Reformed Theological Seminary
Global

Christian Apologetics

Dr. James N. Anderson

Course Overview

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Course Description:

00ST5450 Christian Apologetics, 2 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:
Dr. James N. Anderson

The course will seek to formulate the rational basis for believing in Christian theism, with responses to objections and critiques of competing worldviews.

Apologetics is the study of how to give reasons for our Christian hope (1 Pet 3:15). The course has three parts: I. Christian Theory of Knowledge, II. Historic and Contemporary Views of Apologetic Method, III. Topics in Apologetics. In the first part, we shall ask what Scripture says about human knowledge, particularly the process by which a non-Christian comes to know Christ. The second part will deal with the controversy over how to do apologetics, discussing representatives of different apologetic schools. The third part will discuss issues under debate between Christians and non-Christians: the existence of God, the truth of Scripture, the problem of evil, the currents of modern and post-modern thought.

Course Objectives:

- To survey the biblical foundations for apologetics, including the basics of a biblical epistemology (theory of knowledge and rationality).
- 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
- To present a defense of Reformed presuppositional (worldview) apologetics: its biblical and theological warrant, its philosophical cogency, and its practical effectiveness.
- To familiarize the student with prominent issues in apologetics and how they can be addressed from a Reformed presuppositional perspective.
- To strengthen the student's own faith, and to equip them to strengthen the faith of other Christians, through an appreciation of Christian apologetics.

Required Textbooks:

Anderson, James N. "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 home page.]

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_____. "Presuppositionalism and Frame's Epistemology," in John J. Hughes, ed., *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009.

[A copy of this will be made available on the course home page.]

Cowan, Steven B., ed. ***Five Views of Apologetics***. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.

Craig, William Lane. ***Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics***. 3d ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

[Be sure to get the latest edition.]

Evans, C. Stephen. ***Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion.*** Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Frame, John M. ***Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief.*** Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015.

_____. "How to Write a Theological Paper," Appendix F in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987).

[A copy of this will be made available on the course home page.]

Van Til, Cornelius. ***Christian Apologetics***. 2d ed. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.

[Be sure to get the edition with an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.]

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The Online Student Handbook (can be downloaded here) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded Lectures
2. Complete all Readings
3. Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and the professor)
4. Take the Midterm Exam
5. Take the Final Exam
6. Submit Course Paper
7. Submit Mentor Report or Course Application Paper

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Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:

Dr. James Anderson is an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Dr. Anderson came to RTS from Edinburgh, Scotland, and specializes in philosophical theology, religious epistemology, and Christian apologetics. His doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh explored the paradoxical nature of certain Christian doctrines and the implications for the rationality of Christian faith. His research and writing has also focused on the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til, particularly his advocacy of the transcendental argument. Dr. Anderson has a longstanding concern to bring the Reformed theological tradition into greater dialogue with contemporary analytic philosophy. Before studying philosophy, Dr. Anderson also earned a Ph.D. in Computer Simulation from the University of Edinburgh. He is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion, and the Evangelical Philosophical Society. Prior to joining RTS Charlotte, Dr. Anderson served as an assistant pastor at the historic Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh where he engaged in regular preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry. He is active now in service at Ballantyne Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. He is married to Catriona and they have three children. You can follow his blog at www.proginosko.com or on Twitter @proginosko

Selected Publications by Dr. Anderson

Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of Its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status. Paternoster Theological Monographs. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007.

What's Your Worldview?: An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

"The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic" co-authored with Greg Welty, *Philosophia Christi 13:2.* 2011.

Review of *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* edited by Oliver Crisp and Michael Rea, *Ars Disputandi 11.* 2011.

"No Dilemma for the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument: A Response to David Reiter," *Philosophia Christi* 13:1 2011.

Review of *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* by Michael Sudduth, *Themelios* 35:2 2010.

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Grades

Forum Discussions (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
   A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
   B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts =10 total posts).
   C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
   A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examinations (Midterm 20%, Final 20%):

The midterm exam will cover Lessons one through five (1-5). The format of the exam will consist of 30 multiple-choice questions and 7 short-answer questions. Students will have 90 minutes to take the exam. 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. Use the Lesson Questions at the end of each lesson to assist you in studying. The final is cumulative and consists of 5 short-answer questions and 3 essay questions. Students will have 2 hours to take the exam. 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. You should review all of the lecture material and course notebook in preparation for the exam.

The exams for this course are to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). After clicking on the exam link you, will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam. Please note that you are required to have a proctor for all exams. Please see the proctor policy in the Global Student Handbook.

Course Paper (35%):

The student is required to 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. See section titled "Research Paper Instructions" in this syllabus.

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Reading Report (5%):

The student must complete all of the required reading. Reading assignments are broken down week by week within the LMS. The Reading Report will indicate the amount of required reading that has been completed during the semester and must be filled out and submitted at the end of the course.

*Mentor Report **OR** Course Application Paper (5%):*

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program submit a mentor report. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or special student (e.g. from another seminary), submit a 250-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 250 words will receive a grade deduction. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

Reformed Theological Seminary, Global Education
2101 Carmel Road
Charlotte, NC 28226
Campus: (704) 366-4853
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Web site: rts.edu/campuses/online/

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Lessons

Lesson One
Introduction to Apologetics

Lesson Two
Biblical Foundations for Apologetics

Lesson Three
Classical & Evidentialist Apologetics

Lesson Four
Fideist, Presuppositional & Eclectic Apologetics

Lesson Five
A Case for Presuppositional Apologetics

Lesson Six
The Existence of the Biblical God

Lesson Seven
The Divine Inspiration of the Bible

Lesson Eight
The Resurrection of Jesus

Lesson Nine
The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Lesson Ten
Science and Scripture

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Course Paper Instructions

The student will 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. Chapter 10 of John Frame's Apologetics provides a good model of the dialogue format.

You have several options for the dialogue paper:

1. 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.).
2. 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").
3. 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").

The paper should illustrate that you have a good understanding of the goals, principles, and methods of apologetics discussed in the lectures and readings. 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). You 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.

The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text. Use section headings where appropriate to improve readability. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes and a recognized scholarly style for citations (Turabian). 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).

You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.

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Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Apologetics
Professor: Dr. James N. Anderson

Student Learning Outcomes *In order to measure the success of the 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 outcomes.*		**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.	Strong	See course title
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	A biblical concept and method of Apologetics and apologetic defense the Scripture are central concerns of the course
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed theology is assumed and drawn upon as a source in course
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Love of God and neighbor, however, is the only proper spirit for apologetics
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Aim of our ministry of apologetics
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.)	Strong	A constant theme of the course
Teach	Ability to teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	Ideally this course will help student know "what they are up against" and how to adequately address it in the work of the ministry
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Engaging the world (and less so other Christian traditions) is central to the course
MAR Specific SLO	An ability to integrate such knowledge and understanding into one's own calling in society	Moderate	Apologetics is vital to this aspect of the ministry

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