COURSE SYLLABUS
Christian Apologetics, 0ST530, 2 hours
Dr. John M. Frame
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

Professor
Dr. Frame is professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy. He has his A.B. degree from Princeton University, a B.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary, an M.Phil. from Yale University, and a D.D. from Belhaven College. An outstanding theologian, John Frame distinguished himself during 31 years on the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, and was a founding faculty member of WTS California. He is best known for his prolific writings including ten volumes, a contributor to many books and reference volumes, as well as scholarly articles and magazines. Dr. Frame is a talented musician and discerning media critic who is deeply committed to the work of ministry and training pastors.

Course Description
The course will seek to formulate the rational basis for believing in Christian theism, with responses to objections and critiques of competing worldviews.

Apologetics is the study of how to give reasons for our Christian hope (1 Pet 3:15). The course has three parts: I. Christian Theory of Knowledge, II. Historic and Contemporary Views of Apologetic Method, III. Topics in Apologetics. In the first part, we shall ask what Scripture says about human knowledge, particularly the process by which a non-Christian comes to know Christ. The second part will deal with the controversy over how to do apologetics, discussing representatives of different apologetic schools. The third part will discuss issues under debate between Christians and non-Christians: the existence of God, the truth of Scripture, the problem of evil, the currents of modern and postmodern thought.

Required Textbooks

Supplementary Documents (available online in the Virtual classroom):
Week 1: Frame, "Unregenerate Knowledge of God," "Certainty."
Week 2: Frame, "A Van Til Glossary," "Van Til: A Reassessment."
Week 3: Frame, "Ontological Argument," "Infinite Series."
Week 5: Frame, "Do We Need God to Be Moral," "Self-Refuting Statements."
Week 6: Frame, "Transcendental Argument."
Good News.

All required books are available through the RTS Online Bookstore at www.mindandheart.com.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
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Online Student Handbook
The Online Student Handbook has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the online Virtual campus experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual. You will find it located at the RTS/Virtual website (http://virtual.rts.edu) under the Student Services tab.

Requirements in Brief
- Complete all Reading Assignments
- Listen to all Recorded Lectures
- Participate in Immersive Learning Simulations
- Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and Professor)
- Midterm Exam
- Final Exam
- Course Paper
- Mentor Report

Simulations (20%)
There are three immersive learning simulations in this course. Each simulation will cover a topic relevant to the topics covered in the readings and lectures for the appropriate weeks.

Course Paper (25%)
Each student is required to submit a methods paper at the completion of the course. See notes below for a specific description of this paper, and the specific requirements for it.

Examinations (Midterm: 20%, Final: 20%)
There are two examinations for this course. The Midterm examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lesson One through Lesson Four. The Final examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lesson Five through Lesson Seven.

All exams are proctored. For this course, you will take your exams within the Virtual classroom. Under Week 4 you will see links to instructions for the Midterm examination and a link to the examination itself. Under week 8, you will see links to instructions for the Final examination and to the examination itself. Your Midterm examination will be in two sections and your Final examination will be in two sections. In order to take your examinations, you must email student services (vess@rts.edu) and request that the appropriate examination password be sent to your proctor, who will then open the exam for you.
Forum Discussions (10%)

The student is to participate in forum discussions online throughout the course (see the descriptions for each of these forums in the Virtual classroom).

* Student to Professor Forum Discussion (5%). You must have a minimum of five posts in this forum to earn the full five percent of your course grade for this forum. This includes posting your student introduction as well as your responses to the four Topical Discussion Questions located throughout the course.

* Student to Student Forum Discussion (5%). You must have a minimum of five posts in this forum to earn the full five percent of your course grade for this forum.

Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%)

Each MA Distance student is required to have his mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student's grade. For students who are not registered in the MA program, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life.

Assignments

All assignments are due the last day of the course unless specifically noted in this syllabus (See start letter). Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Virtual Campus before the deadline. Only one extension is allowed for this version of the course. Submit all assignments to the RTS Virtual Classroom via upload http://virtualclassroom.rts.edu.

