



CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Institute for Biblical Studies (CRU)

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SYLLABUS

COURSE SCHEDULE

9:30a – 11:30a and 1:00p – 3:00p, May 7-May 11 at Western Seminary

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the nature and importance of Christian apologetics in defending the faith, addressing issues that non-Christians have with Christianity, and bolstering the confidence of Christians. Different approaches to apologetics will be explained and evaluated. In addition, the course will focus on specific questions that non-Christians (and many Christians) that are hindrances to faith.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the importance of apologetics for defending the faith.
- Learn different apologetic strategies for engaging unbelievers with the gospel.
- Develop responses to the most problematic questions that unbelievers (and many believers) have about the Christian faith.

- Gain a vision and tools for developing apologetic strategies as a lifelong pursuit.
- Be more aware of your own background and some of the key historical events and interactions of major ethnic groups in the United States, so as to understand how they shape life and ministry today, for yourself and others.

TEXTBOOKS

- Timothy Keller. [Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World](#). ISBN: 978-0143108702
- Joshua Butler. [The Skeletons in God's Closet](#). Baker, 2009. ISBN: 978-0529100818

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation (15%)

You are responsible to regularly attend and participate in class discussions. The class time will be conducted seminary style, so active, prepared, and intentional student participation is necessary to maximize learning.

2. Reading (15%)

Please read all of Butler and Part 1 of Keller by our first meeting (May 7). Please complete Keller by June 8.

3. Apologetics Interview Project (25%)

This assignment enables you to put some shoe leather on your apologetics study and engage with some individuals from different walks of life, in order better to understand and evaluate their thinking and values. You will write a brief summary and analysis of the views of each interviewee, as well as a summary and analysis of the overall picture that emerges, along with applications to your life and ministry. Reports are to be 8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced. Reports are due June 8.

- Interview at least 10 unbelievers and 10 Christians (no CRU staff or seminarians). For each ask the following (or some variation of the question that makes sense):
 - Do you believe that God exists?
 - What kind of proof would be convincing or more helpful to you?

- What is the biggest problem (obstacle/inconsistency/contradiction – real or perceived) that you see in the Christian faith?
- Do you believe that the Bible the Word of God? If not, what do you think it is?
- What do you perceive to be the biggest problem in the Bible – the biggest challenge to your worldview?
- In the first part of your paper (3-4 pages), summarize the results and reflect upon them. Consider the following:
 - Were there any patterns in the results?
 - Were there similarities between the survey results of the believers and unbelievers?
 - How might the Church begin to address these issues – for believers and unbelievers?
- In the second part of the paper, address one of those issues. What would be a strong biblical and persuasive response (5-6 pages)? You will have to be concise.
 - Summarize the issue and potential responses (one page)
 - Summarize any biblical data that is germane to the issue (two pages)
 - Present a response (one page)

Some questions to help you reflect:

- Were there common threads – responses (reflecting thinking and/or values) that were common to all or most interviewees? In what areas? How would you explain this? Does this suggest any significant patterns?
- Were there significant differences in their responses? Along what lines? Were there significant differences in responses according to age, gender, or marital status? Race? Socio-economic status? Does this suggest any significant patterns?
- What or who surprised you most during the interview?
- How will this experience affect your interaction/sharing with non-Christians? How will this experience affect your interactions and intentionality in your discipling relationships?

4. **Apologetic Evaluations**

Watch (or listen to) the following videos:

- [William Lane Craig vs Christopher Hitchens](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KBx4vvlbZ8) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KBx4vvlbZ8>
- [Greg Bahnsen vs Gordon Stein](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anGAazNCfdY&t=6954s) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anGAazNCfdY&t=6954s>

Then find one more debate (not involving Craig or Bahnsen) and watch/listen to it.

For each debate, summarize the different approaches of the participants (one page for each participant). Then offer one page of your summary observations and conclusions. Which approach resonates with you and why? Which do you find most compelling and why? Which approaches represent a strategy that you think is valuable and that you think you can personally employ in your own conversations with unbelievers? (7 pages) *Please watch/listen to the Craig and Bahnsen debates by the first class meeting (May 7).* The paper is due June 8.

GRADING

94-100 A	74-79 C
92-93 A-	72-73 C-
90-91 B+	65-71 D
84-89 B	0-65 F
82-83 B-	
80-81 C+	

COURSE TOPICS

1. Why Do Apologetics?
2. Biblical Theology of Humanity and Sin
3. The Nature of Truth: Does it even exist?
4. Arguments for God's Existence
5. Can I Trust My Bible?
6. Is God a Moral Monster?
7. Science and Faith
8. Homosexuality
9. Gender Dysphoria
10. Marijuana and Opioids
11. Exclusivity of Christ
12. The Problem of Hell

13. The Church and Politics

COURSE POLICIES

Assignment Format:

Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must meet the following criteria:

- 1 " margins on the left, right, top, and bottom
- Double-spaced
- 12 point font (Times New Roman or Arial)
- A cover page that contains the assignment title, class title, your name, and date
- Please submit to me as .doc, .docx, or .pdf documents. (I cannot read .pages docs.)