

W O R L D ' S E N D :

Millennialism in the Modern Age

RE 330-002

Classroom: Ladd 106
Tues & Thurs 3:40-5:30

Prof. G. Spinner

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or by appointment

Course Description

End-time preachers, devotees of the Virgin Mary, cargo cultists, would-be messiahs, wagers of racial holy war, followers of Odin or of Rastafari, people waiting for the saucers to land or for the Temple to be rebuilt: these are the millennialists, people who expect an imminent apocalypse that will usher in a Golden Age of peace, material plenty and spiritual pursuits. While many religious traditions posit that at some point in the future the world as we know it will come to an end, millennialists are those who believe that this End is coming *soon*. Whether or not this End will be attended by natural catastrophe, it is always marked by drastic social reversals.

This course surveys millennial movements from around the world, situating them historically, and subjecting them to careful analysis and critical scrutiny. We will examine how such movements emerge, and how they continue on even after the anticipated End fails to unfold as predicted. Additionally, we will attend to the paranoid rhetoric of various millennialist groups, and consider the complicated connections between millennialism and violence.

Learning Goals

You will learn to situate religions historically, within social and political contexts, attending to their diversity and complexity. For many of the groups we study, this entails a closer look than mass media typically affords, going beyond the hype and stereotyping, and humanizing people with millennial convictions.

You will learn to apply critical theories, assessing each theory's utility for making sense of our data. This means you do not just criticize millennialism, but become critical of the theories themselves.

You will develop research skills, in which you identify reliable information and organize it into a coherent fashion.

As this course is conducted as a seminar, you will further develop your ability to freely exchange ideas, to refine your arguments, and to respectfully disagree.

Course Materials

Gershom Gorenberg, The End of Days: Fundamentalism & The Struggle for the Temple Mount (Oxford, 2000).

All other required readings will be made available as a **Course Reader**.

Additionally, you will be assigned to watch films or clips on You Tube; the links will be sent via email. Videos are visual texts, and you will be just as accountable for knowing these sources as for the written ones.

Course Requirements

Your grade consists of the following components:

Participation	10 %
Preparing Questions	6 %
First Exam	22 %
Second Exam	22 %
Research project: <i>subtotal</i>	<i>40%</i>
a.) Proposal	5 %
b.) Annotated Bibliography	10 %
c.) Outline	5 %
d.) Final Paper	20 %
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Total	100 %

A few words are in order, at the outset, about some of these components:

Attendance is mandatory: you will come to each and every class. If you are too sick to attend, or if an emergency arises, then please contact me as soon as possible.

While participation is contingent upon attendance, it involves much more than just showing up. **Participation** requires active engagement: you must have done the reading and be prepared to discuss it. You should have your own questions prepared, and you should be game for answering the questions that others pose. Our goal is focused conversation: it involves talking with and listening to others, rather than sitting quietly by (no matter how deep in thought you are). *Real education is not a spectator sport*. We are going to think through some difficult materials together, and I expect each and every one of you to have something to contribute. So you should have questions, you should have comments, and, above all, you should have curiosity. Over the course of the semester we will undertake a sustained and thoughtful discussion about our subject, and this will not be achieved through dispirited or half-hearted attempts.

Preparing Questions: for each class you should prepare a minimum of two questions, *along with your own (tentative) answers*, that you could ask the other students with the express purpose of facilitating classroom discussion. You are not trying to stump your classmates; rather you are trying to direct the conversation to some of the more salient points from the readings. Your questions should therefore be carefully chosen and thoughtfully worded. I will collect your questions at the end of each class session, and will only accept them in class on the day they were due. While I won't be assigning grades (or returning them), I will be looking over your questions to see what you have been thinking about and to assess your level of engagement.

Exams will be take-home essays, and must be submitted in hard-copy form. Closer to the time of the first assignment, I will spell out my expectations as to what makes for a good essay.

Late work will be marked down. I will deduct half a letter grade for each day any assignment is late. While due dates are firm, the instructor is not inflexible. It is, however, incumbent on you to explain to me why you deserve an extension. And here is some good advice: *one asks for an extension before a deadline is missed.*

Do note that this is a 4 credit hour class, and thus my expectations for your time and effort, both inside and outside of the classroom, are set accordingly. This is a *reading intensive* course, on top of which you will be conducting research independently, culminating in a 12- 15 page paper, complete with academic citation and annotated bibliography.

Conducting Research

Research is simply searching out information. Now one might suppose, in our electronic age of the Internet, equipped with ubiquitous search engines, that this task has been made so much easier. But as the information one seeks out has to be both *reliable* and *relevant*, it may actually be harder to do sound research today. I will be saying more about those dual criteria of reliability and relevance, as well as providing further instructions for producing your annotated bibliography and your outline.