Contact Information

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FAX: (704) 366-9295 - E-mail: vcss@rts.edu - Web site: http://virtual.rts.edu
Write a paper of approximately 2000 words describing and arguing your own view of apologetic method. This should show interaction with the course lectures and readings and should present a biblical basis for your view. Some research beyond assigned readings required. The paper should interact with Van Til and with some of the other alternative apologetic methods discussed (both in the historical lectures and in the book *Five Views of Apologetics*). This paper will be 25% of your final grade. For details of the mechanics of writing a course paper, visit the RTS Virtual Campus Opening Page to review the Course Paper immersive learning simulation at any time.

When you are required to submit a course topic, follow this format: "My Personal View of Apologetic Method: (with a brief description of what that is)". Then go ahead and complete the "Big Four": Topic, Paragraph, Outline and Bibliography.

Grading of Papers

Abbreviations for Comments on Papers

A - awkward
Amb - ambiguous
Arg - more argument needed
C - compress
Circle (drawn around some text)
   - usually refers to misspelling or other obvious mistake
D - define
E - expand, elaborate, explain
EA - emphasis argument
F - too figurative for context
G - grammatical error
Ill - illegible
Illus - illustrate, give example
Int - interesting
L1 - lateness penalty for one day (similarly L2, etc.)
M - misleading in context
O - overstated, overgeneralized
R - redundant
Ref - reference (of pronoun, etc.)
Rel - irrelevant
Rep - repetitious
Resp - not responsive (In a dialogue: one party raises a good question to which the other does not respond.)
S - summary needed
Scr - needs more scripture support
Simp - oversimplified
SM - straw man (a view nobody holds)
SS - problem in sentence structure
St - style inappropriate
T - transition needed
U - unclear
V - vague
W - questionable word-choice
Wk - weak writing (too many passives, King James English, etc.)
WO - word order
WV - whose view? yours? another author?

Letter Grades

A: Good grasp of basic issues, plus something really extraordinary, worthy of publication in either a technical or popular publication. That special excellence may be of various kinds: formulation, illustration, comprehensiveness, subtlety/nuance, creativity, argument, insight, correlations with other issues, historical perspective, philosophical sophistication, research beyond the requirements of the assignment. One of these will be enough!

A-: An A paper, except that it requires some minor improvement before an editor would finally accept it for publication.

B+: Good grasp of basic issues but without the special excellences noted above. A few minor glitches.

B: The average grade for graduate study. Good grasp of basic issues, but can be significantly improved.

B-: Shows an understanding of the issues, but marred by significant errors, unclarities (conceptual or linguistic), unpersuasive arguments, and/or shallow thinking.

C+: Raises suspicions that to some extent the student is merely manipulating terms and concepts without adequately understanding them, even though to a large extent these terms and concepts are used appropriately. Does show serious study and preparation.

C: Uses ideas with some accuracy, but without mastery or insight; thus the paper is often confused.
C-: Problems are such that the student evidently does not understand adequately the issues he/she is writing about, but the work may nevertheless be described as barely competent.

D: I do not give D's on papers.

F: Failure to complete the assignment satisfactorily. Such performance would disqualify a candidate for ministry if it were part of a presbytery exam.

Most of my students get B's. I try to keep A's and C's to a relatively small number. F's are extremely rare, but I have given a few.
COURSE OUTLINE
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Part I: Doctrine of the Knowledge of God/Biblical Theory of Knowledge

Lesson 1
Section 1: Objects of Knowledge
I. The Biblical World-view as a Christian Philosophy
II. God and the World (Metaphysics, Ontology)
III. God as an Object of Human Knowledge
IV. Knowing God's World

Lesson 2
Section 2: Justification of Knowledge
I. The Question of Justification
II. Forms of Justification
III. Secular Epistemologies
IV. Normative Justification
V. Situational Justification
VI. Existential Justification

