ST5450 – Apologetics

Reformed Theological Seminary

Summer 2020

I. Details

A. Dates: July 13–August 7 (Summer B)
B. Format: "Remote Residential"—10 hours of prerecorded lectures, which students will listen to in the *first* two weeks of the Summer B session, followed by 16 hours of live Zoom lectures in the *second* two weeks of the Summer B session.
C. Times: 2:00–4:00, Mon–Thu, July 27–30 & Aug 3–6
D. Instructor: Dr. James N. Anderson
E. Contact: janderson@rts.edu (or use Canvas inbox)

II. Goals

A. To survey the biblical foundations for apologetics, including the basics of a biblical epistemology (theory of knowledge and rationality).
B. To familiarize the student with the major schools of apologetic methodology: their basic rationales, their representative thinkers, and their distinctive approaches to prominent issues in apologetics.
C. To present a defense of Reformed presuppositional (worldview) apologetics: its biblical and theological warrant, its philosophical cogency, and its practical effectiveness.
D. To familiarize the student with prominent issues in apologetics and how they can be addressed from a Reformed presuppositional perspective.
E. To strengthen the student's own faith, and to equip them to strengthen the faith of other Christians, through an appreciation of Christian apologetics.

III. Course Overview

A. Biblical Foundations for Apologetics
B. Survey of Contemporary Approaches to Apologetics
C. Reformed Presuppositional Apologetics: Principles and Practice
D. Issues in Apologetics (1): The Existence of the Biblical God
E. Issues in Apologetics (2): The Divine Inspiration of the Bible
F. Issues in Apologetics (3): The Resurrection of Jesus Christ
G. Issues in Apologetics (4): The Problem of Evil and Suffering
H. Issues in Apologetics (5): Science and Scripture

IV. Course Requirements

A. *Lecture attendance and class interactions*.
   1. You will be expected to 'attend' all the live Zoom lectures (see above for dates and times). If you know that you will be unable to attend on a particular date, please inform me in advance, otherwise you may be penalized for your absence.
   2. You will also be expected to interact with the professor and the other students via several Canvas discussion forums. The *minimum* requirements are **15 student-to-**

professor interactions and **5 student-to-student interactions**. Further details will be provided nearer the time of the class.

3. A proportion of your final grade will depend on your lecture attendance and class interactions.

B. *Reading assignments*.
   1. A proportion of your final grade will depend on how much of the required reading you have completed.
   2. A reading report indicating the *percentage completed* of each required reading item is due on **August 14**. The report should be submitted via the course website (look for the link on the **Modules** page) on or prior to this date. Late submissions will be penalized.

C. *Writing assignment*.
   1. You should write a paper (3500–4500 words, excluding bibliography) taking the form of a dialogue with *either* a non-Christian *or* a Christian who is struggling with the intellectual aspects of their faith.
   2. You have **several options** for the dialogue paper:
      i. The first (and recommended) option is to engage in *a real written exchange* with either a non-Christian or a Christian with doubts or intellectual anxieties, e.g., via email, social media, or an internet discussion forum. You should edit the dialogue as needed to maintain clarity and conciseness (i.e., format it to make clear the flow of discussion, correct obvious errors of spelling or grammar, excise irrelevant or tangential material). If the final word count of the dialogue is less than 3500 words, you should supplement it with a critical commentary on the exchange (where you would aim to take any subsequent discussion, how you might have argued differently in retrospect, etc.).
      ii. The second option is to write *an entirely fictional dialogue* between a Christian apologist and either a non-Christian or a Christian with doubts or intellectual anxieties. If you choose this option, you should aim to represent both sides of the dialogue in a realistic, fair, and challenging way (i.e., avoid "straw men").
      iii. The third option is a hybrid of the first two: *a partly fictional dialogue* based on a real exchange with either a non-Christian or a Christian with doubts or intellectual anxieties ("based on a true story").
   3. The paper should illustrate that you have a good understanding of the goals, principles, and methods of apologetics discussed in the lectures and readings.
   4. Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: realism, responsible use of Scripture, extent of research, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, evidence of critical thinking, and good writing style (inc. grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
   5. The paper should include a standard bibliography citing sources used in the writing of the assignment and sources that document or further develop the points raised in the dialogue.
   6. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
      i. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
      ii. Use section headings where appropriate to improve readability.
      iii. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
      iv. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago/Turabian, SBL).

