

Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
205-776-5650

Fall 2015

AP8521 Introduction to Apologetics

Phone:

205.776.5110

Professor: Dr. Harry Reeder

And Mr. Brandon Robbins

Class Hours: 2

E-mail address: brobbins@briarwood.org

COURSE PURPOSE

This course is a focused study of the defense of the Christian faith. Topics discussed will include apologetic methodology, arguments for God's existence, and responses to several major objections to the Christian faith.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Familiarize students with theological, philosophical, and apologetic vocabulary.
2. To provide a structure for understanding of different apologetic arguments.
3. To expose students to various objections to Christianity and how those objections may be answered.
4. To enable the student to more effectively defend the faith.
5. To prepare students to dialog with, criticize, and appropriate the best parts of various apologetic works into their system of thinking.
6. To deepen the students understanding of the Christian world and life view.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Texts:

Masters and Certificate Level

Sproul, R.C, *Defending your Faith: An Introduction* . Crossway, ISBN-10: 978-1581345193

Pratt, Richard, *Every Thought Captive*., P&R Publishing **ISBN-13:** 978-0875523521

Cowan, Steven *ed, Five Views on Apologetics*, Zondervan ISBN- 978-0310224761

Suggested Reading

R.C. Sproul: Classical Apologetics

Van Til.: Pre-suppositional Apologetics

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Certificate and Masters Level Requirements:

1. Class attendance: more than two unexcused absences drops final grade one letter grade.
2. Completion of reading assignments on time.
3. There will be 6 pop quizzes that cover lecture and reading material given throughout the course. The top 4 grades on these quizzes count toward your final grade.
4. Exams: There will be multiple choice and short answer on Midterm and Final exams. This will cover all major terms defined in the course.

Masters Level only:

5. An 8-12 page writing project answering the major questions and objections to the Christian faith. The attached handout lists 12 different scenarios in which you must make a reasonable response to six.

GRADING

Masters level:

1. Class attendance: more than two unexcused absences drops final grade one letter grade.
2. Completion of reading and ability to participate in discussion 10%
3. Pop quizzes: Top 4 of 6 grades equal 20%
4. Writing project 20% of grade
5. Midterm grade 25%
6. Final grade 25%

Certificate Level:

1. Class attendance: more than two unexcused absences drops final grade one letter grade.
2. Completion of reading and ability to participate in discussion 15%
3. Pop quizzes: Top 4 of 6 grades equal 30%
4. Midterm grade 25%
5. Final grade 30%

BTS FORMAT AND STYLE STANDARDS

NOTE: All papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. Any papers not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade.

COURSE OUTLINE

Topics

Reading assignments

Weekly reading will be given each week:

Week 1: September 5th Why Should we Study Apologetics?

Week 2: September 12th Faith and Reason and Epistemology

Week 3: September 19th – Guest Apologist

Week 4: September 26th Worldviews

Week 5: October 3rd: Evangelism and Apologetics and the Noetic Effects of Sin?

Week 6: Oct. 10th: Presuppositional Method and Arguments (Transcendental Argument and sufficient reason)

Week 7: Oct. 17th: Classical Method and Arguments (Moral and Design)

Week 8: Oct. 24th Ontological, Cosmological, Existential (True, beautiful, Good)

Week 9: Oct 31st Apologetics and the Purity of Doctrine

Week 10: Nov. 7th: Problem of Evil and Major objections to the Christian faith

Week 11: Nov. 14th: Evidential Method, the Resurrection, Defense of Scripture positive defense and answering objections

Week 12: The Church and the Public Square

Week 13: Dec. 5th Wrap up, Review and Final

Introduction to Apologetics writing project

Choose Six of the following and write essays as instructed:

1. Your Christian friend Bob notices you reading *about Christian Apologetics*, and asks you what it's about. When you tell him, he says, "Aww, you don't need to waste your time reading that stuff! You're not going to convince anybody to believe with arguments. It's all a matter of faith anyway." Write an essay in which you respond to Bob's remarks. Define apologetics and its biblical basis. Explain the relationship between faith and reason, and make a case for how and why he should defend his faith.

