

# Apologetics

## January 8-12, 2018

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**Instructor:** Dr. Luke Bobo ('Dr. B') [see Appendix B, page 8 for bio]

**Meeting times:** Morning, 9:30-11:30 am; Afternoon, 1:00-3:00 pm

**E-mail:** megatheos@sbcglobal.net

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will equip the student to confidently and winsomely respond to common objections to the Christian faith, identify and appropriately challenge the worldviews from which they arise, and better understand how cultural contexts shape unbelief. Topics we will explore include the existence and nature of God, miracles, the problem of evil (theodicy) and hell, religious and moral relativism, the trustworthiness of the Bible, and the historicity of the resurrection.

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Bible (Any translation but better translations are ESV, NIV, N/RSV, N/KJV, NAS). Bring paper version of Bible to class.
2. Allberry, Sam. *Is God Anti-Gay?* Epsom, Surrey, U.K. The Good Book Company, 2013. (ISBN: 9781908762313)
3. Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God.* New York, NY. Riverhead, 2009. (ISBN: 9781594483493)
4. Contextualization Reader (Provided).
  - a) "Paul's Letters: Doing Theology in Context." *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*, Dean Flemming, pp. 89-117.
  - b) Scott Hildreth. "Contextualization and Great Commission Faithfulness." Published in the Contemporary Practice section [www.globalmissiology.org](http://www.globalmissiology.org), October 2010.
  - c) Dale T. Irvin. "The Gift of Mission." *Christianity Today* 43:14, Dec. 6, 1999.
  - d) Nelson Jennings. "Tapestry of Contextualization." <https://www.mtw.org/stories/details/the-tapestry-of-contextualization>.
  - e) Tim Keller. "Gospel Contextualization." Adapted from *Center Church*, Redeemer City-to-City, Chapters 7 to 10.
  - f) C. S. Lewis. "Christian Apologetics." *God in the Dock*, pp. 89-103.
  - g) C. S. Lewis. "Before We Can Communicate." *God in the Dock*, pp. 254-257.
  - h) Scott Moreau. "Contextualization That Is Comprehensive."
  - i) Alan Thompson. "Learning from the African Experience: Bediako and Critical Contextualisation."

**You are strongly urged to read the Contextualization Reader, the passages in Acts 13, 14 and 17 (see p. 3) and *The Reason for God* (Introduction & Chapter 1) before class starts on January 8, 2018.**

### COURSE OBJECTIVES: For students to:

1. Grow in their understanding of and obedience to God's command that we love Him with our whole selves including our minds.
2. Understand the nature and role of apologetics in evangelistic and discipling conversations.
3. Acquire skill in identifying and challenging the presuppositions underlying various objections to the Christian faith.
4. Learn how to make effective use of questions to further evangelistic and apologetic conversations.
5. Become better equipped to articulate a thoughtful case for Christianity.

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### CLASS ETIQUETTE:

- ✓ Decorum. Your classmates have varying opinions, beliefs, etc. regarding theology and its implications. This is true because your classmates come from different denominational and Christian backgrounds. Because of this wonderful diversity, it is imperative that we are hospitable, respectful and kind to each other.
  
- ✓ Tardiness. Getting to class on time is expected. However, 'life happens' and some situations are unavoidable. But unless providentially hindered, students are expected to be on time every class period.
  
- ✓ Cell Phones. They are a wonderful technological gadget. However, in class they are more wonderful when they are turned off or on silent mode and put away. **Upon entering the classroom, be a magician and make your cell phone disappear. Points will be deducted if this rule is violated.**

### SCHEDULE: (subject to change)

<i>Day</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment Due</i>
8 (Morning)	Prolegomena: Review Syllabus; Definitions; Our Cultural Moment/Milieu	
8 (Afternoon)	Our Cultural Moment/Milieu cont'd & Principles for Apologetic Communication	
9	Contextualization: Wisdom or Compromise? <sup>1</sup>	
9 (A)	Contextualization: Wisdom or Compromise? Cont'd; Common Objection #1: <i>There can't be one true religion for everyone.</i>	
10 (M)	Common Objection#2: <i>The claim of a good and all-powerful God and the existence of evil and suffering (theodicy).</i>	Keller, Chapter 2, Chapter 5
10 (A)	Common Objection #3: <i>Existence of God and the resurrection</i>	Keller, Chapters 8-9, 12-13
11 (M)	Common Objection #4: <i>Wickedness approved of or ignored by the Church</i>	Keller, Chapter 4
11 (A)	Common Objection #5: <i>The Bible presents an outdated morality.</i>	Keller, Chapter 7
12 (M)	Common Objection #6: <i>The church hates gay people.</i>	Allberry reading complete
12 (A)	Common Objection #6: <i>The church hates gay people, cont'd; Student Presentations</i>	

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<sup>1</sup> Title of an article by Tim Keller.