7. The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following: the name and year of the course; your name; the professor's name; the title of the paper; and the *exact word count* for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor's word-count feature).
8. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.
9. Your dialogue paper is due on **August 28**. It should be uploaded to the course website (look for the link on the **Modules** page) on or prior to this date. Late submissions will be penalized.

D. *Final exam*.
1. The final exam should be completed by **August 14**. The exam will be taken on Canvas using the LockDown Browser and you will need to arrange a proctor.
2. The format of the exam will be a series of short-answer questions plus two longer essay questions. You will have three hours to complete it.
3. You may refer to an English translation of the Bible (but not one with study notes, etc.). You may not refer to any class notes or other study resources.
4. You will be asked to sign a declaration that you have not discussed the content of the exam with anyone who has previously taken the exam.

V. Course Documents

A. *Instructions for accessing course documents*.
1. Log in to the RTS Canvas website (https://rts.instructure.com).
2. Select "Apologetics" from the **Courses** menu.
3. All the course documents will be accessible from the **Modules** page.

B. *Course outline*.
1. Other than the syllabus, the course outline is the most important document. You will need a copy (either electronic or printed) in front of you throughout the class.
2. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the outline with your own notes.
3. The outline will be uploaded to the course website the week before class.

C. *Supplementary documents*.
1. Some of the required and recommended readings (see below) will be available on the course website.
2. You should also consult the documents "Research Paper Checklist" and "Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers" *before* you start the writing assignment.

VI. Grading

A. Lecture attendance and class interactions — 10%
B. Reading assignments — 20%
C. Writing assignment — 40%
D. Final exam — 30%

VII. Required Reading

You should obtain copies of all the items below. You should try to read **A** before class begins. You should certainly have read **A–G** (completely, including appendices) in preparation for the paper and final exam.

A. John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (P&R, 2015).
B. Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Zondervan, 2000).
C. Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (P&R, 2nd edition, 2003). [Be sure to get the edition with an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.]
D. James N. Anderson, *Why Should I Believe Christianity?* (Christian Focus, 2016).
E. James N. Anderson, "If Knowledge Then God: The Epistemological Theistic Arguments of Plantinga and Van Til," *Calvin Theological Journal* 40:1 (2005). [A copy of this will be made available on the course website.]
F. James N. Anderson, "Presuppositionalism and Frame's Epistemology," in John J. Hughes, ed., *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame* (P&R, 2009). [A copy of this will be made available on the course website.]
G. John M. Frame, "How to Write a Theological Paper," Appendix F in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (P&R, 1987). [A copy of this will be made available on the course website.]

VIII.Recommended Supplementary Reading

You are not *required* to read any of the items below, but you may find them useful to consolidate the course material and for further study as your interests dictate. For many of these, the table of contents can be viewed on Amazon.com or Google Books. Further recommendations for specific topics are included in the course outline.

A. History of Apologetics / Methodology in Apologetics
    1. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (P&R, 1998).
    [The definitive exposition of Van Til's presuppositionalism: a combination of representative excerpts from Van Til's writings and Bahnsen's insightful, concise commentary. Highly recommended.]
    2. Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Paternoster, 2nd edition, 2006).
    [A comprehensive, fair-handed, and well-structured survey of approaches to Christian apologetics. Highly recommended. The first edition is available for free online: https://bible.org/series/faith-has-its-reasons]
    3. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Crossway, 3rd edition, 2008).
    [Craig is arguably the best-known and most sophisticated representative of the classical approach today. This is his main text on apologetic method and practice.]
    4. Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics* (IVP Academic, 2015).
    [An even-handed and insightful survey of different apologetic methodologies.]
    5. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past & Present: A Primary Source Reader* (Volume 1, To 1500) (Crossway, 2009).
    [An excellent selection of primary source readings on Christian apologetics from

the apostolic era to the close of the Middle Ages, with helpful commentary by two WTS professors.]

6. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past & Present: A Primary Source Reader* (Volume 2, From 1500) (Crossway, 2011).
   [Another excellent selection of primary source readings on Christian apologetics from the Reformation to the present day, with helpful commentary by two WTS professors.]
7. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (P&R, 1987).
   [An insightful treatment of epistemology (theory of knowledge) from a biblical perspective by a Reformed theologian. Very relevant to apologetics, but also to other areas of biblical and theological study. Highly recommended.]
8. Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Baker, 1976).
   [An influential work by a leading classical apologist; covers both methodology and application.]
9. K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Crossway, 2013).
   [An up-to-date defense of Van Tilian presuppositional apologetics (although Oliphint prefers the label "covenantal apologetics") with helpful illustrations of its practical application. Good emphasis on the relationship between apologetics and biblical theology.]
10. R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Zondervan, 1984).
    [A defense of the classical approach and critique of the presuppositional approach from three Reformed scholars, dedicated (without evident irony) to Cornelius Van Til. John Frame's critical review of the book appears as an appendix in *AGG*.]
11. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister, *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Zondervan, 2012).
    [A good selection of readings representing a range of approaches to apologetics.]
12. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (P&R, 4th edition, 2008).
    [One of Van Til's most influential works on presuppositional apologetics. This edition features an introduction and explanatory notes by K. Scott Oliphint.]

B. Apologetics in Practice

1. David E. Alexander and Daniel M. Johnson, eds., *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil* (Pickwick Publications, 2016).
   [A collection of scholarly essays exploring Calvinist responses to the problem of evil; deals in depth with the philosophical issues of divine providence, human free will, and theodicy. Includes an essay by yours truly.]
2. James N. Anderson, "Secular Responses to the Problem of Induction" (2000).
   [https://www.proginosko.com/docs/induction.html]
3. James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction: An Argument for God from Logic," *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011).
   [https://www.proginosko.com/docs/The_Lord_of_Non-Contradiction.pdf]
4. James N. Anderson, *What's Your Worldview?* (Crossway, 2014).
   [A little book of applied apologetics written for both believers and unbelievers. It

uses an interactive, non-linear format to help the reader to understand what a worldview is and to reflect more critically on their own worldview.]

5. C. John Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Crossway, 2003).
   [A reliable and wide-ranging treatment of the relationship between modern science and Christian faith; particular relevance to issues in apologetics, e.g., Darwinism versus Intelligent Design.]
6. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser, eds., *The Rationality of Theism* (Routledge, 2003).
   [A collection of scholarly philosophical essays arguing that belief in God is rational. Part 2 contains contemporary versions of the traditional arguments for God's existence.]
7. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, eds., *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering New Atheists & Other Objectors* (B&H, 2009).
   [Eighteen short chapters penned by leading evangelical scholars responding to the claims of the New Atheists and other contemporary critics.]
8. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis* (Routledge, 2000).
   [A collection of essays offering a sophisticated and comprehensive critique of metaphysical naturalism. A number of the arguments could be fairly described as presuppositional in thrust.]
9. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
   [A heavyweight volume offering state-of-the-art formulations and defenses of the traditional theistic arguments.]
10. William Lane Craig and Chad Meister, eds., *God is Great, God is Good: Why Believing in God is Reasonable and Responsible* (InterVarsity Press, 2009).
    [Another collection of essays responding to the New Atheists. Not all contributors write from an evangelical perspective. Includes an interview with Antony Flew following his 'conversion' from atheism to theism (or something close to theism).]
11. Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (Baker Books, 2nd edition, 2002).
    [A generally reliable introduction to the basic teachings of Islam followed by a critical evaluation from an evangelical Christian perspective.]
12. R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History* (InterVarsity Press, 1997).
    [A collection of essays that together offer a comprehensive case (presuppositional in part, evidential in part) that miracles are possible in principle, that miracle claims can be rationally believed, and that the major miracle claims of the Bible are true.]
13. John Gilchrist, *Facing the Muslim Challenge* (Life Challenge Africa, 2002).
    [A short but well-informed handbook of responses to common Muslim objections. PDF version is available online if you search for it.]
14. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (InterVarsity Press, 2011).
    [Exactly what it says on the tin. A cumulative-case approach to defending the Christian worldview by a leading evangelical philosopher.]
15. Gary R. Habermas, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Kregel, 2004).
    [An up-to-date handbook of evidences for the historicity of the Resurrection.

Evidentialist in its methodological orientation, but still invaluable for 'moderate' presuppositionalists.]

16. Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton, 2008).
    [An apologia for the Christian faith aimed at 21st-century Western unbelievers. Keller's approach is eclectic, but has presuppositionalist themes; he cites Van Til and Frame as positive influences. A good example of culturally-aware apologetics.]
17. Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (Viking, 2016).
    [A prequel to *The Reason for God* which aims to open up the modern skeptic to a serious intellectual consideration of Christianity. Keller argues that culturally, emotionally, and intellectually, Christianity makes more sense than secularism.]
18. John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Lion Hudson, updated edition, 2009).
    [A gem of a book by an evangelical Oxford professor debunking myths about the (alleged) conflict between Christianity and science.]
19. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Fount Paperbacks, 1977).
    [Lewis's influential apologia for the existence of God and the identity of Jesus Christ. Various editions available.]
20. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (Fount Paperbacks, 1977).
    [Lewis's influential response to the problem of evil—a mixed bag of biblical insights and unbiblical ideas. Various editions available.]
21. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (Fount Paperbacks, 1974).
    [Lewis's classic defense of miracles (and supernaturalism more broadly); includes an insightful refutation of metaphysical naturalism.]
22. Michael J. Murray, ed., *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans, 1999).
    [A useful collection of essays on prominent issues in Christian apologetics, but with very little attention given to methodological concerns.]
23. Gordon Nickel, *The Gentle Answer to the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification* (Bruton Gate, 2015).
    [A superb defense of the integrity of the Bible in response to the common Muslim accusation that Jews and Christians have corrupted their scriptures. Also documents the contradictions, alterations, and dubious textual history of the Qur'an.]
24. Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach* (Crossway, 2006).
    [A knowledgeable and insightful treatment of the relationship(s) between science and biblical theology, from a Reformed perspective.]
25. Victor Reppert, *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea* (InterVarsity Press, 2003).
    [An updated defense of Lewis's "argument from reason" against metaphysical naturalism.]
26. Mark D. Roberts, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Crossway, 2007).
    [A well-informed, lay-level defense of the reliability of the Gospels, clearing away the common objections and misconceptions. A useful resource to give to skeptics.]
27. Mitch Stokes, *A Shot of Faith to the Head* (Thomas Nelson, 2012).
    [A popularization of Alvin Plantinga's apologetics. Well-argued and engagingly written, but mostly defensive in orientation.]

28. Mitch Stokes, *How To Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2016).
    [Stokes argues, quite effectively, that atheists need to take their atheism more consistently; although they routinely appeal to science and morality, their own worldview is inconsistent with such appeals. Plantingan in orientation.]
29. Greg Welty, *Why Is There Evil in the World (And So Much of It)* (Christian Focus, 2018).
    [A highly accessible, superbly argued, and thoroughly biblical treatment of the problem of evil, written primarily for non-Christian readers. Highly recommended.]
30. James R. White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an* (Bethany House, 2013).
    [An engaging scholarly critique of the Qur'an by a Reformed Christian apologist with decades of experience in debating Muslims. Highly recommended.]
31. Peter J. Williams, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Crossway, 2018).
    [Not to be confused with the book of the same title by Mark D. Roberts, but just as scholarly and accessible. A great little book to give to the skeptic in your life.]

C. Reference Works

1. W.C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath, *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (InterVarsity Press, 2006).
   [A comprehensive reference work with a wide range of scholarly contributors.]
2. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, eds., *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
   [An online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; good articles on many of the philosophical concepts discussed in the course. https://www.iep.utm.edu]
3. Edward N. Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
   [An online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; good articles on many of the philosophical concepts discussed in the course. https://plato.stanford.edu]

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
SYSTEM

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Apologetics
Professor: James N. Anderson
Campus: Charlotte
Date: 10/28/19

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes *In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.* **As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*		**Rubric** • **Strong** • **Moderate** • **Minimal** • **None**	**Mini-Justification**
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	1. Creative application paper 2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	1. Explores biblical teaching on apologetics and epistemology 2. Examines biblical basis for presuppositional methodology 3. Biblical perspectives on theodicy 4. Historicity of Gospel accounts
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	1. Emphasizes connection between Reformed theology and apologetic methodology 2. Emphasizes self-attesting nature of Scripture 3. Reformed approach to theodicy
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	1. Emphasizes our dependence on God in all aspects of life 2. Ultimate purpose of apologetics to glorify God
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	1. Presuppositional methodology 2. Holistic view of Christian faith 3. Christian worldview shown to be foundation for all aspects of life
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Minimal	1. Appreciation for material from non-Reformed apologists and scholars 2. Emphasizes humility in apologetics 3. Person-relative approach
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Minimal	1. Role of apologetics in preaching 2. Critical thinking skills developed