

JOHANNINE LITERATURE: A Course Outline

Course Code: THEO 2215/THEO 5315 **Instructor:** Dr. Bruce Worthington

English Title: Johannine Literature

Chinese Title: N/A

Telephone: 852-3943-6202 **Time:** Tuesday 9:30 to 12:15PM **Location:** CCT T31

Course Description: Other than Paul's letters, the trajectory of literature from the author known as "John" provides the most significant corpus, or body of literature in the Christian New Testament. Unlike Paul's letters, the literature devoted to John is more diverse in its content, ranging from casual letters addressed to individual persons (The Lady in 2nd John, Gaius in 3rd John), extensive biographical accounts of Jesus' life (Gospel of John), and apocalyptic prophecy addressed to larger bodies of Christian associations in the Roman Province of Asia (Revelation). In addition to the creative diversity of genres from which John writes, his letters likely span over a longer time period than Paul, and thus provide insight into the development of Christianity near the end of the first, and well into the second century CE. Quite simply, Johannine literature is the bridge between the writings of the New Testament and Church of the Second Century, an essential corpus for the student of Christian Origins.

This course will explore the trajectory of John's writings beginning with the Gospel of John, the Letters of John, and finally the Apocalypse of John, otherwise known as Revelation. The course is not a simple survey course (moving through each chapter sequentially), instead it will address larger themes that should be of interest to modern readers in a topical manner. Such topics include John and ethnicity, gender, politics, and John's historical relationship to Judaism. Students who take this course will benefit from seeing the diverse contributions of John to the early, or formative years of Christianity in the Roman Provinces, along with an ability to discern how Johannine literature may be relevant for some of the modern intersections and theological interventions mentioned above.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Compare and contrast the Johannine corpus (Gospel, Letters, Apocalypse) on the basis of key intersections including ethnicity, politics, gender, bodies, and John's relationship to Judaism.
- 2) Explain a variety of interpretive approaches to the Gospel of John, including the "Community Hypothesis" and "Sectarian/Synagogue" approach to interpretation.
- 3) Situate John's Apocalypse (Revelation) within the context of Apocalyptic Judaism by comparing it with other Jewish writings.
- 4) Make conclusions regarding the origins and general development of Christianity, especially as it nears the end of the first century CE.

Course Syllabus (Weekly Schedule):

***Readings in bold are mandatory for THEO 5315 students, optional for THEO 2215**

Week One (January 10th): John and the Community Hypothesis

“The Story of the Johannine Community and its Literature.” Martinus C. De Boer, 63–83 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“He is Excluded from the Synagogue and Enters the Church” J.L. Martyn, 17–41 in *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*.

Week Two (January 17th): John, Jesus, and History

“Why this Study is Needed, and Why It is Needed Now.” Paul N. Anderson, 13–73 in *John, Jesus, and History Volume One: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*.

Week Three (January 31st): John and Judaism (Guest Speaker Dr. Wally Ciresesi)

“The Jews of the Fourth Gospel.” Adela Reinhartz, 121–138 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“The Johannine Literature and Contemporary Jewish Literature.” Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer, 155–170 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“John and Judaism, Then and Now.” Wally Ciresesi, 1–26 in *John within Judaism Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel*.

Week Four (February 7th): John and Philosophy

“The Johannine Literature in a Greek Context.” Gitte-Buch Hansen, 138–155 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John.” Daniel Boyarin, *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (03):243-284 (2001).

Week Five (February 14th): John and Politics

“Ideological Readings of the Fourth Gospel.” Warren Carter, 203–219 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“John’s Jesus and the Renewal of Israel.” Richard Horsley and Tom Thatcher, 137–156 in *John, Jesus, and the Renewal of Israel*.

“Ambiguous Admittance: Consent and Descent in John’s Community of Upward Mobility” Tat-Siong Benny Liew, 193–224 in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*.

Week Six (February 21st): John and Gender

“Gender and the Fourth Gospel.” Colleen M. Conway, 220–236 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“Gender, Rhetoric and Recognition: Characterizing Jesus and (Re)defining Masculinity in the Gospel of John.” A.D. Myers, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38(2), 191–218 (2015).

