

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PHI 631/THE 628 Apologetics

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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 demonstrated in classroom discussions, examinations, and papers

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

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

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

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

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

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

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

Day 5: The Impact of Christianity (Hill)

METHODOLOGY

The methods of instruction will be the lecture, guided discussion, role playing and selected small group interactions with assigned texts and issues that arise in the course of the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to attend all class sessions. Absences should be for extreme circumstances only. The limits established by the Seminary will be observed. (“Barring a serious medical emergency, credit cannot be granted for courses in which a student has been absent beyond the equivalent of more than 2 weeks” – *Catalog*, 74). In an Intensive Course such as this, more than one day absent is cause for serious concern.
2. There will be four (4) essays of 4-5 pages due on Tuesday through Friday. 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?
 - 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 rational thinking?
 - 3) What are our primary weapons in confronting postmodernism?
 - 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 the last day of class. It will be an open-note, but not open-book essay exam. Potential questions will be handed out two days before the exam..
 4. There will be a Research Paper due after the end of the intensive period. This will be a 10-15 page paper using at least six (6) sources other than the class texts. 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. For example, 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 and will be due on the date announced in class.
 5. Late work is subject to grade penalties commensurate with lateness. As long as all essays are turned in by the final class day and the exam is completed, no penalties will be assigned.

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.

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OTHER NOTES

I look forward to a great time together and expect to see growth in all of us as we wrestle with the serious issues and the rich biblical materials that will guide us.

At the graduate level we are a fraternity of scholars, so lively interaction is always expected. We do not need to agree on every issue and I expect that all our thinking will be sharpened.