

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

**Professor: Dr. Matthew Burford**  
**AP8521 Introduction to Apologetics**

**Class Hours: 2**  
**Fall 2020**

**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**

Powell, Doug. *Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics*. Holman Reference, 2006.

Guinness, Os. *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015.

Willard, D. (2015). *The allure of gentleness: Defending the faith in the Manner of Jesus*. HarperCollins.

## **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. Presentation – Presenting a chapter of Os Guinness’ book “*Fool’s Talk*” to the class. This activity may include a PowerPoint presentation and up to 20 minutes of lecture and class discussion.
4. There will be 4 pop quizzes that cover lecture and reading material given throughout the course. The top 2 grades on these quizzes count toward your final grade.
5. 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:**

6. 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.

*\*Certificate student can complete writing project for extra credit toward the grade of the mid-term or final exam grade. This can add up to 10pts toward the final grade of exam.*

## **GRADING**

### **Masters level:**

1. Class Participation and Presentation 20%
2. Pop quizzes: Top 2 of 4 grades equal 10%
3. Writing project 20% of grade
4. Midterm grade 25%
5. Final grade 25%

### **Certificate Level:**

1. Class Participation and Presentation 25%
2. Pop quizzes: Top 2 of 4 grades equal 20%
3. Midterm grade 25%
4. Final grade 30%

## **BTS FORMAT AND STYLE STANDARDS**

Note:

BTS has adopted Turabian as the standard form and style for writing formal papers. However, professors retain discretion in determining how “formal” a paper must be. Students should reference Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9th Edition*. A Turabian Supplement is available through the seminary. Students should also refer to the BTS Student Handbook on academic integrity/plagiarism. Below is a Paper Grading Rubric for formal papers:

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Many errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor and/or seminary office prior to the absence. In the absence of professor approval, a student will be permitted two absences per semester in a course. Tardiness may be recorded and three unexcused tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence. Unexcused absences and tardies exceeding the allowance may result in the student being dropped from the course with an “F” grade.

## **CLASS POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

Refer to Student Handbook:

<https://bts.education/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Student-Handbook-2016-Current.pdf>

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Reading assignments</b>
Week 1	What are we defending?	Powell: Chapter 1 & 14 Guinness: Introduction Willard: Chapter 1 & 2
Week 2	Methodology Apologetics is for Believers Apologetics in the Bible Use and Abuse	Powell: Chapter 2 Guinness: Chapter 1 & 2 Willard: Chapter 4
Week 3	Faith & Reason Cosmological Arguments Scientific Arguments	Powell: Chapter 3 Guinness: Chapter 3 & 4
Week 4	The Watchmaker Fine-Tuning as Design Information & Complexity as Design Review	Powell: Chapter 4 Guinness: Chapter 5
Week 5	Moral Arguments Midterm	
Week 6	Fall Break	Powell: Chapter 5 Willard: Chapter 6
Week 7	The Elephant and the Blind Wise Men The Glass Slipper The “isms” The Problem of Pain	Powell: Chapter 6 Guinness Chapter 6

Week 8	Where did the NT Come From?	Powell: Chapter 7 & 8 Guinness Chapter 7 & 8
Week 9	Is the NT/OT Reliable?	Powell: Chapter 9 & 11 Guinness Chapter 9 & 10
Week 10	Miracles/The Resurrection	Powell: Chapter 12 Guinness Chapter 11 & 12
Week 11	Is Jesus the Only Way? Dealing with Christian Doubt	Guinness: Conclusion
Week 12	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 13	Final Final Paper Due by December 10 <sup>th</sup>	

## Apologetics Bibliography

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- Boa, Ken and Larry Moody. *I'm Glad You Asked: In-depth Answers to Difficult Questions About Christianity*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994.
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## 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 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.



**BTS Mission:**

**Providing sound Biblical and practical theological training to equip leaders for Christ's Church.**

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Semester:	FALL 2020	Course:	AP8521 Introduction to Apologetics
Day & Time:	Thursday, 5:30-7:00 pm	Room:	A200
Professor:	Matthew Burford, Dmin	Credits:	2 Hours
E-mail:	mattburford@gmail.com	Phone:	(M) 205-937-6063

**STUDENT SIGNATURE**

Your signature below indicates that you have read this syllabus, understand it, and willing accept the requirements and responsibilities for successfully completing this course.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_