The Christian faith is not true because it works. It works because it is true. No issue is so fundamental both to the searcher and to the believer as the question of truth. The uniqueness and trustworthiness of the Christian faith rest entirely on its claim to be the truth. God, who is the father of Jesus Christ, is either there or he is not there. Either he has spoken or he has not spoken. What his revelation claims is either true or false. Jesus either rose from the dead or he didn't. There are no two ways about it.

Os Guinness: *God in the Dark* (1996)

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to Christian apologetics. Students should improve their skills in the art of Christian persuasion, develop tools in order to understand the surrounding culture, not only in the West but beyond. Overall, we will together learn how to lift up Christ and give reasons for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15)

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

1. **AN APOLOGY FOR APOLOGETICS**
   
   1.1 The challenge of apologetics today
   1.1.1 Apologetics in the contemporary world
   1.1.1.1 The questions asked
   1.1.1.2 The questions not asked
   1.1.2 Highlights in the history of apologetics
   1.2 The biblical basis for apologetics
   1.2.1 Initial probe: 1 Peter 3:15
   1.2.2 Apology in the history of redemption
   1.2.3 Scripture as apologetic
   1.2.4 Personal qualifications of the apologist
   1.3 Preliminary definition of apologetics

2. **DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW**
   
   2.1 Basic orientation
   2.1.1 Recent history
   2.1.2 Religion and culture
   2.1.3 Humility and worldview claims
   2.2 The fundamentals of the Christian world view
2.2.1 From him and through him and to him
2.2.2 The cultural mandate in creation, fall, and redemption
2.2.3 About public life
2.2.4 About knowledge
2.2.5 The clash of worldviews
2.2.5.1 The relationship of belief to unbelief
2.2.5.2 Common grace and the antithesis

3. UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

3.1 Are we secular?
3.1.1 The secularization thesis
3.1.2 De-secularization and re-secularization
3.2 Apologetics and other disciplines
3.3 Persuasion and change

4. PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

4.1 The transcendental approach
4.1.1 The background
4.1.2 Presuppositions
4.1.2.1 Paradigm, pre-understanding, bias
4.1.2.2 The point of contact
4.1.2.3 From above, yet from every place below
4.2 Arguing transcendently
4.2.1 Disclosure: the impossibility of the contrary
4.2.1.1 Surprised by joy
4.2.1.2 The limits of bargaining
4.2.1.3 Signals of transcendence
4.2.2 Homecoming
4.2.2.1 Evidences, circles and proofs
4.2.2.2 Conviction and doubt
4.2.2.3 Discursive and non-discursive persuasion
4.3 Other schools compared

5. APOLOGETICS CONVERSATIONS

5.1 The problem of evil
5.1.1 The problem stated
5.1.2 Classical answers
5.1.3 God and the inexcusable mystery of evil
5.2 Psychologized culture
5.2.1 A therapeutic world
5.2.2 Apologetics and psychology
5.3 Worldwide apologetics
5.3.1 Globalization and missions
5.3.2 Confronting world religions
5.3.3 Pluralism, relativism and truth
5.4 Science and faith
5.4.1 History
5.4.2 Models
5.4.3 Challenges

6. APOLOGETICS AND THE FUTURE

6.1 The call of the church
6.2 Apologetics and theological education
6.3 Forms of missions and evangelism
6.4 Into the new millennium

REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE

1. Required reading: Due on dates indicated below. It is essential to keep up with the reading, since a good deal of the lecture material assumes a background from the reading, not to mention the exam at the end of the course. Some of the reading may be new and challenging to certain students, so, do keep up.

2. Response paper: You will be required to write a “dialogue” between yourself and Muslim. The instructor will spend some lecture time on Islam, plus a brief bibliography will be provided in order to get you familiarized with some of the basics of Islam. Due April 28th. Hard copies for the instructor, please (but copy them to the RTS administrator both electronically and in hard copy). The RTS administrator will forward hard copies to the instructor. Be sure your name is on it. It should not exceed 15 pages. Students are expected to use the method set forth in this course.

The RTS Curriculum Committee recommends the following for this dialogue:
1. That it be a focused dialogue on at least one major issue between Christianity and Islam;
2. That it be a minimum of 2000 words
3. That it demonstrate the goals, principles, and methods of the apologetic approach of class instruction;
4. That it cite at least eight sources in its bibliography."

