

**RLST 499 Capstone: Times and Cosmologies**  
**Spring 2013, W 3:10 – 6:00 PM**

**Instructor:** Dr. Susan Cohen  
**Office:** 2-161 Wilson  
**Office hours:** W 10:00 – 11:30 AM or by appointment.  
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**Goals of the course:**

- 1) to examine human perspectives of time, world order, reward/punishment, and the human and divine role and/or responsibility for creating and maintaining these concepts.
- 2) to engage in critical reading and analysis of materials to gain additional knowledge of theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion
- 3) to undertake collaborative and independent work that involves research and the use of primary and secondary sources, that will result in the production of group and final projects focused on the critical analysis of religious thought and perspectives in a secular setting.

**Required texts:**

Baumgartner, R.

2001 *Longing for the End. A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization.* NY: Palgrave, 2001.

Bernstein, A.

1996 *A Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds.* Ithaca: Cornell University.

Cohn, N.

2001 *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come.* New Haven: Yale University.

Pagels, E.

1995 *The Origin of Satan.* NY: Random House.

Perdue, L.

2008 *The Sword and the Stylus. An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires.* Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.

Wright, J.E.

2000 *The Early History of Heaven.* Oxford: Oxford University.

Other readings to be handed out in class or posted on D2L.

<b>Course requirements:</b>	attendance/participation/assignments	20%
	group presentation	30%
	final project presentation	20%
	final paper/project	30%

Each student will be required to participate in **one group project and in-class presentation**. Dates of each presentation will be organized during the first week of class.

The final project and presentation must draw on each student's "methodology" background as part of the requirements for the major in religious studies.

## Course Policies:

- 1) This is a course about religion and the development of religious thought, and the interaction between religion, human society, and the categories assigned to groups within society. This is **NOT** a class that teaches religious doctrine or that is taught from a religious perspective. We will be examining the development of social and religious categories and the ways in which this perceptions function in society in **an academic and secular setting**, and all religions, religious beliefs, and religious interpretations of events, texts, and politics will therefore **be open to questioning, examination, interpretation, criticism, and discussion**. An open mind and a willingness to examine new ideas and new methods regarding the history of religions and the development of religious traditions are essential. **This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.**
- 2) Plagiarism – the presentation of others’ work as your own – is an offense punishable by expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and all references to ideas from books, articles, or other sources must be cited correctly. If you do not know how to properly reference your work, or you are in doubt whether or not you should cite material, refer to the *Student Academic and Conduct Guidelines*, or make an appointment to see the instructor to discuss the problem. **Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification or any other form of academic dishonesty will fail this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.**

## Course Schedule:

### Week One:

Jan. 9: Introduction and organization of assignments/presentation schedule, etc.

### Week Two:

Jan. 16: Wisdom: worldview, justice, and retribution

Read: Perdue, chapters 1-2, 6-7.

Bible, Proverbs, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon

### Week Three:

Jan. 23: Wisdom: breakdown of justice and retribution

Read: Perdue, chapters 3 and 5.

Bible, Job, Ecclesiastes.

### Week Four:

Jan. 30: Theodicy: evil, reward and punishment

Read: Pagels, chapters 1-4

Bible, Tobit, Mark and/or Matthew

### Week Five:

Feb. 6: Theodicy: spiritual and personified evil, group presentation and discussion

Read: Pagels, chapters 5-6

Russell, Devil readings, D2L.

### Week Six:

Feb. 13: Times, part 1: apocalypse, heaven and hell

Read: Perdue, chapter 8

Bernstein, part 2

Wright, chapter 5

Cohn, chapter 9.

Bible, Daniel, Zechariah

**Week Seven:**

Feb. 20: Times, part 1: apocalypse, heaven and hell, group presentation and discussion

Read: Bernstein, part 3  
Wright, chapters 6 and 8  
Cohn, chapter 10.  
Enoch 1, D2L

**Week Eight:**

Feb. 27: Times, part 2: millennialism

Read: Bernstein, part 4  
Cohn, chapters 11-12  
Baumgartner, pp. 1-130.  
Bible, Revelation

**Week Nine:**

March 6: Times, part 2: millennialism, group presentation and discussion

Read: Baumgartner, pp. 130-end  
Gorenberg, History of the Future, D2L.

**March 11-16 Spring Break**

**Week Ten:**

March 20: Times and Cosmologies: millennialism and violence

Read: Juergensmeyer, Cosmic War, D2L  
Gorenberg, The Day After the Last, D2L.  
Additional readings TBA, on D2L.

**Week Eleven:**

March 27: Individual meetings for final project.

**Week Twelve:**

April 3: Times and Cosmologies

Read/Watch: films and readings to be assigned.  
Assignment due in class.

**Week Thirteen:**

April 10: Final project presentations

**Week Fourteen:**

April 17: Final project presentations

**Week Fifteen:**

April 24: **FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE**