



PHIL5301 Christian Apologetics
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Theological and Historical Studies Division
***Defend* Conference, Jan. 2-6, 2017**

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Mission Statement

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.

Core Value Focus

The seminary has five core values.

1. **Doctrinal Integrity:** Knowing that the Bible is the Word of God, we believe it, teach it, proclaim it, and submit to it. This course addresses Doctrinal Integrity specifically by preparing students to grow in understanding and interpreting of the Bible.
2. **Spiritual Vitality:** We are a worshiping community emphasizing both personal spirituality and gathering together as a Seminary family for the praise and adoration of God and instruction in His Word. Spiritual Vitality is addressed by reminding students that a dynamic relationship with God is vital for effective ministry.
3. **Mission Focus:** We are not here merely to get an education or to give one. We are here to change the world by fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries. This course addresses Mission Focus by helping students understand the biblical foundations for fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandments.
4. **Characteristic Excellence:** What we do, we do to the utmost of our abilities and resources as a testimony to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Characteristic Excellence is addressed by preparing students to excel in their ability to interpret Scripture, which is foundational to effective ministry.
5. **Servant Leadership:** We follow the model of Jesus and exert leadership and influence through the nurture and encouragement of those around us. Servant Leadership is modeled by classroom deportment.

The core value focus for this academic year is **characteristic excellence**.

Curriculum Competencies

NOBTS faculty members realize that all ministers need to develop specific competencies if they are going to have an effective ministry. To increase the likelihood of NOBTS graduates having an effective ministry, the faculty developed a competency-based curriculum after identifying seven essential competencies necessary for effective ministry. All graduates are expected to have at least a minimum level of competency in all of the following areas:

1. **Biblical Exposition:** to interpret and communicate the Bible accurately.
2. **Christian Theological Heritage:** To understand and interpret Christian theological heritage and Baptist polity for the church.
3. **Disciple Making:** To stimulate church health through mobilizing the church for missions, evangelism, discipleship, and church growth.

4. **Interpersonal Skills:** To perform pastoral care effectively, with skills in communication and conflict management.
5. **Servant Leadership:** To serve churches effectively through team ministry.
6. **Spiritual and Character Formation:** To provide moral leadership by modeling and mentoring Christian character and devotion.
7. **Worship Leadership:** To facilitate worship effectively.

Course Description

This course examines barriers to Christian faith as well as efforts to provide convincing presentations of Christian faith. Attention is given to biblical foundations, historical development, apologetic method, and contemporary issues related to apologetics.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Be able to *apply* their knowledge and comprehension of how to defend and support Christian belief to academic and ministerial issues.
2. *Value* the following:
 - Intellectual accountability in relation to issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith.
 - Convincing presentations of Christian faith.
3. Be able to *present* the Christian faith in a reasonable and attractive form to skeptics and other non-Christians.

Biblical Authority

The instructor of 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. *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) provides the confessional framework in which this course is taught.

Course Teaching Methodology

All students taking this class will attend the *Defend* conference that takes place on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, LA on January 2-6, 2017. The conference begins at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning of that week and ends at 12:00 p.m. on Friday.

All students taking this course will be required to listen to all the lectures from the conference, which will be available online after the conference.

The written assignments for the course are all due in the weeks following *Defend*.

Required Textbooks

Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011.

Course Requirements

1. Lecture Attendance (5%)

Students are required to attend all plenaries and attend lectures during every breakout time slot of *Defend*. Students are also required to listen to audio recordings of all other breakouts they did not physically attend.

2. Book Reviews (20% x 3)

Each student is required to write reviews on Douglas Groothuis's *Christian Apologetics* textbook AND two of the following books:

Collins, Francis S. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2007.

Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig. *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Copan, Paul. *True for You But Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Corduan, Winfried. *No Doubt About It: The Case for Christianity*. Broadman & Holman, 1997.

Craig, William Lane. Francis J. Beckwith and J. P. Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Third Edition. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.

Evans, Craig A. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.

Groothuis, Douglas. *Philosophy in Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction to a Vast Topic*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.

Lewis, C. S. *Miracles*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.

McDowell, Sean. *A New Kind of Apologist: *Adopting Fresh Strategies *Addressing the Latest Issues *Engaging the Culture*. Grand Rapids: Harvest House, 2016.