3. Final exam: The exam must be proctored by an RTS employee, an ordained minister or elder, or an employee of a testing center that offers proctoring services. Your proctor must mail your exam to the RTS-DC campus, postmarked no later than April 28th. It takes three hours, covering all aspects of the course. Please use a dark pen, and leave margins.

Office Hours: The professor will make himself available before or after class meetings by appointment.
Required Reading:

1. AN APOLOGY FOR APOLOGETICS

REQUIRED --- due February 7
   1 Peter 3:8-22 (Greek version if possible)

SUPPLEMENTARY
   Dick Keyes, Chameleon Christianity, Grand Rapids: Baker/Hourglass, 1994

2. DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

REQUIRED --- due February 7

Al Wolters, Creation Regained, Eerdmans, 2005, entire

SUPPLEMENTARY
   Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Engaging God’s World, Eerdmans, 2002
   Timothy Keller, Center Church, Zondervan, 2012

3. UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

REQUIRED --- due March 7


SUPPLEMENTARY
   Peter L. Berger, The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics, Eerdmans, 1999
   Richard Keyes, Seeing Through Cynicism, Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006
   J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age, Inter-Varsity Press, 1995
David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*, Trinity Press, 1995

4. PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

REQUIRED --- due March 7
K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics*, Crossway, 2013, chaps 1-4

SUPPLEMENTARY

5. APOLOGETIC CONVERSATIONS

REQUIRED --- due March 14
Vern Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, Crossway, 2006, chapters 4-10

SUPPLEMENTARY
Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Who Are We?* Eerdmans, 2000
Craig S. Keener & Glenn Usry, *Defending Black Faith*, Inter-Varsity, 1997
-----, *Unspeakable: Facing up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror*, Harper-San Francisco, 2005
RESOURCES

Today, resources books and others, are proliferating. It is important to be aware of these, because the quality is improving all the time. Furthermore, much apologetics is being done in formats related to the information explosion. The following items are suggestive, but hardly exhaustive.

*Mars Hill Audio*: Tape series, NPR format, hosted by Ken Myers. Very insightful interviews on every aspect of contemporary culture. Special emphasis on the arts. Current address: P.O. Box 1527, Charlottesville, VA 22902-1527.

*The Trinity Forum*: Several curricula whose stated purpose is, "Strengthening Spiritual Balance in Secular Leadership." They issue from the work of Os Guinness, and consist of Aspen-type seminars. Billed as "an academy without walls," they use texts from the classics, to theology, to skeptical moderns, to Scripture, challenging the student to think through first-order questions. Current web-address: www.ttf.org.


A large number of *websites* related to apologetics exist. Some are profitable, many are exercises in “vain repetition.” Browsing through various drives gives an open window onto American Christianity. One sees a good number of evidentialist sites, with questions focusing on evolution, the Bible’s reliability, the cults, etc. There are also a fair number of Roman Catholic sites, embracing a great variety of issues and approaches. Despite the smaller population, Reformed circles display a significant number of sites as well.

For some of the most interesting links:
http://maxpages.com/thirdmill (Richard Pratt’s fascinating and engaging *Third Millennium Ministries*)  http://www.liberty.edu/resources/library/christn/apol/apol.htm (from Liberty U.)  www.thetruthaboutdavinci.com (WTS!)  http://str.org/links/apolsite.htm (from Stand To Reason; this is probably the most rich)

From a specifically Reformed point of view:
http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/apologetics.html (Jonathan Barlow and Ed Welsh’s site)  http://www.scccs.org (from the late Greg Bahnsen’s Institute)

Most useful all around:
http://www.ttf.org/ (The Trinity Forum: “engaging leaders... for personal and societal renewal”)
http://www.veritas.org/index.html (from the Veritas Forum; outstanding creative apologetics in universities)
Redeemer City-to-City blog []
http://huizen.dds.nl/~chr/links/apolog.htm (from Christian Europe Online; very useful resources)
http://thegospelcoalition.org/

Class Schedule

February 7-8   Apology for Apologetics
               Developing a Christian Worldview

March 7-8     Understanding the Times
               Presuppositional Apologetics

March 14-15   Apologetic Conversations