

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PHII 631/THEI 628 Apologetics

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Distance Learning
Audio Course

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the catalog: A course designed to equip the student to defend the Christian faith against important contemporary assaults and to build a positive Christian world and life view. Appeal is made not only to the varieties of rational arguments but also to the special contributions of the Pentecostal message.

From your professor: The post-Christian/post-modern world presents new challenges and opportunities to the art and science of apologetics. Empirical and Rational arguments are still important, but other factors such as community, spirituality, aesthetics and issues of evil and war all demand a fresh articulation of the “faith once delivered to all the saints.” We will present a polyvalent approach and positively demonstrate why intelligent Pentecostal Christianity meets the cries of those searching for God.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this course, the student will have:

1. An understanding of the biblical material that relates to apologetics.
2. A familiarity with the various approaches to apologetics and their theological and philosophical bases, including knowledge of some of the key figures in the field of apologetics, both from the history of the church and from the present.
3. A focus on the relationship between apologetics and personal/local church evangelism
4. An appreciation for the relationship between faith and reason and an ability to formulate an approach to this relationship that will serve in ministry.
5. An ability to struggle with a defense of some of the major theological positions of Christianity and some of the major difficulties to the faith raised by those who object to Christianity.
6. An understanding of the crucial nature of the claim to exclusivity made by Christendom and some of the ways in which that claim can be defended.
7. An appreciation and understanding of the supernatural and “suprarational” facets of apologetics
8. Capability of relating this knowledge to the post-Christian and post-Modern West as well as the Majority World cultures

TEXTBOOKS

Beckwith, Craig and Moreland, eds., *To Everyone an Answer: A case for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 30-8308-2735-8

Guinness, Os. *Unspeakable: Facing up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror*. Harper San Francisco: 2005. # 0-06-058636-2

Hill, Jonathan. *What has Christianity Ever Done for Us? How It Shaped the Modern World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2005. # 0-8308-3328-5

Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian*. Harper San Francisco. 2006. # 10-0-06-050715-2

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

(See Attached Course Notes for more details)

Unit 1: Biblical and Historical Foundations for Apologetics (Read all of Wright)

Unit 2: Building the Case: Defending the Faith (Beckwith, pp. 1-198)

Unit 3: Building the Case: Confronting Postmodernism and World Religions (Beckwith, 199-380)

Unit 4: Confronting Evil: Theodicy and the real barriers to faith (Read all of Guinness)

Unit 5: The Impact of Christianity (Hill)

METHODOLOGY

The methods of instruction will be the lecture, interactions with assigned texts, and addressing issues that arise in the course of the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to listen to all audio lectures. Course Notes (see attached) are provided to help guide the student in note-taking, they are not intended to replace the discipline of taking notes but enhance it.
2. There will be four (4) essays of 4-5 pages due throughout the course. These will demonstrate interaction with the textbook materials and careful reflection. Here are the four issues:
 - 1) Focus on two of N.T. Wright's "echoes" or pointers to God's Reality. Develop your own apologetic using his ideas as a starting point. For example, how does the cry for justice reveal a conscience and therefore moral responsibility? You may also include any critique of one or two of Wrights ideas or statements.

- 2) From your reading of Beckwith and other sources, what are the three strongest arguments for God's existence as an Infinite-Personal God? What objections have you heard to these and other arguments and how do you defend your thinking?
 - 3) What are three (3) ways we can build bridges with people possessing a postmodern (or "post-postmodern") mentality? What do they need to hear and see to consider the claims of Christ?
 - 4) Comment on four (4) insights you gleaned from Guinness' book and how they will help you in your evangelism and equipping work.
3. There will be a final exam to be taken at the end of the course. It will be an open-note, but not open-book essay exam. Potential questions are covered in the last audio lecture (Apologetics 23.mp3).

** The student will need to notify AGTS with the contact information of a proctor and the day he/she intends on taking the exam (Exam Request Form). The student will be given 2 hours to complete the essay exam.

4. A Research Paper is due by the end of the course. This will be a 10-15 page paper using at least six (6) sources other than the class texts (See attached Selected Bibliography). Based on Hill's book and other sources, the student will choose to right on at least two major positive contributions of Christianity to the world and how these can be used apologetically (e.g. everywhere that there is some semblance of political freedom in the world, we see the impact of Biblical Christianity). The paper should conform to A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, current edition, by Kate L. Turabian, using footnotes for resource documentation. The paper will be graded on content, composition, and style.

