

Time & Place: Mondays, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM; Jan 25–May 5

Spring, 2021

Meeting Place: Patterson's Porch

Note: the professor reserves the right to modify this syllabus as needed at any time.

Contact Information

Professor

Bruce Baugus (BPB)

Email: bbaugus@rts.edu

Phone: 601-923-1696 (office) or 601-519-9091 (personal cell)

Office: Dean Center Faculty Suite

Hours: M 11:00–1:00, and T–Th by appointment.

Teaching Assistant

Sebastian Bjernegård

Email: sbjernegard@students.rts.edu

Office: Dean Center TA Suite

Catalog Course Description

Students examine the various approaches to apologetic methodology and engage the most frequently raised objections to the Christian faith.

Explanation

The purpose of this class is to help students (1) understand the role apologetics plays in the life and work of the ministry, (2) develop an effective apologetic method grounded in Scripture and consistent with the Reformed standards; and (3) identify and engage various common challenges, objections to, and attacks upon Christian faith on the contemporary scene.

Textbooks

Textbooks

John Fesko, *Reforming Apologetics: Retrieving the Classic Reformed Approach to Defending the Faith* (Baker, 2019) ISBN: 9780801098901

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Riverhead Trade, 2009)
ISBN: 9781594483493

Brian Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (IVP, 2015)
ISBN: 9780830840670

Primary Readings

William Edgar and Scott Oliphant, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 2 vols. (Crossway, 2009)
ISBN: 9781581349061

On Topics

Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (OUP, 2011)
ISBN: 9780199812097

Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam* (IVP, 2008)
ISBN: 9780830834853

Recommended

C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion* (IVP, 2002)
ISBN: 9780830814657

Attendance & Participation Policy

Your primary assignment is to be present, prepared, and ready to participate fully in class each week. This requires showing up on time and remaining for the duration of class, ready to contribute meaningfully by having read all assigned materials beforehand.

Any student who misses class or is grievously or repeatedly tardy (without prior permission or a compelling emergency) may find their course grade reduced on the following schedule:

1. By one full letter grade (e.g. A to B) for each unexcused absence
2. By one increment (e.g. A to A-) for each unexcused tardy or absence from class of more than 20 minutes
3. By one increment (e.g. A to A-) for every unexcused tardy of less than 20 minutes, for repeat offenders

Students found studying for other classes or using electronic devices for any reason not directly related to the current topic of discussion will be counted as being tardy or absent from class for more than 20 minutes.

Permission to be absent from class will ordinarily be granted only for medical reasons or family crises. Elective choices such as attending a conference, work (including RTS and church internship duties), enrolling in another course in conflict with this one, and so on, are unacceptable excuses. (The professor will try to accommodate special events on campus and presbytery meetings, as needed.)

Note: this “law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient” (1 Tim 1:9).

Technology Use Policy

Since students who type notes during lectures consistently perform worse on exams and other assessments of lecture and discussion comprehension, laptops and tablets are prohibited in class except by special permission from the professor.¹ (Permission is ordinarily restricted to matters of learning disabilities or those who handwrite their notes directly into a tablet application). Phones must be on silent and kept out of sight (and mind). If you must receive or place a call, even during a class break, please leave the classroom to do so.

Assessments

Written Exams include a midterm and cumulative final that will cover class lectures and discussions and assigned readings. These will be timed-limited open note and open book essay exams administered through Canvas and taken at your convenience within specified windows of opportunity. While you may use notes and books, you must NOT work together with classmates while taking the exams or discuss the exams with classmates till the professor has notified you that ALL exams have been submitted (or grades have been posted). See schedule for dates.

Note well: I often use student questions to introduce and expand on important concepts and their applications. Class discussions ordinarily cover testable material.

The Oral Exam is an approximately fifty-minute conversation with the professor at a scheduled time in which you (with a two or three classmates) will be required to answer questions, respond to objections, and generally synthesize and apply course content in an appropriate, ministerial spirit as I sometimes play the role of “professor” and sometimes “devil’s advocate.” Oral exams need to be completed within the allotted window of opportunities. A sign-up sheet will be posted outside my office toward the end of the semester.

Note: Due to Covid measures this assignment may be facilitated via Zoom

A Reading Report in which you write up a concise, single paragraph summary of the argument in each assigned chapter (excluding front matter and introductions) of the required readings for this course (see schedule for assigned chapters) is due by 5:00 PM on the final day of class. Submit as a single document organized by the title of each book.

Assignment Submission Policy

Submit written assignments as individual pdf files on Canvas. If you have any difficulties submitting your assignments, please contact my teaching assistant using the contact information at the top of this syllabus.

Course Grade

Written Exams	25% each; 50% total (demonstrating familiarity with issues and mastery of concepts)
Reading Report	10% (demonstrating comprehension of assigned readings)
Oral Exam	40% (demonstrating effective application of class content in ministry context)
Total	100%

¹ See, for example, Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, “The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Not Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25.6 (June 2014): 1159-1168. See also the excellent guide produced by Harvard University’s Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching (HILT): Machael C. Friedman, “Notes and Note-Taking: Review of Research and Insights for Students and Instructors,” available online at http://hilt.harvard.edu/files/hilt/files/notetaking_0.pdf and appended to this syllabus.


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Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes

<u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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.	Strong	See course title
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.)	Moderate	A biblical concept and method of Apologetics and apologetic defense the Scripture are central concerns of the course
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed theology is assumed and drawn upon as a source in course
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Love of God and neighbor, however, is the only proper spirit for apologetics
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Aim of our ministry of 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.)	Strong	A constant theme of the course
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	Ideally this course will help student know "what they are up against" and how to adequately address it in the work of the ministry
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Course is rich in implications for worship which will be explored at times
Shepherd	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	Apologetics is vital to this aspect of the ministry
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Engaging the world (and less so other Christian traditions) is central to the course