

**Birmingham Theological Seminary  
2200 Briarwood Way  
Birmingham, AL 35243  
205.776.5650**

---

**Dothan Extension  
Westwood Presbyterian Church  
5480 West Main Street  
Dothan, AL 36305  
334.794.4080**

**Spring 2020  
AP8521 Introduction to Apologetics  
Class Hours: 2**

**Professor: Rev. Lynn D. Miley  
Cell Phone: 334.701.5023  
E-mail address –  
ldmiley1@comcast.net**

### **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, the infallibility of Scripture, and key doctrines of Christ, and responses to several major objections to the Christian faith. This course is required for M.A.A., M.DIV., M.A.B.C., M.A.M., M.A.B.S., C.A., C.MIS.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. The student will be able to identify key elements of apologetic methodologies in terms of principles and practice while evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. From these methodologies the student will identify the methodology that he feels most comfortable using.
2. The student will be able to identify major objections to key elements of the Christian faith, to describe the underlying philosophy or rational behind these objections, and to answer these objections in such a way that the Christian faith becomes a viable option for the one objecting to it.
3. The student will identify areas of doubt in his own life concerning the Christian faith and will formulate a Christian response to at least one of those doubts.

### **COURSE TEXTS**

#### **Required Texts:**

Groothuis, Douglas, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, IVP Academic. ISBN: 978-0-83083-935-3

Keller, Timothy, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Riverhead Books. ISBN: 978-1-59448-349-3 (This text is not required for Certificate students.)

Collateral Texts:

- Frame, John M., *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, P&R Publishers. ISBN: 0-87552-243-2  
McDowell, Josh, *A Ready Defense*, Thomas Nelson Publishers. ISBN: 0-8407-4419-6  
Moreland, J.P., *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*, Baker Book House, ISBN: 0-8010-6222-5  
Sproul, R.C., John Gerstner, Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, Zondervan. ISBN: 25986-44951

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Class attendance and participation. More than two unexcused absences drops the final grade by one letter grade.
2. Completion of reading assignments on time, according to the Course Outline. Each class may begin with a short quiz over the reading assignment.
3. Three two to three page papers. These papers are to be short, concise, but precise. The topics for these papers are to come from the twelve scenarios described in the Appendix A. If the student has an issue, other than one of those in the Appendix A, that he would like to answer, he must first secure permission from the instructor.
4. An apologetic project. Select one of the following projects:
  - \* Engage with an unbeliever on an apologetic level. He/she may be someone you know or a stranger on the Internet or street. Record your conversation by way of text, audio, or video. Please remember that you represent Christ and use common sense as well. The exchange needs to be of a reasonable length: roughly 3-5 pages if in text or 5-10 minutes if recorded.
  - \* Prepare an apologetics presentation. This presentation can be on any topic from the material we have studied. Use audio/visual, PowerPoint or Keynote, handouts, lecture, games, or whatever else you can think of to make the presentation convincing to your audience. Presentation should be 10-15 minutes long.
  - \* This Apologetic Project is not required for Certificate students.
5. Final exam.

**COURSE GRADING**

Quizzes over reading assignments	– 20%
Three short papers	– 30%
Apologetic project	– 25%
Final exam	– 25%

The Student Handbook contains information on late assignments, grade scale, and attendance.

## **BTS FORMAT AND STYLE STANDARDS**

BTS uses the Turabian style of formatting as a standard for papers. However, students should regard individual professor preferences if they communicate any variance in outlining their requirements for papers. Professors retain discretion in determining how “formal” a paper must be. In this technological age, information is readily available; make sure that you understand about giving reference sources the proper recognition. Please refer to the BTS Student Handbook section on plagiarism for guidance.

Proper planning and timely completion of assignments is crucial.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

January 23 – Introduction to Apologetics and class notes from *The Mind Changers* by Em Griffin

January 30 – Groothuis pp. 15-94

February 6 – Groothuis pp. 95-167

February 13 – Groothuis pp. 171-239

February 20 – Groothuis pp. 240-329; first paper due

February 27 – Groothuis pp. 330-417

March 5 – Spring Break

March 12 – Groothuis pp. 418-506; second paper due

March 19 – Groothuis pp. 507-563

March 26 – Groothuis pp. 567-598

April 2 – Groothuis pp. 599-613; third paper due

April 9 – Discuss Christian response to Abortion and Homosexuality; discuss and evaluate Part I of Keller’s *The Reason for God*

April 16 – Discuss and evaluate Part II of Keller’s *The Reason for God*; go over individual projects

April 23 – Final Exam

May 6 – Grades Due

## APPENDIX A

### Apologetics Project

Choose *three* of the following and write a two to three page essay as instructed:

1. Your Christian friend Bob notices you reading *The Reason for God* 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 the 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.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer, Gleason L. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties: Based On the Niv and the Nasb*. Zondervan's Understand the Bible Reference Series. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, [1998?]. A helpful reference work for addressing more popular supposed Bible “contradictions” and difficulties.

Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2 ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. A helpful reference work for philosophical terminology.

