**Class Schedule:**

**Eschatology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Introductions and syllabus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking about apocalypse (Eliade, &quot;Eschatology and cosmogony&quot; in <em>Myth and Reality</em>, 54-74 (R); M.E. Stone, &quot;Vision or hallucination?&quot; (R))</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Hebrew apocalypse (Ezekiel (R); Daniel (R); Carr 3-6, 167-177, 248-253(R))</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Christian apocalypse I (Matthew 13 (R); Thessalonians (R); Revelation to John (R); Pagels, Ch 1)</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>Christian Apocalypse II (Pagels Ch 2 and 73-86, 133-170; Reread Revelation)</td>
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24  The Thousand Year Reign (McGinn, ed., xiii-xviii, 81-96, 97-117, 135-48 (R))
26  Reformation (Isaac Newton, Treatise on Revelation (R); Hall, Ch. 4(R))

Oct 1  American apocalypse (William Miller, Apology and Defense (R); Testimonials of members (R))
3   Failure (Festinger, When Prophecy Fails, Chs 1, 5, 7, 8 [online])
8   The Rapture (Tim LaHaye, Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days (passim, but definitely the "Truth behind the fiction" section; available on Google Books); www.raptureready.com, especially the Rapture Index)
10  Make-your-own apocalypse. Projects due.

Modern Apocalypses
15  No class
17  Atomic Apocalypse I (Boyer: 1-18 (R); "On the Beach" (film))
22  Atomic Apocalypse II (Boyer, 115-151 (R))
24  Atomic apocalypse III (Lindsey: Ch 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 (handout))
29  Branch Davidians (Audio of "Koresh Sermon" 1 and 2, and "Excerpts from Negotiations" on website; Koresh's manuscript on the Seven Seals (R); Tabor and Gallagher 1-20, 189-212, (R); Wessinger, 82-100, 347-351 (R))
31  A Human-less World (Weiss, The World Without Us: Chs 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17; "There Will Come Soft Rains" (R))

Nov  5  The Road (1-119)
  7  The Road (119-end)
12  Scientific Apocalypse I: (Davies (Ch 1-7))
14  Scientific Apocalypse II: (Davies (Ch 8-11); "An Inconvenient Truth" (film))
21  Zombie Apocalypse ("Dawn of the Dead" (film))

2012
26  Aveni, complete
28          Calleman, preface, Ch 2, Ch 3, 69-77, Ch 7, Ch 9, Appendix A and D

Dec  3    Aldana, Behind Astronomical Patterns (website)
  5    Workshops with Gerardo V. Aldana from UCSB
  10   Project proposals due.
  12   More Mayans

Final exam date Dec 17, 10-12. **Final projects due.**