Looking at the course requirements, it is obvious that the research project, as an ongoing process worked on throughout the semester, constitutes a major portion of your grade. Please schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your choice of topics. I will shortly distribute a list of sample topics, and give you other tips for getting started. You should consider possible topics carefully, as you want to find a topic that will sustain your interest for an entire semester. I want to help you uncover an aspect of millennialism that fascinates you, and which is a feasible project for one semester.

Deadlines

Topic Proposal	Oct 16
Annotated Bibliography	Nov 13
Outline	Dec 4
Research Paper	Dec 16

Classroom Civility

Don't be late, and don't be rude. I hope that we will engage each other in open and honest ways, but both our speech and our demeanor should reflect common courtesy for those around us. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior will promptly result in being asked to leave the class.

Feel free to bring a beverage or snack, and, if you are so inclined, enough to share. I just ask that eating and drinking do not interfere with our learning.

Turn off cell phones and any other small electronic devices before you come to class. Take your headphones off or remove your ear buds, and stow anything that texts or beeps well out of sight. I will start the semester out by allowing the use of laptops, as some students prefer to take their notes this way, but I will promptly rescind this permission if I feel that people are paying more attention to their computer screen than to class. In short, anything that might provide a distraction to the user, to other students or to the instructor will not be indulged.

Honor Code

I expect you to live up to Skidmore's Honor Code and strictly avoid any forms of academic dishonesty. Copying from others, submitting someone else's work as your own, or submitting your same work for two different courses are all forms of cheating. Any fact, word or thought that originated with somebody else must be promptly and properly cited. Plagiarism, even when inadvertently performed, is a serious violation of academic integrity, and will be treated as such. Suspected infractions of the Honor Code will be duly reported to the Dean of Academic Advising.

Partners in Learning

To my mind, this syllabus establishes a kind of social contract, in which you and I agree to create a stimulating and supportive learning environment. As stated in the learning goals, we will debate positions and challenge each other. Whether engaging the instructor or other students, I simply ask that you be civil, even as I will push you to be honest and open in your thinking.

I trust that with this syllabus I have made clear my expectations, and that if I have not, you will call me to account. I also ask that you make your expectations clear to me, and let me know how we can best achieve that partnership in learning. You may always ask questions; I will not mind if you ask me to repeat something or to clarify a point. Feel free to come by my office, or to contact me by e-mail, in order to discuss any matters pertaining to the course.

I look forward to an exciting semester working together.

Dr. Spinner

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CLASS SCHEDULE
RE 330 / Fall 2013

Please Note: you should have the assigned readings done **before** you come to the class for which they have been assigned.

Sept 3. Introductions. Expectations for the Course
Sept 5. **No class:** Rosh Ha-Shanah.

Sept 10. *Reviewing Scripture.* Prophecy & Apocalypse. Reading 1.
Sept 12. *The Disappointed.* William Miller and Adventism. Reading 2.

Sept 17. *Ranch Apocalypse.* The Branch of David. Reading 3.
Sept 19. *Ranch Apocalypse.* "Bible Babble" and the Siege at Waco. Reading 4.

Sept 24. *Cargo Cults.* Awaiting the Return of the Ancestors. Reading 5.
Sept 26. *Theorizing the Deprived.* Reading 6.

Oct 1. *The Downtrodden.* Ras Tafari, Black Messiah. Reading 7.
Oct 3. *The Dispossessed.* The Ghost Dance. Reading 8.

Oct 8. *UFOs.* When Prophecy Fails: The Case of 'Mrs. Keech.' Reading 9.
Oct 10. *UFOs.* When Prophecy Never Fails: The Case of Unarius. Reading 10.

First Exam: due Oct 9.

Oct 15. *Apocalypse Delayed.* The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses. Reading 11.
Oct 17. *Messages from the Heavenly Mother.* The Secrets of Fatima. Reading 12.

Research Proposal: due Oct 16.

Oct 22. *Messages from the Heavenly Mother.* The Visions of Bayside. Reading 13.
Oct 24. *Racist Apocalypse.* Christian Identity. Reading 14.

Second Exam: due Oct 23.

Oct 29. *Aryan Resistance, Ragnarök & Metal Rage.* Odinism. Reading 15
Oct 31. *Conspiracy Theorists.* The Paranoid Style of American Politics. Reading 16.