Bahnsen, Greg L. *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Edited by Robert R. Booth. Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1996. A collection of articles on such topics as introductory apologetics, presuppositions in apologetics, miracles, faith and science, and the problem of evil.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 1998. Classic work for attempting to understand the apologetic thought of Cornelius Van Til. Consists of primary source material and commentary.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*. Edited by Joel McDurmon. Powder Springs, Ga.: American Vision, Inc., 2008. One of Greg Bahnsen's earlier apologetic works only recently found and published.

Beilby, James K., ed. *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. Introductory text to philosophical theology. Helpful for thinking through a more analytic defense of the Christian faith.

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. New ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. Classic systematic theology text. A must read.

Cahn, Steven. *Classics of Western Philosophy: Sixth Edition*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002. Selected primary texts in philosophy.

Calvin, John. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion (2 Volume Set)*. 1559 translation ed. 2 vols. Phillipsburg, N.J.; Westminster John Knox Press, 1960. Classic text that is a must read especially for pastors using apologetics.

Comfort, Philip Wesley. *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary On the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008. Helpful reference work for textual difficulties. Clear, easy-to-use format.

Copi, Irving M., and Carl Cohen. *Essentials of Logic*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice

- Hall, 2007. A well-known introductory logic text.
- Craig, William Lane. *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2010. William Lane Craig is one of the most well-known scholars in apologetics alive today. This is one of his more accessible texts.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. 3rd ed. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008. William Lane Craig is one of the most well-known scholars in apologetics alive today. This is one of his more accessible texts.
- Edgar, William, and K Scott Oliphint. *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*. 2 vols. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009-2011. This two volume set traces the history of apologetics.
- Flew, Antony. *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. New York: HarperOne, 2007. This title is self-explanatory.
- Frame, John M. *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 1994.
- Geisler, Norman L. and Chad V. Meister, eds., *Reasons For Faith: Making a Case For the Christian Faith: Essays in Honor of Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino Coburn*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007. A hodgepodge of apologetic articles. Includes an article critiquing Greg Bahnsen's argument from his famous debate with atheist Gordon Stein.
- Groothuis, Douglas R. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011. A systematic apologetic work.
- Habermas, Gary R., and Mike Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004. A very basic, practical book presenting historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ in such a way to be remembered and reused by the readers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 1996. Scholarly work on historical evidence concerning Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology - (3-Volume Set)*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999. Hodge is a must read systematician with a heavy philosophical and apologetic emphasis.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines: Revised Edition*. Revised ed. New York: HarperOne, 1978. Many Christians forget the apologetic import of church history. This classic work will guard against that tendency.

- Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009. A practical manual for discussing your faith.
- Lewis, C S. *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*. harpercollins ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. Perhaps the most famous apologetic work of the last century.
- Moreland, James Porter, and William Lane Craig. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003. An excellent systematic text discussing most of the philosophical and apologetic issues Christians will encounter.
- Morris, Thomas. *Our Idea of God*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991. An extremely clear treatment of major ideas in philosophical theology.
- Musgrave, Alan. *Common Sense, Science, And Scepticism : A historical introduction to the theory of knowledge*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. An introduction to epistemology written from a more skeptical perspective.
- Okasha, Samir. *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2002. The title is self-explanatory, and the book is well worth the time it will take to master, given pervasive misunderstandings about science and how those misunderstandings are often used as objections to the Christian faith.
- Oliphint, K Scott. *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013. Probably the best introduction available now for learning presuppositional apologetics.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending Our Faith*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2003. An overview of Scripture as it addresses the task of apologetics.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reasons [for Faith]: Philosophy in the Service of Theology*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2006. Discusses the role of philosophy in the Christian faith.
- Oliphint, K. Scott, and Lane G. Tipton, eds. *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2007. A collection of articles pertaining to a more presuppositional understanding of apologetics methodology and argumentation.
- Parrish, Stephen E. *God and Necessity: a Defense of Classical Theism*. Lanham, MD: University Press Of America, 1997. An extremely unique and insightful work addressing classical proofs and the so-called transcendental argument for God.
- Pearcey, Nancy R., and Charles B. Thaxton. *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994. A cultural apologetic.

- Plantinga, Alvin. *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*. Cornell Paperbacks. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990. A philosophical work focusing on the question of rational faith and the place of classic theistic arguments.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011. One of the best works available on the issues surrounding the relationship of science to religion and Christianity in particular.
- Pratt, Richard L. *Every Thought Captive: A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1979. A small book written on a high school level introducing a presuppositional approach to apologetics.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume*. Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1990. A great way to get acquainted with Schaeffer.
- Sproul, R C. *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009, 2003.
- Sudduth, Michael. *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009. Historical theological work on how Protestant thinkers have understood the classic proofs for the existence of God.
- Sweis, Khaldoun A., and Chad V. Meister, eds. *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Van Til, Cornelius. *Christian Apologetics. 2nd ed.* Edited by William Edgar. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Defense of the Faith. 4th ed.* Edited by K Scott Oliphint. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2008.
- White, James R. *The Forgotten Trinity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1998. Very helpful for interacting with false religions and cults that deny the Trinity.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The King James Only Controversy*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009. An introduction to text criticism.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Roman Catholic Controversy*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1996. Introduces the reader the basic differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic doctrines and explains how to defend the faith against attacks on the sufficiency of Christ and Scripture.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an*. Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House, 2013. A wonderfully well-researched and accessibly presented work on Islam from an explicitly Christian perspective.