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### ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- Format. In the header, your name & date should be left-justified. Proofreader's name should be right-justified (if applicable). No cover sheets.
- Late work. Liberal due dates have been provided so all work is expected to be turned in on time. Thus, late work will be assessed a 20% late penalty each day the assignment is late.
- Submit all work electronically.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Contextualizing the Gospel.** The gospel has "an inherent cross-cultural impulse" (Dale T. Irvin). The gospel is meant to travel across boundaries. Rabbi Jesus and the Apostle Paul frequently crossed ethnic, gender, religious, philosophical and social custom boundaries to share the good news. Yet, they tailored the message of the gospel for their audience to clearly communicate.
  - a) Read Acts 13:13-52, 14:8-18 & 17:22-34 – five (5) times each, observe and make notes. Specifically, as you read Paul's apologetic messages, what is similar and what is different? On January 8 (morning class), submit a 'scratch' piece of paper that specifies how many times you read these passages with your signature. Points awarded for this reading assignment will be based on this grid: 90% to 100% read – 100% of points possible; 80% to 89% read 80% of points possible; 70% to 79% read 60% of points possible; 60% to 69% read 40% of points possible. [200 points/ 18%].
  - b) Read the Contextualization Reader.
  - c) After reading the passages in the book of Acts and the reader: (1) develop five (5) general principles you might use in the future when speaking to someone of a different ethnic culture (what are things you can and cannot assume) and (2) pick a person of a different ethnic culture than yours and develop five (5) questions you would ask based on the readings and class discussions. *Due Friday, January 12* by 5 pm (EST). Submit electronically. [150 points/ 14%]
2. **A Reasoned Response:** Develop a reasoned response to 3 of the 6 apologetic scenarios provided in Appendix A, pages 6-7. Responses should (1) be graciously and winsomely reasoned from Scripture; and (2) exude a tone of gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Manner should not undermine the message. There are two scenarios on the topic of the problem of evil/theodicy (scenarios #1 and #2) - pick one only. Responses should be 2 to 3 pages, Times Roman, 11-point font, 1.5 spaced. Proofreader required. All responses are *due Friday, January 12* by 5 pm (EST). Submit electronically. [300 points (100 points ea.) 27%]
3. **Final Project.** You have several options to choose from for your final project [350 points/32%].
  - o ***Responding to an Atheist's Objections.*** Respond to Dr. Overmann's 'reasons why he is not a Christian'. Dr. Overmann is an atheist and friend of Professor Bobo. Your response: (1) should demonstrate a good understanding of the objection; (2) include additional questions you might ask Overmann; and (3) should be a well-reasoned and winsome scriptural response to his objections. Please note: Dr. Overmann will review your

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responses and weigh in and judge if your responses are reasoned and winsome responses. The professor will provide Overmann's white paper that spells out his objections. ***Due Wednesday, January 17, 2018 by 5 pm (EST); submit electronically.***

- ***Presentation to unbelieving person.*** Respond to an objection you will likely face in your current ministry context. This can be an objection you anticipate experiencing or one that you have already encountered. Prepare a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation for the class afternoon of **Friday, January 12**. A grading/evaluation rubric will be provided. The presentation must:
    - include a brief history of the relationship with the unbeliever;
    - include a clear and accurate accounting of what the person believes, his/her worldview/worldviews, why he holds these beliefs and his objections (note: imagine this person is in the class – they should be nodding in hearty agreement here);
    - demonstrate a knowledge of the surface questions (and you must show knowledge of the question behind the surface question);
    - be a reasoned and winsome apologetic – namely, what would you *say and do* to respond to this objection?
    - be given in a tone of gentleness, humility and respect (1 Peter 3:15).
  - ***Apologetic tool.*** Imagine you are sitting across the table from a *believer* attempting to give a reasoned response to an apologetic issue. This tool would help this person discover a scriptural viewpoint on an important apologetic question. Some apologetic issues (e.g. resurrection of Christ, fate of the unevangelized, Heaven and Hell, etc.) lend themselves more readily to this than others. It must include appropriate Scripture related to the issue, carefully chosen questions to aid discovery, logical progression of thought, and creative packaging. Your grade will be based on (1) evidence of a good understanding of the nature of the problem, (2) a well-reasoned scriptural response to this problem, and (3) creativity in packaging (captivating introduction, illustrations, several key points, and attractive visual layout). Note: if you wish, you may organize this tool in outline form. However, it is organized, you must use only complete sentences (even for titles of main points). For ease of reading, it should be double-spaced, use type no smaller than 12-point and be at least three pages in length. There is no maximum length and you are encouraged to include diagrams and/or art work. ***Due Friday, January 17 by 5 pm EST; and submit electronically.***
4. **Reading Report.** Students will be expected to read 100% of the assigned readings and submit a **percentage read** electronically (by email) on **Thursday, January 11** by midnight. See worksheet and table. [100 points/9%]

### Worksheet

To determine the percentage of reading completed, divide the number of pages completed by the total number of required pages (415) and convert to a percentage. Example: Joe Cru staff completed 380 pages of required reading:  $380 \div 415 = 0.915 \times 100 = 91.5\%$ .

