

Apologetics & Philosophical Theology

REL 375 / Topics in Theology / 4 Credits / Northwestern College / Fall 2008

Instructor: Dr. Michael Andres, andres@nwcsiowa.edu

Office/Hours: VPH115; Mon, Tue, Fri 3:30-5:00pm; Wed 9:00-12:00; ext. 7079

Class Time: Tu-Th 9:25-10:55 am **Class Location:** VPH117

Course Description:

This course is a theological, biblical, and historical study of apologetics, the defense of the faith, from a classical as well as a contemporary perspective. As we consider contemporary apologetics issues, we will explore the relationship between theology and philosophy, especially in epistemology.

Course Objectives:

1. To think
2. To think some more
3. To think about what some others think about what we think, esp. those who question our thinking
4. To actually listen attentively to those people and think about why they might think that way
5. To think about how to articulate a persuasive response to those people, in a way that is responsible to truthfulness and respects them as persons
6. To actually say something truthful and persuasive to some of those people who question our thinking
7. To love God and neighbor by doing all of the above

Primary Texts:

• Ehrman, Bart, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (HarperOne, 2005).

• Harris, Sam, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (Vintage, 2006)

• Keller, Timothy, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton, 2008).

• Komoszewski, Ed, Sawyer, James, and Wallace, Daniel, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Misperceive Popular Culture* (Kregel, 2006).

• Schaeffer, Francis, *The God Who Is There* (InterVarsity, 1998).

Course Requirements:

- *Class attendance/participation:* Participation highly encouraged. Attendance is mandatory;

material covered in class often is not found in readings. After *three* unexcused absences, students will be graded down one-half letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence.

- *Readings*: Reading of required texts should be completed *before* class time listed. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of forthcoming reading assignments and films given in syllabus.
- *Quizzes*: Seven quizzes will cover material from required reading. Quizzes can only be rescheduled with advanced approval by professor.
- *Written Analyses*: Two written book analyses.
- *Significant Apologist Group Presentations*
- *Final Apologetic Engagement Project*

Course Assessment:

- Quizzes (28%) = 10 points each / 70 points total
- Group Presentation (12%) = 30 points
- Written Analyses (40%) = 50 points each / 100 points total
- Apologetic Engagement Project (20%) = 50 points

Guidelines for Group Presentations

Students will be assigned a small group and a significant apologist (see list of apologists in 'content' section of synapse). Research the apologist, his culture and context, and read his main apologetic arguments. Determine the theology and method of the apologist. As a group, evaluate their arguments with care and truthfulness.

- Are they pertinent?
- Are they fair?
- Are they true?
- Do they persuade?
- Are they sensitive and wise?

Then prepare a short 15 minute class presentation (with one-page handout):

• Give brief outline of apologist and context (5 min max.).

• Show how his context influenced his arguments.

• Report on your group discussion and evaluation of the apologist.

Guidelines for Written Analyses

New Atheists Analysis #1

Read Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Then read Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, Intro-Intermission. Consider their contexts. Summarize their main arguments and/or rebuttals. Evaluate their arguments with care and truthfulness.

- Are they pertinent?
- Are they fair?
- Are they true?
- Do they persuade?
- Are they sensitive and wise?

Then answer, in as much as Keller has directly addressed some of Harris' criticisms, has he done so adequately? Give reasons for your answer.

(2000 words max. / 100 points / Due Oct 28)

Textual Reliability Book Analysis #2

Read Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, Ch 5-7. Then read Komoszewski / Sawyer / Wallace [KSW], *Reinventing Jesus*, Part 2. Consider their contexts. Summarize their main arguments and/or rebuttals. Evaluate their arguments with care and truthfulness.

- Are they pertinent?
- Are they fair?
- Are they true?
- Do they persuade?
- Are they sensitive and wise?

Then answer, in as much as KSW have directly addressed some of Ehrman's criticisms, have they done so adequately? Give reasons for your answer.

(2000 words max. / 100 points / Due Nov 20)

Make sure to follow the [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#).

These analyses should be original to you; do not be tempted to plagiarize! Do not consult other students for analysis and evaluation. Be very discerning when using the internet as a resource; ideas found on the net are not necessarily correct or relevant to a theological analysis. If consulted, the internet should be used *minimally* as a source and any ideas (not only phrases) borrowed should be carefully footnoted!

Students will be evaluated according to the depth of comprehension, fairness, analysis, and evaluation demonstrated in their analyses. Be sure to give clear evidence for your analysis and evaluation. For further elaboration of grading criteria, see [Grading Guidelines](#).

Apologetic Engagement Project:

Students are required to actively engage in apologetics with real people beyond the walls of NWC. Possibilities include leading an Alpha Course, a letter to the editor of a major magazine or publication, a youth event with an apologetic topic, a meeting with Mormon elders, etc. Students may think creatively, but must seek professor approval first.

After your work or event is completed, write a paper that (1) gives a report of your engagement,

context, and response, (2) explains your method and reasons why you utilized the arguments you did, and then (3) evaluates the arguments you used with care and truthfulness.

- Were they pertinent?
- Were they fair?
- Were they true?
- Did they persuade?
- Were they sensitive and wise?