Week Seven (February 28th): John and Trajectories (Second and Third Centuries)

“Johannine Commentaries in the Early Church.” William Lamb, 416–436 in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*.

“The Gospel of John and Early Trinitarian Thought: The Unity of God in John, Irenaeus and Tertullian” Marianne Meye Thompson, *Journal of Early Christian History*, 4(2), 154–166 (2014).

Week Eight (March 14th): Letters of John (1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John)

“Setting the Stage: The Context for the Conversation” Alan Culpepper, 3–16 in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*.

“The Relationship between the Gospel of John and 1 John.” Alan Culpepper, 95–120 in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*.

Week Nine (March 21st): Revelation and Apocalyptic Judaism

“The Rhetorical Setting of Revelation: Seven Congregations in the Roman Province of Asia.” David DeSilva, 29–63 in *Seeing Things John’s Way*.

“Understanding Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic.” David Aune, 1–13 in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*.

“Aporias: Passages without Passage” John Marshall, 10–24 in *Parables of War: Reading John’s Jewish Apocalypse*.

Week Ten (March 28th): Revelation and Gender

“Female Imagery in the Book of Revelation.” Hanna Stenstrom, 213–224 in *Religion and Female Body in Ancient Judaism and Its Environments*.

“Out of Control Female: John’s Use of Gender Stereotypes” Paul Duff, 97–112 in *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse*.

“The Empress and the Brothel Slave” Stephen D. Moore, 103–124 in *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology*.

Week Eleven (April 4th): Revelation and Politics

“Setting the Stage: Urban Christianity in Western Asia Minor” Paul Duff, 17–31 in *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse*.

“Revelation and Roman Rule in First Century Asia-Minor” Warren Carter, 132–151, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*.

Week Twelve (April 11th): Revelation and Trajectories

“The Interpretation of the Book of Revelation in Early Christianity.” Charles E. Hill, 394–411, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*.

“Forms of Futuristic Interpretation of Revelation in the Modern Period.” Joshua T. Searle and Kenneth G.C. Newport, 447–463, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*.

Listen: “When the Man Comes Around” Johnny Cash, *American IV*, 2002.

“The Book of Revelation” Friedrich Engels, 1883.

Week Thirteen (April 18th): Conclusions and Final Remarks

Course Components: Lecture, interactive tutorials, online class discussion, student presentations, guest speaker

Blackboard Course Address:

https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/ultra/courses/_181133_1/cl/outline

Assignments and Course Assessment

- 1. Tutorial and Class Participation (20% of Final Grade):** students are expected to attend and participate respectfully in all class discussions. Students will be graded on factors including attendance, preparedness with class readings, quality of oral contributions, regular and respectful dialogue on Blackboard, and original insight. Students will be given a discussion question on the Blackboard course page and must respond to the question with one response by 11:59 PM on Monday night before the lecture the next day. There will be 12 online discussion questions for the semester, each worth 1%. The final 8% of this category will be for in-person discussions and participation.

- 2. Book Review and Presentation (35% of Final Grade):** Students are required to submit an academic style book review no more than 1000 words in length, on a book that is listed in the course bibliography, or another book that has been approved by the Professor. Sample academic style book reviews will be offered to use as an example. Students will be required to present the contents of the book in the form of a presentation to the class. The presentation will be no longer than 15 minutes. Students are encouraged to use a variety of presentation medias including power point or other types of visual software. The presentation should effectively summarize the main thesis of the book, along with salient points that engage the class on the topic of Johannine literature. The presentation may offer points of criticism, along with highlighting the strengths of the work in a supportive, collegial manner. Presentations may also compare the book to other similar books in a way that synthesizes material for other students. Presentations should focus on how the book articulates John’s approach to the topics of Ancient (or Apocalyptic) Judaism, Ethnicity, Gender, Bodies, and Politics.
- 3. Academic Essay (45% of Final Grade):** One of the more recent developments in the study of the New Testament is a renewed emphasis on the physical body, both bodies we find in the text, and as embodied readers ourselves. In both the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation, it is clear that bodies exist, and are emphasized in certain ways by each author. For example, in Revelation 1:12–16 the author comments on the body of Jesus, with “hair white like wool” and “feet like bronze glowing in the fire.” This is remarkably different than bodily depictions of Jesus in the Gospel of John, who, amongst other things, is able to walk through walls (John 20:19). One may also note, for instance, the configuration of female bodies in Revelation, particularly the character of Jezebel as the “whore of Babylon” (Revelation 17:1–5). This is distinct from female bodily characterizations in the Gospel of John (see Woman at the Well, John 4:1–42). The goal of the assignment is to understand how these authors use the body, in which ways, with the overall goal of learning how to value the body (our bodies) as embodied readers of scripture.