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Assigned Reading*	# of pages
Keller, Introduction, Chapter 1	34
Keller, Chapter 2, Chapter 5	28
Keller, Chapters 8-9, 12-13	59
Keller, Chapter 4	17
Keller, Chapter 7	18
**Keller, Chapters 3, 6, 10, 11, 14, Intermission (minus <i>Epilogue</i> )	63
Allberry	96
Contextualization Reader	100
<i>Total pages</i>	415

Notes:

\*Points awarded for reading assignments will be based on this grid: 90% to 100% of assigned reading read – 100% of points possible; 80% to 89% read 80% of points possible; 70% to 79% read 60% of points possible; 60% to 69% read 40% of points possible.

\*\*Students are responsible for reading these chapters of Keller's book too.

**GRADING/ASSIGNMENTS:**

Grading will be based on completion of assignments and assigned points (caution: please don't use points as a means of judging an assignment's importance or significance; all the assignments are significant).

Assignment	Percentage	Points
Book of Acts Reading	18	200
Contextualizing the Gospel	14	150
Reasoned response	27	300
Final project	32	350
Reading	9	100
	100%	1100

**Grading Scale:**

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

Notes: A grade of C- or better is required to apply this course toward your IBS requirements.

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### Appendix A – Apologetic Scenarios [Instructions: Pick #1 or #2 and two other scenarios]

#### **Scenario #1: Problem of Evil/Theodicy**

A friend tells you that she could never worship an immoral deity like the God described in the Old Testament since he is said to have commanded the genocide of the Canaanite people. We don't accept ethnic cleansing today so neither should we accept such actions in the name of religion. How would you respond? Would you agree that the killing of the Canaanites was an act of genocide or ethnic cleansing? Why or why not? Think of at least three questions you would ask her and explain your reasoning for asking them (i.e., what would you hope to help her see by way of these questions?)

#### **Scenario #2: Problem of Evil/Theodicy**

An individual with whom you are sharing the gospel offers the following response. "You said that God loves the world. I have a serious problem believing in a God who would allow thousands of innocent men, women and children to be killed by an earthquake and Tsunami like the one in Japan. How can you believe there is a "loving" God when there is so much suffering in the world?"

1. What are six questions you might ask this person to try to identify his or her underlying issues or concerns?
2. Imagine that in the process of asking some additional questions you discover that this person is convinced that the existence of a loving God is logically incompatible with evil and suffering. How would you respond? (Write a detailed response below)

#### **Scenario #3: There's Only *One* Way?**

In his closing address at the Parliament of World Religions in 1993, the Dalai Lama, head of the Gelugpa order of Tibetan Buddhism, stated the following: "Each religion has its own philosophy and there are similarities as well as differences among the various traditions. What is important is what is suitable for a particular person. We should look at the underlying purpose of religion and not merely at the abstract details of theology or metaphysics. All religions make the betterment of humanity their primary concern. When we view the different religions as essentially instruments to develop a good heart—love and respect for others, a true sense of community—we can appreciate what they have in common. Everyone feels that his or her form of religious practice is the best. I myself feel that Buddhism is best for me. But this does not mean that Buddhism is best for everyone else."<sup>2</sup>

1. How would you summarize the Dalai Lama's viewpoint in your own words?
2. On what basis does the Dalai Lama affirm the validity of all religions? Why is it important to recognize the validity of other religions?
3. What are three questions you might ask someone who holds this viewpoint to better understand their position as well as surface the real issues?

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<sup>2</sup> His Holiness the Dalai Lama, XIV, "The Importance of Religious Harmony," in *The Community of Religions*, eds. Wayne Teasdale and George Cairns (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 17-18.

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You discovered that your Japanese neighbor was raised by Buddhist parents—although she does not practice Buddhism herself. One day you get into a lengthy discussion about Buddhism and Christianity. She listens very intently as you describe the difference Christianity has made in your life; however, as you begin to explain that Jesus Christ is the only way to God you notice a look of concern come over her face. With a look of disbelief she says, “How can you say that Jesus Christ is the only way to God? It does not seem fair. What about my family members who practice Buddhism and have never heard about Jesus? God wouldn’t send them to hell, would he?”

