

Issues in Contemporary Theology:
THE NEW ATHEISM

January 4-8, 2016 · *Defend the Faith* Conference · THEO6305

Course Instructor
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The Mission of the Seminary

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Course Description

An intensive study is made of recent trends and issues in theology. Attention is devoted to representative theologians, developments, and theological methods. Assessments of the impact of these trends upon Baptist and evangelical theology are also investigated.

This particular section of the Issues in Contemporary Theology class will address the so-called “New Atheism” movement, highlighting its key thinkers, key ideas, and particular Christian apologetic responses to it.

Core Value Focus

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. These values shape both the context and manner in which all curricula are taught, with “doctrinal integrity” and “mission focus” especially highlighted in this course. The core value focus for the 2015-16 year is mission focus.

Student Learning Outcomes

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. Be able to understand the key ideas of the New Atheism movement.

2. Be able to apply his or her knowledge of Christian apologetics in responses to the New Atheists.
3. Be able to communicate these apologetic responses to the New Atheism.

Biblical Authority

This course operates under the assumption that the Bible is the inspired, totally true and trustworthy Word of God. While history, tradition, and reason play no small role in the theological task, the Bible holds ultimate authority in Christian doctrine and practice.

Methodology

The seminar will utilize reading assignments, written reading reports, and a research paper. The primary methodology will be individual research and writing, guided by the professor.

1. Lecture Attendance. Students are required to attend all lecture sessions at the School of Christian Apologetics, January 4-8, 2016.

2. Book Reviews. Each student is required to review 4 of the following books (two per section):

A. Primary New Atheist Resources

Boghossian, Peter. *A Manual for Creating Atheists*. Durham, NC: Pitchstone, 2013.

Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. New York: Mariner, 2008.

Dennett, Daniel. *Breaking the Spell: Religion as Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Harris, Sam. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005.

Hitchens, Christopher. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve, 2009.

Stenger, Victor J. *God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows God Does Not Exist*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2010.

B. Christian Responses to the New Atheism

Crean, Thomas. *God is No Delusion*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007.

Goetz, Stewart and Charles Taliaferro. *Naturalism*. Interventions. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Lennox, John C. *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Oxford: Lion, 2011.

Lennox, John C. *Gunning for God*. Oxford: Lion, 2011.

McGrath, Alister. *Dawkins' God: From The Selfish Gene to The God Delusion*. 2d ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

McGrath, Alister. *Why God Won't Go Away: Is the New Atheism Running on Empty?* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011.

McGrath, Allister and Joanna C. McGrath. *The Dawkins Delusion?: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010.

Zacharias, Ravi. *The End of Reason: A Response to the New Atheists*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Reviews should include: (1) some professional biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. The reviews should follow Turabian form. Due Saturday, March 19, 2016.

3. Research Paper. A research paper 12-15 pages in length that addresses a *specific argument or idea* put forward by one of the New Atheist writers. It would be wise for students to focus on a particular argument/idea put forward by one of the New Atheist writers they read for their book review. Due Saturday, April 2, 2016.

Grading

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.

Evaluation

Book Reviews	40%
Research Paper	40%
Lecture Attendance	20%
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	100%

Possible Paper Topics

Extra Credit

1. Book Review

Students may write one (1) critical book review of a book related to the course and **pre-approved by the professor**. Students can earn up to **five (5) points** on their final grade with a quality critical book review.

2. ETS Report

Students attending one of the regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society can earn up to seven points on their final grade with submission of a brief, 1000-word summary of their

experience, including a list of papers attended. For registration information, please visit <http://www.etsjets.org>.

Class Policies

1. Attendance and Class Participation

As noted above, attendance and class participation are necessary for meeting the requirements of this class. Students are expected to be attentive and prepared for each class session. Students who are engaged in private conversations or doing work for other classes may be asked to leave the class; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. Rude or disruptive behavior is also not permitted.

2. Laptop Guidelines

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used for taking notes or accessing Blackboard materials related to this particular course. *Students using laptops are requested to sit in the front of the classroom for accountability purposes.* Gaming, e-mail, social networking, and web browsing of any kind are strictly prohibited. Failure to heed this policy *will* result in dismissal from the class session; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. *Any student using Facebook during a class meeting may be asked to leave the class, repeat offenders for the remainder of the semester.*

3. Late Work

Because life and ministry happens, late work will be accepted—but not without penalty. For every day an assignment is late, five points will be taken off. *No assignment over two weeks late will be accepted.* Failure to submit every assignment will result in failure of the course.

4. Plagiarism

The instructor calls attention to the policy on plagiarism found in the NOBTS Graduate Catalog and Student Handbook. Remember the words of the proverb: “*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out*” (Prov. 10:19).