For THEO 2215 Students: An academic essay of 4000 to 5000 words on the topic of how bodies are configured in *either* the Gospel of John or the Book of Revelation. Students may pay attention to how the use of bodies contribute to the overall rhetorical structure of the book. Students may observe how each book values the body, or perhaps devalues the body in its rhetorical strategy. Students should use 3 to 4 concrete examples from the text and elaborate how the body is used in each instance to contribute to the rhetorical goals of the text. Students will, finally, make conclusions regarding the use of bodies in the book, and how this might contribute to further theological reflection.

For THEO 5315 Students: An academic essay of 5000 to 6000 words on the topic of bodies in Johannine literature. Students may use either the Gospel of John or the Book of Revelation or compare the two of them. Students should develop a significant methodological section at the beginning of the essay. Like the above example, students should use 3 to 4 concrete examples from the text and elaborate how these examples contribute to the rhetorical strategy of the book. Students will, finally, make conclusions regarding the use of bodies in the book, and how this might contribute to further

theological reflection. In the case of THEO 5315, students may also address the use of non-human bodies, particularly in the book of Revelation (beasts, horses, monsters). Successful papers will be able to situate John's use of the body in the context of Ancient Judaism. For an introduction to the topic of "bodies" in the Ancient World, students should use the following text as a guide:

Castelli, Elizabeth. "The Body." In *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Barbette Stanley Spaeth, 252–280. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Essays should be submitted according to the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition).

Structure of the Class: the first 30 minutes of the class will be split into tutorial groups, where students will be able to discuss the readings for the week. Professor will guide the discussions by providing two discussion questions at the beginning of each tutorial group. From 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM, there will be a formal lecture from the Professor. Beginning in week three, there will be three student book presentations from 11:30 AM to 12:15 PM each week.

The course readings (other than the two textbooks) will generally be given on the Blackboard site, along with courses grades, Professor feedback, and written submission guidelines.

Academic honesty and plagiarism: Attention is drawn to University's policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines, and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Grading: The grading follows the general grading policy of the CUHK outlined below (in short form):

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on all or almost all learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B / Good: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C / Fair: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade D / Pass: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand the assignment, perhaps completely misses the point.

Excellent Good Needs Improvement Unacceptable

Thesis	A clear statement of what is being proposed or argued in the paper.	The thesis is easily detectable after reading the paper, but it is not presented in a single and clear statement.	The thesis is present, but a reader must work hard to reconstruct from the entire paper.	There is no thesis or central argument/proposal to tie the paper together, or the thesis is unclear.
Arguments	Each reason, support, or argument to follow the thesis is made clear, thorough, relevant and convincing. Proper references are consistently made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.	Arguments made to support the thesis are clear, but less thorough, relevant, and/or convincing. References are often made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid, but this is done not as consistently.	Arguments made to support the thesis are acceptable but sketchy or their relevance unclear. Some references are made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.	Arguments to support the thesis are missing, irrelevant, or not convincing. The paper makes lots of claims or assertions that are not substantiated. There are few or no references to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid.
Counter-Arguments	The paper acknowledges, anticipates, and accounts for conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions, even ones that are not obvious or not yet been made in writings of others.	The paper acknowledges and accounts for obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions.	The paper acknowledges and accounts for a few obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, and counter-arguments, but miss other obvious opposing positions. Or the paper acknowledges counter-arguments without accounting for them.	No awareness or acknowledgment of conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, or opposing positions.

