

ST6455 – Applied Apologetics

Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

Fall 2020

I. Details

- A. Times: Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00
- B. Instructor: Dr. James N. Anderson
- C. Contact: janderson@rts.edu
- D. Availability: If you wish to discuss some aspect of the course, please speak to me after class or email me to arrange an office appointment. (I'm also available for lunches with students to chat about any topics of interest or concern, theological or otherwise.)

II. Goals

- A. To develop the student's understanding of worldviews and their role in apologetics.
- B. To familiarize the student with some prominent non-Christian worldviews.
- C. To assist the student in developing robust critiques of non-Christian worldviews.
- 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 others, through an appreciation of the rational superiority of the Christian worldview.

III. Course Overview

- A. Biblical Foundations for Apologetics
- B. Introduction to Presuppositionalism
- C. Worldview Apologetics
- D. The Biblical Christian Worldview
- E. Secular Worldviews:
 - 1. Naturalism
 - 2. Postmodernism
- F. Religious Worldviews:
 - 1. New Age Spirituality
 - 2. Mormonism
 - 3. Islam
 - 4. Pluralism
 - 5. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
- G. Concluding Advice

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 and questions during the lectures.

3. You will be expected to use the internet in the classroom *only for appropriate class-related activities*. Please consult **Appendix A** regarding the RTS Charlotte policy on classroom technology usage.
 4. 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 grade will depend on how much of the required reading you have completed.
 2. A reading report indicating the *percentage completed* of each required reading item is due on **December 3**. The report should be submitted via the course website (look for the link on the **Modules** page) on or prior to this date. Late submissions will be penalized.
- C. *Writing assignment.*
1. You are required to write a critical review paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) of a book which defends or promotes a non-Christian worldview. (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 methods 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, extent of research, 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 internet 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 review paper is due on **December 3**. It should be uploaded to the course website (look for the link on the **Modules** page) on or prior to this date. Late submissions will be penalized.
- D. *Final exam.*
1. The final exam should be taken during the exam period: **December 3–8**.
 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 readings. You will have two 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 anyone who has previously taken the exam.

V. Course Documents

- A. *Instructions for accessing course documents.*
1. Log in to the RTS Canvas website (<https://rts.instructure.com>).
 2. Select “Applied Apologetics” from the **Courses** menu.
 3. All of the course documents will be accessible from the **Modules** page.
- 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 website the week before class.
- C. *Supplementary documents.*
1. Some of the required reading items (see below) will be available on the course website.
 2. You should also consult the documents “Research Paper Checklist” and “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers” *before* you start the writing assignment.

VI. Grading

- A. Class attendance and participation — 10%
- B. Reading assignments — 15%
- C. Review paper — 50%
- D. Final exam — 25%

VII. Required Reading

You should obtain copies of all the items below. You should have read the main chapters of Frame's *Apologetics* by the third week of class (September 2). You should read the other items in preparation for the review paper and final exam. Each book should be *read in full* (including appendices) by the end of the semester.

- A. James N. Anderson, *Why Should I Believe Christianity?* (Christian Focus, 2016).
- B. John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (P&R, 2015).
- C. John M. Frame, "How to Write a Theological Paper," Appendix F in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (P&R, 1987). [Available on the course website.]
- D. Gregory Koukl, *Tactics* (Zondervan, 2009).
- E. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (InterVarsity Press, 5th/6th edition, 2009/2020).

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.

- A. James N. Anderson, "Secular Responses to the Problem of Induction" (2000).
[<https://www.proginosko.com/docs/induction.html>]
- B. James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic," *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011).
[https://www.proginosko.com/docs/The_Lord_of_Non-Contradiction.pdf]
- C. James N. Anderson, *What's Your Worldview?* (Crossway, 2014).
[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.]
- D. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready* (Covenant Media Foundation, 1996).
[A practical introduction to presuppositional apologetics.]
- E. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (P&R, 1998).
[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. <https://www.iep.utm.edu>]
- G. John M. Frame, *Christianity Considered: A Guide for Skeptics and Seekers* (Lexham Press, 2018).
[A concise, winsome, worldview-oriented introduction to the Christian faith.]
- H. John Gilchrist, *Facing the Muslim Challenge* (Life Challenge Africa, 2002).
[A short but well-informed handbook of responses to common Muslim objections. PDF version is available online if you search for it.]
- I. Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Eerdmans, 1996).
[As you might expect from the title, a primer on postmodernism. A reliable introduction but weak on critique.]
- J. Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (InterVarsity Press, 2000).
[A readable and incisive critique of typical postmodernist claims.]
- K. Gary R. Habermas, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Kregel, 2004).
[A comprehensive handbook of evidences for the historicity of the Resurrection. Evidentialist in orientation, but still invaluable for 'moderate' presuppositionalists.]
- L. Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton, 2008).
[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.]