NOTE: Due dates for assignments are only subject to the final due date of the course (15 weeks after receiving the materials). While not suggested, students can turn all assignments in on the last day of the course if they desire. Students are solely responsible for planning the schedule of their assignments. No one will be holding the student accountable on whether they are creating realistic time frames for the various assignments.

COURSE GRADING

The grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Essays:	50 points each = 200 points
Exam	100 points
Paper	100 points
Total	400 points

Grades are recorded and averaged on the basis of the following grade scale: A=12; A-=11; B+=10; B=9; B-=8; C+=7; C=6; C-=5; D+=4; D=3; D-=2; F=1.

All assigned work for the course must be submitted for the student to receive a passing grade for the course. The grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be granted only for extenuating circumstances upon the written request of the student. Except in the case of severe extenuating circumstances, the granting of the "I" grade will mean that the course grade, assigned when the work is completed, will be reduced by one letter.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Hill, Jonathan. *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press. 2005
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COURSE NOTES
Outline of Audio Lectures

[Apologetics 01.mp3 – 1:03 min]

Unit 1: Biblical and Historical Foundations for Apologetics

As we begin...

Class overview:

The Faithful Life Quadrant (FLQ)™

Our Strategic Aim:

Apologetics: Initial Thoughts

Defining our terms:

Apologetics:

Evangelism:

Levels of discourse

Going deeper: the art and science of apologetics (Guinness, Sire and Zacharias have all contributed to these principles)

The various types of apologetics

The values of apologetics

The calling to apologetics

[Apologetics 02.mp3 – 1:32 min]

Some surprises

A Scriptural survey of apologetics – and its corollary of evangelism

Genesis – the Book of Beginnings

Exodus: Liberation

The Torah – covenant Fidelity

Joshua through Esther – a narrative of promise
The Wisdom Literature: Reflections of experience

The Prophets thunder: Evidence and Ethics and Ethos

The Gospels: Reliable and Revolutionary (Great Commands and Great Commissions)

Acts – apologetic preaching and teaching

Epistolary perspectives: Indicative and Imperative

Revelation – the apologetic of the martyrs

[Apologetics 03.mp3 – 1:43 min]

Church History and Apologetics

NT Era – “to the Jews...and the Greeks...”

Under the Cross: 2nd and 3rd century approaches: Justin vs. Tertullian

The specter of Augustine

Medieval outreach – the relationship of faith and reason

Aquinas: Two Summas

Toward and beyond the Reformation

Modernity – Cartesian “I” and the new epistemology

Enlightenments and the need to defend the faith

From modern to post-modern to post-post-modern!

[Apologetics 04.mp3 – 1:00 min]

“Our world makes a world of difference” – understanding world-views

The key components – conscious and unconscious

The three “families of faith”: Eastern, Secular, Monotheistic

The syncretistic challenge – a brief discourse on “The Secret”

“Remind me again, why are we doing all of this – defending the faith?”

Identifying Critiques Against Christianity

[Apologetics 05.mp3 – 1:19 min]

N.T. Wright’s new work – the *Mere Christianity* of the 21st century:

The 4 Echoes:

Justice

Spirituality

Love/Relationships

>> Excursus on Homosexuality

[Apologetics 06.mp3 – 54 min]

Beauty/Truth

Looking at the Story of God and his people

God and Israel

Jesus and the Kingdom

The Holy Spirit and the Church

Living the Christian Life

Word and Spirit

Story and Task

Transformation

The Trinity and Apologetics – Rich resources for reflection

[Apologetics 07.mp3 – 1:04 min]

Unit 2: Building the Case: Defending the faith

Step One: Do we understand our own history and theology well?

The differences that make a difference

The Trinitarian shape of history and theology

Step Two – we are inviting people on a journey

Practical realities – where are people on this road?

A way of thinking

Ordering our thinking

Integrating Biblical motifs

[Apologetics 08.mp3 – 1:00 min]

Issues and Answers:

Epistemology – how do we know what we know?

Critical mind vs. Critical spirit

7 Challenges to Critical Thinking

[Apologetics 09.mp3 – 1:27 min]

Faith and Reason revisited

Pointers to God

Cosmological arguments

Design and Designer

Where does the “ought to” come from? Morality

Anselm Lives! The ontological argument (or, why do we keep thinking about God if there is no God?)