Organization	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is consistently sensible, logical, and always with clear transitions. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is easy to follow and coherent.	The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is largely sensible and logical. Transitions are mostly appropriate. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is distinguishable if not easy to follow.	There are signs of sensible and logical organization, but these are mixed with abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective flow of ideas. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is not clearly distinguishable.	The paper does not flow well in terms of organization or for the argument of the thesis. Transitions from paragraph to paragraph or from one idea to the next are missing. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is non-existent.
Style	The paper is written in complete and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is precise; definitions are provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains no errors.	The paper is written in complete sentence and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is understandable, definitions are generally (though not always) provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains only a few errors.	The paper contains some incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is imprecise, at times not understandable, and/or not defined when needed. Not clear if the paper has been spell-checked and proofread because of the number of errors present.	The paper is written with many incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is not understandable and definition of particular terms or words is not given even when needed. The paper has clearly not been spell-checked or proofread, and hence contains an excessive number of errors.
Documentation	Notes to indicate sources of information are given whenever they are needed. Both notes and bibliography use consistent and academically acceptable format.	Notes to indicate sources of information are generally given when they are needed. Notes and bibliography are generally but not always consistent or conform to required academic standard.	Sources of information are not consistently documented. If they are, format is inconsistent or does not conform to required academic standard.	Source materials are used without documentation.

Course Textbooks:

Lieu, Judith and Martinus C. de Boer, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Koester, Craig R, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Bibliography:

Anderson, Paul, Felix Just and Tom Thatcher, eds. *John, Jesus, and History Volume One: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*. Atlanta: SBL, 2007.

Aune, David. *Revelation*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word Books, 1997.

- . “The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3).” *New Testament Studies* 36, no 2 (1990): 182–204.
- . *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971.
- Callon, Callie. *Reading Bodies: Physiognomy as a Strategy of Persuasion in Early Christian Discourse*. New York: T and T Clark, 2019.
- Castelli, Elizabeth. “The Body.” In *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Barbetta Stanley Spaeth, 252–280. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Chilton, Bruce. *Visions of the Apocalypse: Receptions of John’s Revelation in Western Imagination*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013.
- Cirafesi, Wally. *John within Judaism: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
- Collins, Adela. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
- Collins, JJ. *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979.
- Culpepper, Alan and Paul Anderson, eds. *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*. Atlanta: SBL, 2014.
- Boyarin, Daniel. “The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John.” *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (03):243-284 (2001).
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- Dube, Musa and Jeffrey L. Staley. *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space, and Power*. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Duff, Paul. *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Frankfurter, David. “Jews, or Not? Reconstructing the ‘Other’ in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.” *Harvard Theological Review* 94:4 (2001): 403–25.

- Frilingos, Christopher. *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Furey, Constance M. "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2012): 7–33.
- González, Justo L. *For the Healing of the Nations: The Book of Revelation in an Age of Cultural Conflict*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.
- Gorman, Michael. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.
- Graves, David. *The Seven Messages of Revelation and Vassal Treaties*. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009.
- Hays, Richard and Stefan Alkier, eds. *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.
- Hemer, Colin. *The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Hidalgo, Jacqueline. "The Roman Empire in the Book of Revelation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, edited by R.S. Sugirtharajah, 1–29. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Leif Hansen, Ryan. *Silence and Praise: Rhetorical Cosmology and Political Theology in the Book of Revelation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. *A Feminist Companion to John*, 2 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Lieu, Judith. *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991.
- Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.
- Marshall, John. *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001.
- Martin, Dale B. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Martyn, J. Louis. *History & Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. rev. enl. ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.

- Miller, David. "Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* and Its Relationship to Other Group Labels in Ancient Judaism." *Currents in Biblical Research* 12: 216–65 (2014).
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- Moss, Candida. *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.
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- Pippin, Tina. "Apocalyptic Horror." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 8, no. 2 (30): 198–217 (1997).
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- Thompson, Leonard. *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Thompson, Marianne Meye. "The Gospel of John and Early Trinitarian Thought: The Unity of God in John, Irenaeus and Tertullian" *Journal of Early Christian History*, 4(2), 154–166 (2014).
- Xeravits, Geza G., ed. *Religion and Female Body in Ancient Judaism and Its Environments*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.