- M. Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (Viking, 2016).
[A prequel to *The Reason for God* which aims to open up the modern skeptic to a serious intellectual consideration of Christianity. Keller argues that culturally, emotionally, and intellectually, Christianity makes more sense than secularism.]
- N. Greg Koukl, *The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between* (Zondervan, 2017).
[An engaging, apologetics-oriented introduction to the biblical worldview. Koukl sets forth “the Christian story” and tries to explain why it alone makes sense of the world.]
- O. Michael J. Murray, ed., *Reason for the Hope Within* (Eerdmans, 1999).
[Useful collection of essays on various topics relevant to applied Christian apologetics.]
- P. Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* (Zondervan, 1992).
[An introduction to worldviews and a critique of some major non-Christian worldviews. Nash was a Reformed philosopher/apologist who taught at RTS’s Orlando campus.]
- Q. Gordon Nickel, *The Gentle Answer to the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification* (Bruton Gate, 2015).
[A superb defense of the integrity of the Bible in response to the common Muslim accusation that Jews and Christians have corrupted their scriptures. Also documents the contradictions, alterations, and dubious textual history of the Qur’an.]
- R. Victor Reppert, *C.S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea* (InterVarsity Press, 2003).
[An updated defense of Lewis’s “argument from reason” against naturalism.]
- S. Mitch Stokes, *How To Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2016).
[Stokes argues, quite effectively, that atheists need to take their atheism more consistently; although they routinely appeal to science and morality, their own worldview is inconsistent with such appeals. Plantinga in orientation.]
- T. Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (P&R, 2nd edition, 2003).
[A relatively accessible introduction to Van Til’s presuppositionalism. This edition features an introduction and explanatory notes by William Edgar.]
- U. James R. White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur’an* (Bethany House, 2013).
[An excellent introduction to the Qur’an and critical evaluation of its claims.]
- V. Edward N. Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[A free, online, peer-reviewed encyclopedia of philosophy; contains good articles on many of the philosophical concepts discussed in the course. <https://plato.stanford.edu>]

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. You should do some research (e.g., Goodreads/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. Bart Ehrman: *Jesus, Interrupted / God's Problem*
- I. Sam Harris: *The End of Faith / Letter to a Christian Nation / The Moral Landscape*
- J. Paul Harrison: *Elements of Pantheism*
- K. Stephen Hawking: *A Brief History of Time / The Grand Design*
- L. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion / God Has Many Names*
- M. Christopher Hitchens: *God is Not Great*
- N. Richard Holloway: *Godless Morality / Doubts and Loves*
- O. Harold Kushner: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
- P. Robert L. Millet: *A Different Jesus?*
- Q. Thomas Nagel: *Mind and Cosmos*
- R. Thomas Paine: *The Age of Reason*
- S. Jordan Paper, *The Deities Are Many: A Polytheistic Theology*
- 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*
- W. Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions*
- X. Bertrand Russell: *Why I am Not a Christian*
- Y. Eckhart Tolle: *The Power of Now / A New Earth*
- Z. Abu Zakariya: *JESUS: Man, Messenger, Messiah*

Appendix A: RTS Charlotte Classroom Technology Usage

Academic Dean's Office

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information.

However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities.

From the Student Handbook: "Classroom etiquette also includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet and laptop computer games and communicating to your neighbor during lectures. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students."

Appendix B: Instructions for Exams with LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link:
<https://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers both Mac and Windows applications.
 - Be sure that you are able to login to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before scheduling a time to take your exam.
 - The LockDown Browser application is already installed on the computers in the RTS Charlotte library. (Note that if you elect to use the library computers, your proctor must still be present throughout the duration of the exam.)
 - If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
2. Make arrangements with a proctor to supervise the exam within the date timeframe set by the professor. The proctor cannot be a family member, current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated), or member of the library staff. Typical proctors are pastors or church staff members. The document "Proctor Expectations Letter.doc" has been provided on your Canvas homepage in order to facilitate communication with your proctor. For your convenience, there will be several on-campus proctor blocks where a proctor will be available to supervise your exam. Dates and times will be posted on Canvas and announced in the weekly *Semper*.
3. The proctor must observe student taking exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam:
 - a. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable WiFi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop WiFi to take exams.
 - b. Login to your Canvas account using your Self-Service username and password. If you need to reset your Self-Service password, you may do so at <https://selfservice.rts.edu>
 - c. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - d. Time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - e. Exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to exam later.
 - f. The exam will contain questions requiring the proctor contact information, an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if internet service goes out during exam), the proctor should contact the course TA. While the TAs may not be immediately available, the date and time of the email will document when the issue was reported. Please have your TA's contact information available for your proctor before opening the exam. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computers.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Applied Apologetics
 Professor: James N. Anderson
 Campus: Charlotte
 Date: 6/1/20

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical review/application paper 2. Final exam tests knowledge and articulation of course topics 3. Class discussion questions testing understanding and application
Scripture	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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviews biblical basis for presuppositional methodology 2. Reviews biblical basis for tenets of Christian worldview 3. Reviews biblical arguments against cults (Mormonism, etc.)
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevance of Reformed distinctives to Christian worldview and apologetic methodology
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasizes our dependence on God in all aspects of life 2. Ultimate purpose of apologetics to glorify God
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worldview-centered approach to apologetics in both theory and practice 2. Exposition and defense of Christian worldview, and critical comparison with various non-Christian worldviews 3. Discussion of cultural apologetics
Winsomely Reformed	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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciation for material from non-Reformed apologists 2. Emphasis on humility in apologetics 3. Person-relative approach
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Importance of apologetics for evangelism and discipleship 2. Practical application of apologetics to edify and protect Christian believers