Section 3: Method in Apologetics
I. Normative
II. Situational
III. Existential

Part II: Apologetic Method

Lesson 3
Section 1: History and Current Discussion
I. The Nature of Apologetics: giving a reason of our hope (1 Pet 3:15)
II. Original Opponents of Christianity
IV. Irenaeus (d. around 200)
V. Tertullian (Carthage: 160-220)
VI. Clement of Alexandria (155-220)
VII. Augustine (354-430)
VIII. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)
IX. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Lesson 4
I. John Calvin (1505-1564)
II. XI. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)
III. Joseph Butler (1692-1752)
Lesson 5

I. Alvin Plantinga (1932-), "Reformed epistemology" (Cf. Kelly James Clark)

II. Gordon H. Clark (1902-1985)

III. Cornelius Van Til

Part III: Topics in Apologetics

Lesson 6

Section 1: Apologetics as Proof

I. Apologetics is evangelism, counseling, preaching.

II. Toward an Ideal Argument

III. The Existence of God

IV. Proving the Gospel

Section 2: Apologetics as Defense

V. Apologetics as Defense: The Problem of Evil

Lesson 7

VI. Apologetics as Offense: Challenging Unbelieving Thought
COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Religious Knowledge

See also books listed in the Apologetics section below.

Calvin, John. Institutes, I, i-ii, various editions.
Plantinga, Alvin, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, ed. Faith and Rationality. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983. Plantinga is greatly respected even in secular philosophical circles. His work is original, much discussed, and not easily classified. Requires some philosophical background. See Frame's review of this volume in an appendix to Doctrine of the Knowledge of God. Plantinga is of Christian Reformed background and taught at Calvin College for some years. Now teaches at Notre Dame.
Wolterstorff, Nicholas. Reason Within the Bounds of Revelation. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976. Also, see under Plantinga. Wolterstorff also taught at Calvin for many years. He recently moved on to Yale.

Apologetics (General works)


Carnell, Edward J. *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948. See the chapter on Carnell in Frame's *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought*.

Clark, Gordon H. *A Christian View of Men and Things*. Eerdmans, 1952. Clark was Reformed in theology, and a kind of presuppositionalist, but opposed to some of Van Til's ideas. This is an excellent work, showing that many human disciplines (history, politics, ethics, etc.) require Christianity.


_____. *Reasons of the Heart*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. Edgar is a presuppositionalist, very knowledgeable about culture, adept at speaking to real people.


Gerstner, John, with R. C. Sproul and A. Lindsley. *Classical Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan,


Hanna, Mark. Crucial Questions in Apologetics. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. Tries to establish a position called "veridicalism," between "presuppositionism" and "verificationism." His concept of presuppositionism is a straw man; his veridicalism is very close to Van Til, once you get past the rhetoric.


Marston, George. The Voice of Authority. Vallecito: Ross House, 1978. This is the simplest of all the simplifications of Van Til.

Mayers, Ronald B. Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Like Hanna, tries to find a middle ground that allows both presuppositions and evidences. I think Van Til already found it. But there are good things in the volume.

McDowell, Josh. Evidence That Demands a Verdict. San Bernardino: Here's Life, 1979. McDowell has published a great many books of evidences. He doesn't worry too much about apologetic method, just sets out the facts. Lots of quotations from others. The author is not a profound thinker, but these books are handy summaries of relevant data. He does sometimes amuse, as when talking about the "swoooooldoooon theory."

McGrath, Alister. Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths. Zondervan, 1993. McGrath has a great reputation as an evangelical Oxford scholar. His appendix on Van Til, however, is incompetent.


_____. Where is History Going? Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969; Minneapolis: Bethany House
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Publishers, 1976. Traditional. See also his essay in Jerusalem and Athens (under Geehan, above).


Writs clearly.


Van Til, Cornelius. Christian Apologetics. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975. This was the basic syllabus for Van Til's first-year apologetics course. In many ways it remains the best introduction to his thought.


_____. Introduction to Systematic Theology. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974. This, together with the above three, is of major importance to understanding Van Til's approach.


_____. The Works of Cornelius Van Til on CD-ROM. Available from Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. Most all his writings, a complete bibliography, fifty one hours of audio sermons, lectures, discussions. A very helpful tool.
The Existence of God

See also the general apologetic works above.