Philosophy of Religion and Apologetics

- Copan, Paul. *True for You, But Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998.
- Geisler, Norman. *Philosophy of Religion*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.
- _____. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.
- Hudson, Yeager. *The Philosophy of Religion*. London: Mayfield, 1991.
- Moreland, J. P. *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988.
- _____. *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1988.
- Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Pojman, Louis P., ed. *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*. New York: Wadsworth, 1996.
- Pojman, Louis P., ed. *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1994.
- Solomon, Robert C. *The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1982.
- Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Fort Worth: Scripta, 1989.

Works Arguing for Theism

- Allen, Diogenes. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.
- Hick, John. *Philosophy of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: MacMillan, 1968.
- Mitchell, Basil. *The Justification of Religious Belief*. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.

Moreland, J. P. *Scaling the Secular City*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

Nash, Ronald H. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988.

Plantinga, Alvin, and Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: Notre Dame, 1983.

Pojman, Louis P. *Philosophy of Religion*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987.

Introduction to Philosophy

Allen, Diogenes. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.

Bush, L. Russ. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Brown, Colin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. London: Tyndale, 1969.

_____, *Christianity and Western Thought*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.

Dyrness, William. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1983.

Nash, Ronald H. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988, 11-18, 51-92.

Ramm, Bernard. *Types of Apologetic Systems*. Wheaton: Van Kampen, 1953.

_____, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961.

Roberts, J. Deotis. *A Philosophical Introduction to Theology*. London: SCM, 1991.

Philosophical Apologetics

Brown, Colin. *Christianity and Western Thought*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.

_____, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1968.

Bush, L. Russ. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

_____, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Clark, Kelly James. *Return to Reason*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*, 8 vols. Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.

- Edwards, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- Hunnex, Milton. *Chronological and Thematic Charts of Philosophies and Philosophers*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988.
- Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1984.
- Plantinga, Alvin, and Wolterstorff, Nicholas, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
- Solomon, Robert. *The Big Questions*. New York: Hartcourt Brace Javonovich, 1986.
- Sproul, R.C., Gerstner, John, and Lindsley, Arthur. *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Thielicke, Helmut. *Modern Faith and Thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.

Logic

- Bush, Russ. *Handbook in Christian Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Copi, Irving M. *Introduction to Logic*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- Geisler, Norman, and Brooks, Ronald M. *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Hurley, Patrick. *A Concise Introduction to Logic*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1982.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988, pp. 93-120.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, pp. 17-37.

Theism

- Allen, Diogenes. *Christian Belief in a Post-Modern World*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1989.
- Hick, John. *Philosophy of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990.
- Mitchell, Basil. *The Justification of Religious Belief*. New York: Seabury, 1974.

- Moreland, J. P. *Scaling the Secular City*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 188, pp. 93-174.
- Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1988, pp. 414-456.
- Plantinga, Alvin, and Wolterstorff, Nicholas, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
- Pojman, Louis. *Philosophy of Religion*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, pp. 17-59.

Christianity and Science

- Allen, Diogenes. *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*. Atlanta: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.
- Barbour, Ian. *Religion in an Age of Science*. New York: Harper/Collins, 1990.
- Hutchingson, James E. *Religion and the Natural Sciences: The Range of Engagement*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1993.
- Johnson, Phillip E. *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Education*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Kaiser, Christopher. *Creation and the History of Science*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University Press, 1970.
- Moreland, J. P. *Christianity and the Nature of Science*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1988, pp. 118-184.
- Peacock, Roy E. *A Brief History of Eternity*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, pp. 173-206.

Miracles

- Brown, Colin. *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Lewis, C. S. *Miracles*. New York: MacMillan, 1960.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988, pp. 225-251.

Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1988, pp. 158-184.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Concept of Miracle*. London: Macmillan, 1970.

Christianity, Creation, Evolution

Archer, Gleason. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.

Barbour, Ian. *Religion in an Age of Science*. New York: Harper Collins, 1990.

Behe, Michael J. *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: Touchstone, 1998.

Hyers, Conrad. "Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance." *Christian Century* (August 4-11, 1982), 823-827.

Moreland, J. P. *Christianity and the Nature of Science*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

_____, *Scaling the Secular City*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, 185-233.

Morris, Henry. *Scientific Creationism*. El Cajun: Master Books, 1985.

Newport, John. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1988, pp. 118-157.

Pinnock, Clark. "Climbing Out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts." *Interpretation* 43 (April 1989), 143-155.

Van Till, Howard J., ed. *Portraits of Creation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981, pp. 173-206.