ST628 – Applied Apologetics
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte
Spring 2014

I. Details
   A. Times: Tuesdays, 6:00–8:00 PM
   B. Instructor: Dr. James N. Anderson
   C. Contact: janderson@rts.edu
   D. Availability: If you wish to discuss some aspect of the course, please either arrange (via email) an appointment or knock on the door of my office (in E building) if it’s open.

II. Goals
   A. To develop the student’s understanding of the Reformed presuppositional method of apologetics through its application to specific instances of non-Christian thought.
   B. To familiarize the student with prominent non-Christian worldviews (both secular and religious) and their philosophical shortcomings (both theoretical and practical).
   C. To introduce the student to various ‘tools’ of apologetics.
   D. To sharpen the student’s critical thinking skills in the practice of apologetics.
   E. To strengthen the student’s own faith, and to equip them to strengthen the faith of other Christians, through an appreciation of the rational superiority of the biblical Christian worldview.

III. Course Overview
   A. Review of Apologetic Method
   B. Tools and Techniques in Applied Apologetics
   C. Secular Worldviews:
      1. Naturalism
      2. Postmodernism
   D. Religious Worldviews:
      1. Pantheism (e.g., New Age)
      2. Panentheism (e.g., Process Theism)
      3. Polytheism (e.g., Mormonism)
      4. Dualism
      5. Deism
      6. Unitarian Theism (e.g., Islam, modern Judaism)
      7. Pluralism (e.g., Baha’i)
   E. Discussion Scenarios

IV. Course Requirements
   A. Class attendance and thoughtful participation.
      1. As per seminary policy, you are required to attend all the lectures. If you know that you will be unable to attend class on a particular date, please inform me in advance, otherwise you may be penalized for your absence.
2. There will be opportunity for class participation (particularly toward the end of the course) and questions during the lectures.

3. A proportion of your final grade (see below) will depend on your attendance record and your participation in the classes (thoughtful interaction with the professor and other students).

B. Reading assignments.
   1. A proportion of your final exam mark (and thus your final grade) will depend on your acknowledgment that you have completed the required reading (see below).
   2. You will be penalized for each uncompleted reading assignment.

C. Writing assignment.
   1. You should write a critical review paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) of a book which defends or promotes a non-Christian worldview (e.g., naturalism, deism, pantheism). (See below for some book suggestions.)
   2. Your paper should include all of the following:
      i. An explanation of how you identified the author’s worldview from the text (you may make use of other writings from the same author in support).
      ii. A critique of the author’s worldview, using the presuppositional approach illustrated in class.
      iii. A comparison of the author’s worldview with the Christian worldview, explaining why the latter does not succumb to the criticisms you have made of the former.
      iv. An explanation of any significant logical fallacies or other errors of reasoning committed by the author.
   3. Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: responsible use of Scripture, responsible use of sources, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, evidence of critical thinking, and good writing style (inc. grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
   4. The paper should cite at least 6 scholarly sources (other than the book reviewed).
      i. For the purposes of this paper, a scholarly source is a book or article by a recognized expert in the field (and not aimed at a popular level for a general audience)—ideally one that has been peer-reviewed.
      ii. Wikipedia is clearly not a scholarly source.
      iii. That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a useful pointer to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking on uncontroversial issues.
      iv. Please consult me if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly.
      v. You should not rely heavily on web-based sources. Use the library!
   5. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
      i. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
      ii. Use section headings where applicable to improve readability.
      iii. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
      iv. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, SBL).
   6. The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following: the name and year of the course; your name; the professor’s name; the title of the paper; and the exact word count for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor’s word-count feature).
7. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.
8. Your paper is due on **May 13**. It should be submitted on or prior to this date. Ensure that the paper is stamped with the date of submission. Late submissions will be penalized.
9. Your paper will be returned to you after grading with limited feedback. Consult the document “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers” to crack the code. If you wish to receive more detailed feedback, please email me to arrange an appointment.

D. **Final exam.**
   1. The final exam will be taken in exam week: **May 15–20**.
   2. The exam will consist of a combination of short-answer and short-essay questions based on all of the class material and all of the required reading. You will have 2 hours to complete it.
   3. You may refer to an English translation of the Bible (but not one with study notes, etc.). You may not refer to any class notes or other study resources.
   4. You will be asked to sign a declaration that you have not discussed the content of the exam with any other students before taking it.
   5. You will also be asked to indicate which of the required reading assignments you have *completed* and to sign a declaration to that effect.

V. **Course Documents**
   A. *Instructions for accessing course documents on Course Home Page.*
      1. Login to the Self-Service website ([https://selfservice.rts.edu](https://selfservice.rts.edu)).
      2. Select Classes > Schedule > Student Schedule.
      3. Select the period (“2014/Spring”) from the drop-down menu.
      4. Click on the link “Go to Course Home Page” for the relevant class.
      5. Select Course Documents.
      6. All the course documents can be found in the “Section Media” folder.
   B. *Course outline.*
      1. Other than the syllabus, the course outline is the most important document. You will need a copy (either electronic or printed) in front of you throughout the class.
      2. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the outline with your own notes.
      3. The outline will be uploaded to the Course Home Page the week before class.
   C. *Supplementary documents.*
      1. One of the required reading items (see below) will be available on the Course Home Page.
      2. You should also consult the document “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers”.

VI. **Grading**
   A. Class attendance and participation — 10%
   B. Final exam (including credit for reading assignments) — 40%
   C. Review paper — 50%

VII. **Required Reading**
You should obtain copies of all of the items below. You should have read **A** by the third week of class (February 18) and **B-E** in preparation for the review paper and final exam. Each book
should be read in full, including appendices. You do not need to read F from cover to cover, but you should have it available as a reference during class.


**VIII. Recommended Supplementary Reading**

You are not *required* to read any of the items below, but you may find them useful to consolidate the course material and for further study as your interests dictate. For many of these, the table of contents can be viewed on Amazon.com or Google Books.

[An interactive non-linear book (in the style of a Choose Your Own Adventure book) designed to help readers identify and critically evaluate their worldviews in comparison to other worldviews. Aimed at both Christians and non-Christians.]
[A practical introduction to presuppositional apologetics.]
[The definitive exposition of Van Til’s presuppositionalism: a combination of representative excerpts from Van Til’s writings and Bahnsen’s insightful, concise commentary. Highly recommended.]
F. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, eds., *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[A free, online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; contains good articles on many of the philosophical concepts discussed in the course. http://www.iep.utm.edu]
[As you might expect from the title, a primer on postmodernism. A reliable introduction but weak on critique.]
[A readable and incisive critique of typical postmodernist claims.]
[A comprehensive handbook of evidences for the historicity of the Resurrection. Evidentialist in orientation, but still invaluable for ‘moderate’ presuppositionalists.]
[An apologia for the Christian faith aimed at 21st-century Western unbelievers. Keller’s approach is eclectic, but has presuppositionalist themes; he cites Van Til and Frame as positive influences. A good example of culturally-aware apologetics.]

[Useful collection of essays on various topics relevant to applied Christian apologetics.]

[A collection of essays critiquing process theology from an evangelical perspective.]

[An updated defense of Lewis’s “argument from reason” against naturalism.]

[A defense of classical theism—includes a critique of Hartshorne’s process theology.]

[A relatively accessible introduction to Van Til’s presuppositionalism. This edition features an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.]

[An excellent introduction to the Qur’an and a critical evaluation of its claims.]

[A free, online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; contains good articles on many of the philosophical concepts discussed in the course. http://plato.stanford.edu]

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**IX. Suggestions for Books to Review**

The following are merely suggestions. You are free to choose any book you think will allow you to fulfill the paper requirements, but be sure that your chosen book does allow you to meet those requirements. I recommend that you spend time doing some research (e.g., Google searches, Amazon reviews) before settling on a final choice.

A. Marcus Borg: *The God We Never Knew*
B. Deepak Chopra: *How to Know God / The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*
C. John B. Cobb, Jr. & David Ray Griffin: *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*
D. Don Cupitt: *Taking Leave of God / The Sea of Faith*
E. Paul Davies: *The Mind of God / The Fifth Miracle*
F. Richard Dawkins: *The Selfish Gene / The Blind Watchmaker / The God Delusion*
G. Daniel Dennett: *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea / Breaking the Spell*
H. Sam Harris: *The End of Faith / Letter to a Christian Nation / The Moral Landscape*
I. Paul Harrison: *Elements of Pantheism*
J. Stephen Hawking: *A Brief History of Time / The Grand Design*
K. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion / God Has Many Names*
L. Christopher Hitchens: *God is Not Great*
M. Richard Holloway: *Godless Morality / Doubts and Loves*
N. Harold Kushner: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
O. Robert L. Millet: *A Different Jesus?*
P. Thomas Nagel: *Mind and Cosmos*
Q. Thomas Paine: *The Age of Reason*
R. Jordan Paper, *The Deities Are Many: A Polytheistic Theology*
S. Tariq Ramadan: *What I Believe / The Quest for Meaning*
T. Feisal Abdul Rauf: *What’s Right with Islam*
U. Stephen E. Robinson: *Are Mormons Christians?*
V. Peter Rollins: *How (Not) to Speak of God*
X. Bertrand Russell: *Why I am Not a Christian*
Y. Eckhart Tolle: *The Power of Now / A New Earth*
### Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

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<th><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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| Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | **Moderate** | 1. Critical review/application paper  
2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics  
3. Class discussion questions testing understanding and application |

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<th><strong>Scripture</strong></th>
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| Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | **Minimal** | 1. Reviews biblical basis for presuppositional methodology  
2. Reviews exegetical arguments against cults (Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.) |

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<th><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></th>
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<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong></td>
<td>1. Relevance of Reformed distinctives to Christian worldview and apologetic methodology</td>
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<th><strong>Sanctification</strong></th>
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| Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | **Minimal** | 1. Emphasizes our dependence on God in all aspects of life  
2. Ultimate purpose of apologetics to glorify God |

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<th><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></th>
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| Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | **Strong** | 1. Presuppositional methodology  
2. Holistic view of Christian faith  
3. Christian worldview shown to be foundational for all aspects of life |

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<th><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></th>
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| Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.) | **Moderate** | 1. Appreciation for material from non-Reformed apologists  
2. Emphasis on humility in apologetics  
3. Person-relative approach |

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<th><strong>Preach</strong></th>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong></td>
<td>1. Critical thinking skills developed</td>
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<th><strong>Worship</strong></th>
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<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Shepherd</strong></th>
<th>Rubric</th>
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| Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | **Moderate** | 1. Importance of apologetics for evangelism  
2. Use of apologetics to edify and protect Christian believers |

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<th><strong>Church/World</strong></th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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| Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | **Moderate** | 1. Relevance of apologetics to public issues, ethics, politics, etc.  
2. Distinguishes Christian worldview from denominational distinctives |