4. What are six questions (intellectual and personal) you might ask this woman to try to identify what her underlying issues or concerns are?
4. Describe in detail how you would respond to this woman’s position.

### **Scenario #4: How Can I Trust the Bible?**

A non-Christian friend says that we can’t trust the New Testament because even if a man from Nazareth named Jesus *did* exist, the gospels were written many years after his lifetime by people who didn’t know him. What we have in the gospels, according to him, are not historically reliable accounts about the sayings and deeds of Jesus but folktales or myths that arose in the early church about the historical Jesus.

1. Identify three questions you would ask of your friend for clarification and/or to expose the presuppositions underlying his claims.
2. How would you respond to his objections?
3. Based on what he says in chapter seven, how do you think Tim Keller would respond to someone who says, “Much of the Bible’s social teaching (for example, about women) is socially regressive”?

Imagine if a person with whom you were sharing the gospel said, “*History is written by the victors. The gospels that made it into the Bible as we know it only did so because their authors and the early church were more powerful than their contenders.*”

4. What are three questions you might ask this person? For each question, explain what it is you would hope to achieve by asking it.
5. What evidence would you offer in defense of the New Testament’s reliability contrary to his claims?

### **Scenario #5: Jesus and the Resurrection**

Mike thinks there is no good reason to think that Jesus rose from the dead. And obviously, he says, we know from experience that dead men don’t rise from the dead. What could you say in response to his objection? That is, what is some of the key evidence for the resurrection?

### **Scenario #6 LGBTI & Christianity**

An unbeliever spots you reading Sam Allberry’s *Is God Anti-Gay?* and comments, “Assuming that’s a Christian book, I suppose the answer is yes. Am I right?” How would you respond? In your answer, be sure to explain Allberry’s understanding of God’s intention for human sexuality and whether that is inconsistent with his answer to the question “Is God Anti-Gay?”

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### Appendix B – Instructor Bio

Dr. Luke B. Bobo ('Dr. B') is the Director of Resource and Curriculum Development for Made to Flourish (Overland Park, KS). He is the former Department Chair and Associate Professor for the Christian Ministry Studies (CMS) Program at Lindenwood University (St. Charles, MO). Prior to Lindenwood, Dr. Bobo directed the Francis Schaeffer Institute, at Covenant Theological Seminary, whose mission is "to train God's servants to demonstrate compassionately and defend reasonably the claims of Christ upon the whole of life." He holds degrees from the University of Missouri-St. Louis (PhD), Covenant Theological Seminary (M.Div., with an emphasis in Apologetics and Contemporary Culture), the University of Missouri-Columbia (M.S., Electrical and Computer Engineering) and the University of Kansas (B.S., Electrical Engineering). Dr. Bobo is an ordained minister and is the author of *Living Salty and Light-filled Lives in the Workplace* (Wipf & Stock, 2014) and *A Layperson's Guide to Biblical Interpretation* (Wipf & Stock, 2016). He co-authored the ebook, *Discipleship with Monday in Mind: How Churches Across the Country Are Helping Their People Connect Faith and Work* (Made to Flourish, 2016).

Dr. Bobo is married to Rita Holmes-Bobo and they have two children, Briana Amber and Caleb Avery. Dr. Bobo enjoys reading, traveling, drinking coffee, spending time with students, yard work, golf, analyzing contemporary culture, preaching, teaching and writing.

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### Suggested Readings

Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Crossway, 2001).

[Although not an apologetic text per se, this volume deserves its place in this list for at least three reasons. First, its author is one of today's most practiced 'on the ground' apologists. Indeed, there is hardly a situation Jerram has not been asked to speak into and barely a question he has not been asked to speak to. Second, as apologetics and evangelism are twin disciplines (distinct, yet closely related), so this careful study on New Testament evangelism is foundational to Christian apologetics. And third, both the principles that he lays down for our consideration and the principles of communication he promotes are properly basic to any defense of the faith we are likely to go about offering.]

James K Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It is and Why We Do It* (IVP, 2011).

Gregory A. Boyd & Edward K. Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic* (David Cook, 2008).

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: an English professor's journey into Christian faith* (Crown & Covenant, 2012).

William Edgar, *Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion* (P&R, 2003).

Os Guinness, *Fools Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (IVP, 2015).

Dick Keyes, *Chameleon Christianity: Moving Beyond Safety and Conformity* (Baker & IVP 1999; repr. Wipf & Stock, 2003; Destinee, 2014).

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne, 2015).

Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (IVP, 1995).

Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Crossway, 1990).

James Sire, *Why Good Arguments Often Fail: Making A More Persuasive Case for Christ* (IVP, 2006).

John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford, 2002).