CLASS SCHEDULE, *continued*

- Nov 5. *Salvation & Suicide*. The People's Temple. Reading 17.
Nov 7. *The Deprogrammed*. Leaving This Level Behind. Reading 18.
- Nov 12. *The Deprogrammed*. Entering Heaven's Gate. Reading 19.
Nov 14. *Aum Shinrikyo*. Leaving the World. Reading 20.

Annotated Bibliography: due Nov 13.

- Nov 19. *Aum Shinrikyo*. Killing for Salvation. Reading 21.
Nov 21. *Violence & the Millennium*. Reading 22.

Nov 25 -27. ***No classes held this week:***
American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting,
followed by Thanksgiving Break.

Outline: due Dec 4.

- Dec 3. *In Jerusalem*. Cattlemen of the Apocalypse. Reading 23.
Dec 5. *In Jerusalem*. Rebuilding the Ruined Temple. Reading 24.
- Dec 10. *In Jerusalem*. The Day after the Last. Reading 25.

Finished Research Project: due Dec 16.

Reading Assignments for
W O R L D ' S E N D

- Reading 1.** Short selections from the Bible: Amos 8:1-9:15, Isaiah 13:1-14:2, Zechariah 1:7-21 and 14:1-21, Daniel 7:1-28 and 11:36 -12:13, Matthew 24:3-44, 25:1-13 and 25:31-46, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, and Revelation chs. 5, 6 and 8.
- Reading 2.** William Miller, "Evidence from Scripture." Excerpt on Millerism from O'Leary, Arguing the Apocalypse.
- Reading 3.** Bromley & Silver, "The Branch Davidians: A Social Profile And Organizational History." Excerpt from Thibodeau, A Place Called Waco.
You Tube: watch "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," through part 6.
- Reading 4.** David Koresh, Unfinished ms. on the Seven Seals, from Why Waco? (with commentary by Tabor and Arnold). Tabor, "Religious Discourse & Failed Negotiations." You Tube: finish watching "Waco: The Rules of Engagement."
- Reading 5.** Excerpts from Worsley, The Trumpet Will Sound; *idem*, "Cargo Cults."
- Reading 6.** Excerpt from Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium." Cochrane, "Big Men." Excerpt from Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory."
- Reading 7.** Excerpts from Barrett, The Rastafarians. "Creed of a Ras Tafari Man."
You Tube: Newsreel footage of Selassie.
- Reading 8.** Excerpts from Kehoe, The Ghost Dance.
- Reading 9.** Ellwood, "UFO Religious Movements." Excerpt from Festinger, Riecken & Schachter, When Prophecy Fails.
- Reading 10.** Excerpts from Ernest Norman, The Voice of Eros. Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails." Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail." You Tube: "Unarian's Uriel Speaks."
- Reading 11.** Singelenberg, "It Separated the Wheat from the Chaff."
Schmalz, "When Festinger Fails."
- Reading 12.** Excerpts from Zimdars-Swartz, Encountering Mary. Press releases about Fatima's Third Secret (from Spring 2000).
- Reading 13.** Excerpt from Garvey, Searching for Mary. Veronica Luecken on the "Ball of Redemption," and "New York City Targeted for Destruction." Excerpt on 'miraculous photography' from Wojcik, The End of the World As We Know It.
- Reading 14.** Barkun, "Racist Apocalypse." Swift, sermons.
- Reading 15.** Excerpts from Gardell, Gods of the Blood.
- Reading 16.** Hofstadter, "Paranoid Style." Post, "Charisma."
- Reading 17.** Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones." (This reading includes an appendix transcribing the tape recording of the last minutes of Jonestown; you can listen along to the audio on You Tube). Excerpt from Chidester, Salvation and Suicide. Excerpt from Stories from Jonestown. You Tube: Life & Death of the People's Temple.
- Reading 18.** Excerpts from How and When "Heaven's Gate" May Be Entered.
Viewing of "Heaven's Gate: The Day After" to be scheduled.
- Reading 19.** Newsweek articles: April 7 & 14, 1997. Balch & Taylor.
- Reading 20.** Excerpt from Reader, Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan, through ch. 3.
You Tube: Aum Shinrikyo anime.
- Reading 21.** Excerpt from Reader, Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan, chs. 5 & 6.
- Reading 22.** Excerpt from Wessinger, How The Millennium Comes Violently.
Dawson, "Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy and Violent Behavior."
- Reading 23.** Gorenberg, The End of Days, pp. 1-104. You Tube: "Thief in the Night."
- Reading 24.** Gorenberg, The End of Days, pp. 105-180.
You Tube: "Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem"
- Reading 25.** Finish Gorenberg, The End of Days, pp. 181-250.