Habermas, Gary R., and Anthony G.N. Flew. Did Jesus Rise From the Dead? Ed. by Terry L. Miethe.

Evidence For Christianity, Especially the Resurrection

See also General Works on Apologetics, above.

Lapide, Pinchas. The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983. Lapide is a Jewish rabbi, who concluded that Jesus was actually raised from the dead. Lapide, however, accepted Jesus only as a prophet, not as the Messiah or the Son of God.

The Problem of Evil

See also works listed under General Apologetics, above.

Adams, Jay. The Grand Demonstration: A Biblical Study of the So-called Problem of Evil. Santa Barbara:
EastGate, 1991. I offered some criticisms of this in *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, which Adams answered in an Appendix. Actually, I think this is one of the better books on the subject.


Gerstner, John. *The Problem of Pleasure*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983. Building on the Reformed doctrine of the Fall, Gerstner argues that the real problem is this: Why should God allow fallen sinners to have any pleasure at all?


Philosophy

See course in History of Philosophy and Christian Thought

*Islam (Thanks to Bill Davis, Steve Hays, and others)*


Margoliouth, D.S. *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*. London: C.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931. This is my favorite treatment of the subject. Margoliouth was a Messianic Jew—the son of a rabbi. He was a great linguist and philologist who taught Islamic studies at Oxford and really knew his way around the primary sources. He exposes Muhammad for the charlatan he was. Scholarly, but written with dry wit. Available in other editions.


Wickwire, Daniel E. *A Theological Source Book for Missionaries*. Elizabeth, La Rovere, Goleta, California, Self-Published, 1985, pages 252.
Behe, Michael L. *Darwin's Black Box*. New York: Free Press, 1996. One of the latest rounds in the creation/evolution battle. Respected by secularists and Christians, Behe argues that organisms are too complex to have been evolved by chance. Since the parts of organisms are highly interdependent, they could not be formed by tiny changes in individual parts. No part will work unless the whole organism is present.


Morris, Henry M., and John C. Whitcomb. The Genesis Flood. Phila.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961. Morris is the founder of the Institute for Creation Research. His books, and those of others from the institute, are vigorously criticized by many scientists, some Christians among them. There are other Christian approaches to these issues. But the work of ICR cannot be neglected.
_____. The Genesis Question. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998. Ross is an old earth creationist with a high view of Scripture and an impressive knowledge of science. He claims that every day there is a new discovery confirming the teaching of Scripture. Has some interesting ideas about multidimensionality. See his periodical, Facts for Faith, web site www.reasons.org.

Verbrugge, Magnus. *Alice*. Vallecito: Ross House, 1984. 159. P. Dooyeweerd's son-in-law, a urologist, attacks the notion that life could have come from nonlife.


*Culture, the Arts*


Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, various editions. 3.6-10.


Postmodernism


Middleton, J. Richard, and Brian J. Walsh. *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1995. Christians who are more friendly than most toward some postmodern ideas.


**Web Sites**

http://www.arcapologetics.org/
Craig Branch's ministry.

http://www.cmfnow.com/
They supply writings of the late Greg Bahnsen and others, and you can read a lot of Bahnsen's articles on this site. Bahnsen was a strong Van Tillian and an impressive apologist.

http://www.thirdmill.org

http://www.vantil.info/
Lots of information about Van Til, articles about him from people like Bahnsen, Frame, Pratt, Hays, Welty, and others, along with Van Til himself. Includes Eric Bristley's comprehensive bibliography of Van Til's writings.

http://www.apologeticsindex.org/b64.html
Robert Bowman's web site. He has some sympathy for presuppositionalism, but has a fairly broad reach methodologically. Lots of good stuff.

http://www.carm.org/
This is the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, started by my former student Matt Slick. Some good material here.

http://www.reformed.org/
The Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, founded by Jon Barlow. Oriented
This is the web site of Hugh Ross, the Christian astronomer who has written and lectured broadly on scientific matters. I think he’s one of the most impressive figures writing today on Christianity/Science issues. An old-earth creationist, anti-evolution.