2. Your friend Doug is an atheist. He believes that God does not exist. He knows, however, that you are a firm believer. One day he says to you, "Okay, if you're so sure that there is a God, then prove it to me. Show me some evidence for God's existence!" Write an essay in which you thoroughly present and defend what you take to be strongest or most persuasive argument for God's existence. Be sure to consider possible objections to your argument.
3. You are sharing the Gospel with Sam, a new friend. You have mentioned some of the miracles in the Bible. Sam interrupts you and says, "What you have said is nice, but I have a hard time believing in these miracles. Haven't philosophers like David Hume proven that miracles don't happen, or that it's unwise to believe in them?" Write an essay in which you lay out Hume's arguments against miracles, and then show Sam where these arguments go wrong. Also give any positive arguments you can for the rationality of believing in miracles.
4. Sam has been convinced by your defense of miracles, but when you start talking about the life of Jesus he is not so sure about the historical reliability of the Gospels. "Haven't scholars shown that the Gospels are unhistorical, full of legends made up by the early church?" Write an essay in which you answer Sam's question. Make a case for the historical reliability of the Gospels, and explain why the early church didn't make up stories about Jesus.
5. Sam is still hanging in there! He says, "Okay, I understand that miracles are possible. And I will grant you that the New Testament is basically reliable as an historical record. But, that's still a long way from saying that Jesus is God and believing that he rose from the dead and all that." Write an essay in which you meet Sam's challenge. Make a case for Jesus' claim to be God, and for his resurrection.
6. Your atheist friend Doug is back. This time he wants to know why you can be so silly as to believe the Bible. "It's full of contradictions and errors," he says. Then he rattles off a few alleged errors in the Bible. Respond to Doug's accusation by picking two "Bible difficulties" (use ones not discussed by your instructor) and write an essay that explains why they are not errors after all.
7. You are leading a Bible study on the Gospel of John, and you have come to John 14:6, where Jesus claims to be the only way to God. Bart, a first-time visitor to the study, asks you a question, "How can you believe that Jesus is the only way? Isn't that intolerant and arrogant? And aren't all religions equally valid anyway---just different paths to the same place?" Write an essay answering Bart's questions about religious pluralism and exclusivism.
8. Jane is another atheist, a friend of Doug's. She knows that you are a Christian (you are mild acquaintances). One day, she corners you at the local coffee shop and says, "I just can't understand how you can believe in God. Don't you know it's just a psychological crutch?" Write an essay in which you respond to the idea that belief in God is a psychological crutch.
9. Your Christian friend Katie has been studying a lot of history. She has noticed that much of history is filled with violence, disease, and death. This knowledge has shaken her faith in God. She asks you, "I cannot understand how God, if he is all-powerful and all-good, could allow these things. Is it reasonable to believe in God when there is evil in the world?" Write an essay in which you answer Katie's concerns about the problem of evil.

10. You meet Ali, a Muslim, and engage him in conversation. He tells you that the Qur'an is divinely inspired because it is the most excellent of books. "No human could have written this book," he says. "It must have God for its author." Moreover, he tells you that, unlike the Bible, the Qur'an has been perfectly preserved throughout history, further authenticating the Qur'an's divine inspiration. Write an essay in which you respond to Ali's arguments.

11. Your friend Mary has just read Greg Boyd's book, *God of the Possible* in which he argues that God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. Mary is confused now about what to believe. She has always thought that God knew the future completely, but now she wonders if she has misread the Bible. She asks you about some key biblical texts that seem to suggest that God does not know what free creatures will do in the future and that God sometimes changes his mind or regrets what he did (e.g., Gen. 22:12; 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:10; Jer. 3: 6-7). Write an essay in which you respond to the Open Theist interpretations of these texts.

12. Bart has returned to your Bible study for a second time. This time you were talking about Genesis chapter 1, the creation account. Bart asks, "Hasn't science disproven the Bible? How can you believe that God created human beings directly when science says that we evolved from lower life forms?" Write an essay in which you respond to Bart's questions concerning the relationship between science and theology and creation vs. evolution.

Apologetics Bibliography

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