Learning outcome: critical discernment of the constructed, man-made element in visions of the cataclysmic end of time -- from the biblical apocalypse (at the end of the first century of the Common Era) to the present day -- visions of metamorphosis and radical transformation. The course traces the evolution and utility of the narrative genre of apocalypse, suggesting that the plot and pattern (template) of the traditional “vision” has at least influenced if not effectively “socialized” apocalyptic visionaries both religious and now secular down through the history of Western anxiety over the end of the "world" as we know it. (Cf. Mayan mythology, Doomsday Preppers, the spin-off, distracting zombie fad)

Apocalypse is a religious concern, for many a matter of personal and community faith. The most influential of all apocalyptic visions (in Revelation) is held to be divinely inspired. For certain American evangelical Protestant communities the doctrine of Second Coming and Last Judgment has been one of the six “fundamentals” of the faith.

The expressive political and prophetic vision of “last things” is a recurring phenomenon in religion, literature, and the arts. The course stresses the seminal influence of Revelation and the revolutionary, antinomian poetic-pictorial art of the Romantic, William Blake (1757-1827). We will discuss the manner and meaning of uses of the metaphor/myth of apocalypse by modern writers, artists, film-makers, musicians, religious “prophets" and secular "enthusiasts for trouble." Apocalypse is a recurring American cultural obsession.

The analytical concept of the “apocalyptic imagination” (or, more recently, the “apocalyptic imaginary”) provides a thread of continuity. The evolving historical-cultural influence of Revelation, both formal (as a literary structure) and substantive (as a blueprint for revolution and metamorphic change), of course, provides another.

REQUIRED READING:

*Revelation* (King James, “Authorized,” KJV version preferred)
*William Blake*, ed. G.E. Bentley (Penguin)
*An American Dream*, Norman Mailer
"New Heaven and New Earth," D.H. Lawrence (hand-out)
*Howl and Other Poems*, Allen Ginsberg
*Childhood’s End*, Arthur C. Clarke
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class attendance and participation expected 5%

I monitor class attendance but do not reduce grades for a specific number of classes missed. But you are responsible for material presented and discussed in class.)

January 22 -- factual Quiz on Revelation 10%

March 5 -- Submit Blake Paper (5-6 pages, number the pages) 25%

March 31 -- Quiz on An American Dream 10%

April 23 -- Submit either Paper on a topic relevant to study of apocalypse, but not on Blake (5-6 pages, number the pages) or your own creative Apocalypse (of equivalent length or weight, to be explained in class) 25%

May 5 -- Final Exam (9:00 a.m.) 25%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Jan. 13  Introduction

15  “

20  Revelation (read thoroughly in its entirety). See also: Ezekiel, Daniel, Mark 13, I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

22  Revelation - QUIZ

27  Medieval Millennialism, radical Protestant apocalyptic

29  Slides: Apocalypse and Last Judgment in Western Art


Suggest you look at: Blake’s "illuminated" works, U. of Virginia internet site: www.blakearchive.org

5  William Blake: “The Everlasting Gospel” (103-115), Letters (233-9)


17 William Blake: “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” (47-59)
19 William Blake: “The Book of Urizen,” (esp. 138-143); video: Kenneth Clark’s “Urizenic” interpretation of Blake

24 William Blake: “Milton” (240-254)

26 William Blake: “Jerusalem” (esp. 255-7, 265, 278-9, 283-6)

Mar. 3 Video: "Doomsday" (concluding segment of the English National Theatre production of “The Mysteries,” a medieval village green re-enactment of the biblical story, scripted by north-country poet, Tony Harrison.)

5 Recording: Olivier Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time"

Blake Paper Due (Caution: plagiarism alert)

SPRING BREAK

17 Ghost Dance apocalyptic: Messiah cult of Native Americans in the West in the 1880s (slides)
19 D.H. Lawrence, “New Heaven and New Earth” (hand-out)

24 An American Dream

26 Class cancelled

31 An American Dream Quiz

April 2 “

7 Dispensationalist Millennialism in America

9 Futurist Jerry Falwell vs. Historicist Hal Lindsay (recordings)

14 David Koresh, Heaven's Gate, and other instances of "folk" Christian "prophecy" -- see Ted Daniels, Rapture Index, and related Internet sites
16  *Howl*: the "bop apocalypse" - Ginsberg reading *Howl* at Naropa (recording)

21  *Childhood's End*: “speculative fiction” apocalypse

23  “  *Paper* (Caution: plagiarism alert) or personal *Apocalypse Due*

May 5  **Final Exam** (9:00 a.m.)