Apologetics (ST530):
Defending and Commending the Christian Faith in Today’s Complex World

Reformed Theological Seminary/Washington

Spring 2015

UPDATED 2-27-15

Date: May 18-21, 2015
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: Christ Community Church
21660 Red Rum Drive
Ashburn, VA 20147

Instructor: Geoff Sackett, Dean of Students and Visiting Lecturer in Theology and Philosophy gsackett@rts.edu; (703) 448-3393

I. Purpose

Defending and giving reasons to believe the gospel can be challenging in today’s society. Sometimes, our attempts to introduce Jesus to unbelievers are met with skepticism or counter-argument or indifference. Other times, in God’s kindness, they are received with openness, but with honest questions that require serious answers. It is in these circumstances that Christians need to be equipped to “give a reason for the hope that is within you” (1 Peter 3:15).

This course introduces students to biblical apologetics. We will consider the biblical foundations of apologetics, alternative worldviews, and useful approaches and arguments in sharing the gospel. This course is intended to help students consider the intellectual foundations of the Christian faith and ways to commend that faith in today’s complex world.

II. Course Goals

a. To grow in wisdom and understanding of the apologetic task
b. To increase in confidence in the truthfulness, reasonableness, and beauty of Christian belief
c. To appreciate the lordship of Jesus Christ over the apologetic task
d. To become more faithful followers of our Lord in the apologetic task
III. Required Books

b. Steven Cowan and Terry Wilder (eds.), *In Defense of the Bible* (B&H Academic, 2013)
e. Michael Murray (ed.), *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans, 1999)

IV. Recommended Book (not required)


V. Course Requirements

a. **Class participation – 10%**. You will be evaluated based on your thoughtful participation in class.

b. **Dialogue – 45%**. Write a 3,500-4,000 word apologetic dialogue between a Christian and a non-believer. The dialogue may be entirely fictional or you may engage in an actual dialogue via email or an Internet discussion board (see the Internet Infidels website). In either case, you must argue your position on an apologetic matter, whether it is the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus, the inspiration of scripture, or a different apologetic topic. Your part in the dialogue should demonstrate a clear grasp of the relevant course material. For a model dialogue, see pages 204-217 of *Apologetics to the Glory of God*.

c. **Final exam – 45%**. The final exam will cover the required reading and lectures. It will consist of short answer and essay questions. It is a take-home exam and must be proctored by a non-family member. You and your proctor will sign an honor form.

We will discuss the assignments in more detail in class.

N.B. Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Familiarize yourself with the school policy by consulting p 51 in the Catalogue online.

N. B. Late assignments will not be accepted unless a prior arrangement has been made with the professor.

VI. Due Dates
a. Final Exam. TBD. We will discuss in class.
b. Dialogue. TBD. We will discuss in class.

Return all work as MS Word documents to gsacket@rts.edu

VII. Schedule of Topics

Because the reading material can be complex, it is recommended that you begin the reading before class begins. To aid your grasp of the reading material, I recommend that you read it in the order presented below.

a. Monday, May 18
   i. Biblical Foundations of Apologetics
   ii. Reading: Reasons of the Heart, pp. 11-115

b. Tuesday, May 19
   i. Approaches to Apologetics
   ii. Reading: Apologetics to the Glory of God, pp. 1-217; What’s Your Worldview?, pp. 11-103

c. Wednesday, May 20
   i. Apologetic Challenges, Part I
   ii. Reading: Reason for the Hope Within, pp. 1-46, 399-422

d. Thursday, May 21
   i. Apologetic Challenges, Part II
   ii. Reading: Reason for the Hope Within, pp. 76-115, 165-216, 318-374; In Defense of the Bible, pp. 1-463

VIII. Grading Scale

The standard RTS grading scale will be used in this course.

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