Jesus the Christ – history and faith

The person of Jesus

Miracles – a modern, not post-modern problem!

The Resurrection: everything flows from this! (I Corinthians 15)

[Apologetics 10.mp3 – 18 min]

OK – so what are people really talking about...and what do they really believe?

Atheists and agnostics – holding on to naturalism
Extreme environmentalism and the neo-pagan challenges

New Age: crafting our own reality (Genesis 3 to Camus)

Speaking to the parallel “universes” that exist:

Pre-modern: Majority World proclamation and demonstration

Moderns – empirical and rational ideas

Post-modern (yes, I know this is outdated and oversimplified!)

Neo-medieval (emerging): rebuilding the foundations (Isaiah 61)

[Apologetics 11.mp3 – 1:01 min]

Unit 3: Building the Case: Confronting Postmodernism and the World Religions

East and West keep meeting: the 20th century and globalization

7 Global Forces

If Jesus is THE way – the challenge of pluralism and Christian claims

[Apologetics 12.mp3 – 1:04 min]

What we must NOT say

Going East – Pantheistic Monism and the Impersonal End

Hinduism

Buddhism

Local religion

The modern marketplace

The “American” Religion: Mormonism

An entrepreneur

An epic

An ethos

Our encounter

[Apologetics 13.mp3 – 1:01 min]

The “western” wasteland: the EU and the need to re-evangelize the post-Christian world

Back to the Desert: Encountering Islam

The challenges

The beliefs

The history

The present conflicts – who is the “they” we are fighting?

The spiritual battle

The common ground

[Apologetics 14.mp3 – 1:00 min]

>> Excursus on Vegans and Abortion

OK – back to this “postmodern” issues

Objectivity and truth

Ethnicity and the sociology of knowledge

(Re) evangelizing the Church

[Apologetics 15.mp3 – 48 min]

>> Excursus on Spiritual Abuse

Practical issues closer to home

Evolution and ethics – the nature of humankind and the cosmos

Morality and Social law – what are the limits?

Redefining the familiar – gender, sex, family, identity

Selah – how do we actually equip believers?

[Apologetics 16.mp3 – 1:05 min]

Unit 4: Confronting Evil: Theodicy and the Barriers to Faith

Some resources – C.S. Lewis; A. Plantinga, R. Nash, Guinness, N.T. Wright

Framing the problem(s): “If...then...”

Framing the problem – 21st century context

The “new” problems of evil

Nihilism

It is more complex than we think

Living with mystery – practicing love and justice

The connection of natural and moral evil

Being part of the solution

[Apologetics 17.mp3 – 57 min]

Jesus and the Kingdom

Declaration and demonstration

Crucifixion and Resurrection

An incendiary community transforming a reconciled world

6 Most Potent Weapons

Principalities and powers – from D-Day to V-Day

Ultimate and penultimate victory

A deeper look at Guinness’ work, *Unspeakable*

Evil is not an abstraction or an illusion

The challenges to all

Four facts

[Apologetics 18.mp3 – 57 min]

Seven questions

Where does evil come from?

What is so right about a world so wrong?

Are we worse or just modern?

[Apologetics 19.mp3 – 1:15 min]

Do the differences make a difference (A: YES!)

Is there something we can do?

Why can't I know what I need to know?

Is there any good in all this bad?

The heart of matter – personal experience moves us away from or toward a strong belief in God

Two Kingdoms – manifestation and motivation

[Apologetics 20.mp3 – 57 min]

Unit 5: The Impact of Christianity

This is not a formal proof, but a cumulative argument, with this thought at the core – is the world better off or not because of Jesus and Christianity?

A key distinction (from J. Ellul): there is a difference between Christ and Christendom, between the revelation and the religion, the incarnation and the institutional issues!

Watch our for “The Big 3”

An observation or two in 2007: Where does freedom exist?

Repentance is not repudiation!

[Apologetics 21.mp3 – 59 min]

The impact of Christianity:

Learning and literacy

Real Science

Faith and Art

Music

Literature

Creation and miracles coexist

[Apologetics 22.mp3 – 55 min]

Creation and miracles coexist (cont.)

Education for all – however slowly!

Transformation of human awareness

Reason and Revelation

Ethics and Eschatology

Evangelism and Justice

Another window on the Word and the world

[Apologetics 23.mp3 – 7 min]

Wrap-up Reflections

Final Exam (Answer 2 out of 3 Questions – Essay)