McGrath, Alister E. *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Spitzer, Robert J. *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Stackhouse, John. *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Stokes, Mitch. *A Shot of Faith (to the Head): Be a Confident Believer in an Age of Cranky Atheists*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

Williams, Clifford. *Existential Reasons for Belief in God*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011.

Students may NOT "double-dip" book reviews by reading the same books for multiple classes. The books being reviewed must be books never before read or reviewed by the student.

These reviews should include **(1)** a bibliography entry, **(2)** a brief biographical data about the author(s) (e.g., his or her position, degrees, research interests, and books), **(3)** an assessment of the main purpose and/or thesis of the book, **(4)** a concise summary of the book's contents, **(5)** a thorough critical analysis of the book, and **(6)** a conclusion with a recommendation or dismissal. The review should be between **2000-4000 words** and should conform to **Turabian**. Because book reviews are primarily about one source, use **parenthetical citations** for the primary text and footnotes only for external sources.

- **A papers (93-100)** clearly state the book’s thesis, successfully and succinctly outline its argument in its own terms, demonstrate advanced critical engagement with the argument and content of the book, make clear and well structured arguments, and exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style.
- **B papers (85-92)** clearly state the book’s thesis, show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms and critically reflect on the issues at hand, make arguments, and show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style.
- **C papers (77-84)** state the book’s thesis, present the content of the book, raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation, limit evaluation to approval or disapproval of the author’s arguments, and make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style.
- **D (70-76) and F (0-69) papers** lack evidence of grasping the book’s thesis and content, limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book’s ideas, contain major grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors, and demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread.

All three book reviews are due six weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (February 17).

3. Apologetic Response (25%)

Each student is required to submit an apologetic response on a topic related to Christian Apologetics. It may be on an issue addressed in the apologetics school: science and faith, a non-Christian religion, etc. or on issues such as the existence of God, the problem of evil, and/or miracles, e.g., the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The response should of a relatively thorough statement of the issue in clear terms, then critique the issue rationally and biblically, and finally formulate a Christian response for the purpose of evangelizing those who advocate such positions. The response should be 15-20 pages in length (double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font). References must follow Turabian style guide. **Apologetic Responses are due ten weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (March 17).**

4. Session Summaries (10%)

Students will write one-page, double-spaced summaries of 12 different sessions from *Defend*. They can be sessions for which students were physically present or audio recordings of those sessions.

Session Summaries are due eight weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (March 3).

Evaluation of Grades

1. Lecture Attendance	5%
2. Book Reviews (3x)	60%
3. Apologetic Response	25%
4. Session Summaries	10%
Total	100%

All assignments must be submitted to pass the course. Students who fail to complete an assignment will not receive a passing grade.

Extra Credit Opportunities

1. Book Review

Students may write one additional critical book review of the recommended review texts above. Students can earn up to **five (5) points** on their final grade with a quality critical book review. ***Students may NOT “double-dip” book reviews by reading the same books for multiple classes. The books being reviewed must be books never before read or reviewed by the student.*** Extra credit book reviews are due 10 weeks after the final day of the conference.

2. Greer-Heard

Students attending the Greer-Heard Forum on March 25, 2017—either on-campus or in person—may receive up to five points on their final grade with the submission of a 1,000 word critical analysis of the event. For more details, see greerheard.com.

Class Behavior

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.

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.*

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.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System NOBTS.Blackboard.com.
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Help for Writing Papers at “The Write Stuff”

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

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).

Course Schedule

See DefendtheFaith.net for a complete conference schedule.

- All three book reviews are due six weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (February 17).
- Session Summaries are due eight weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (March 3).
- Apologetic Response due ten weeks after the final day of the *Defend* conference (March 17).

Selected Bibliography

- Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig. *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Copan, Paul. *True for You But Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Corduan, Winfried. *No Doubt About It: The Case for Christianity*. Broadman & Holman, 1997.
- Craig, William Lane, Francis J. Beckwith and J. P. Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Third Edition. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.
- Dean, Kena Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Evans, Craig A. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Geisler, Norman and Paul K. Hoffman. *Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- . *Miracles*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- McGrath, Alister, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.
- Schweizer, Bernard. *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Stackhouse, John. *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Stewart, Robert B. *The Future of Atheism: Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- Stewart, Robert B. *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.