(2000 words max. / 100 points / Due Dec 15)

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community committed to integrity and honesty in all intellectual and academic matters. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow the highest standards of honesty and ethical behavior. In addition, as members of the campus community all students, faculty, and staff have a responsibility to help other members of the community to demonstrate integrity in their actions. Behavior that violates academic integrity can take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, cheating on tests, quizzes, papers, and projects; plagiarism using unauthorized material; willful misrepresentation of evidence and arguments. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas, with the intent of deceiving the reader concerning the origin of the words, ideas, or images. (Excerpt from *NWC Student Handbook*, 11)

Course Assistance:

I have an open door policy. Please come by my office, preferably at office hours, if you have any questions or are having any problems with the reading, lectures, note taking, written project, etc. Or come by for a cup of tea and chat about life. For further assistance in academic matters help is available through Tom Truesdell at Academic Support (VPH 125B). Academic Support is there to help you so if you are having difficulties do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

Course Links:

[Faith Has Its Reasons \(Boa and Bowman\)](#)

[Stand to Reason \(Greg Koukl\)](#)

[Primetime Jesus](#)

[Think Christianly](#)

[Be Thinking - UCCF](#)

[Bible.org](#)

[L'Abri](#)

[Veritas Forum](#)

[The Trinity Forum](#)

[Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics](#)

[Third Millennium Ministries Apologetics Page](#)

[Alpha Course](#)

[Christianity Explored](#)

[Apologetics - C. S. Lewis Society](#)

[An Alvin Plantinga Page](#)

[Academy of Christian Apologetics](#)

[Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics \(Presuppositional\)](#)

[John Frame Apologetics Articles](#)
[Reasonable Faith - William Lane Craig](#)
[Leadership U Apologetics Page](#)
[Ravi Zacharias International Ministries](#)
[Apologetics Bibliography - Doug Groothuis](#)
[The Secular Web \(Defends secularism, critiques Christianity.\)](#)

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading
Aug 26	The Greatest Challenge...	Boa/Bowman, Ch 2
Aug 28	The God of the Apologist, the Mission of the Apologist, and the Character of the Apologist	Jay Wood, "The Nature of Epistemology" ('content' section of Synapse)
Sept 2	Faith and Reason: Friends or Foes?	Natural Theology ; Quiz #1
Sept 4	Determining Rationality in Religious Belief	Religious Epistemology
Sept 9	Religious Truth or Relativism?	Roger Nicole, "The Biblical Concept of Truth" ('content' section); Doug Groothuis, 'The Truth About Truth' ('content' section); Philip Kenneson, "There's No Such Thing as Objective Truth, and It's a Good Thing" ('content' section); Paul Helm, "Don't Let the PM's Spoil Your Christmas" (handout)
Sept 11	Apologetic Methods <i>Evidence for Christianity</i>	Boa/Bowman, Ch 4 ; Quiz #2
Sept 16	New Testament Apologetics	Boa/Bowman, Ch 3
Sept 18	Making Sense of it All: Francis Schaeffer	Schaeffer, Sect 1-2; Quiz #3
Sept 19	<i>Trip to L'Abri – Marvin Padgett on Worldview</i>	
Sept 23	Making Sense of it All: Francis Schaeffer	Schaeffer, Sect 3-4
Sept 25	Culture, Context and Apologetics Through the Ages: Augustine and Aquinas	Group Presentations
Sept 30	Culture, Context and Apologetics Through the Ages: Pascal, Edwards, and Lewis	Group Presentations
Oct 2	Culture, Context and Apologetics	Group Presentations

	Through the Ages: Plantinga and Lane Craig	
Oct 7	Reasons for Christian Belief: Design, Beauty, and Moral Obligation	Keller, Ch 8-9; <u>Quiz #4</u>
Oct 9	Reasons for Christian Belief: Correct Diagnosis of What's Wrong and God's Gracious Rescue	Keller, Ch 10-11
Oct 14	The Divinity of Jesus Christ: Early Tradition or Late Superstition?	Komoszewski/Sawyer/Wallace, Part 4; Watch <i>Da Vinci Code</i> ; <u>Quiz #5</u>
Oct 16	The Death of Jesus Christ: Costly Forgiveness and Real Love	Keller, Ch 12
	Midterm Break Oct 20-21	
Oct 23	The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: N.T. Wright Film <i>Defense of Christianity</i>	Keller, Ch 13
Oct 28	Questioning Christian Belief: The New Atheism	<u>New Atheists Analysis #1 Due</u>
Oct 30	Questioning Christian Belief: <i>Religulous</i>	Watch <u>Religulous</u>
Nov 4	Religious Pluralism: Only One Way?	Keller, Ch 1; <u>Quiz #6</u>
Nov 6	Religious Pluralism: Only One Way?	
Nov 11	Problem of Evil and Suffering	Keller, Ch 2; <u>Quiz #7</u>
Nov 13	The Postmodern Critique: God as Projection and Opiate	Plantinga, <i>Warranted Christian Belief</i> , Ch 5
Nov 18	The Postmodern Critique: Oppression, Hypocrisy, and Certainty	Keller, Ch 3
Nov 20	Are the NT Texts Reliable? – John Brogan	Ehrman, 5-7; Komoszewski/Sawyer/Wallace, Part 2; <u>Textual Reliability Book Analysis #2 Due</u>
Nov 25	Are the NT Texts Reliable? Thanksgiving Holiday Nov 26-30	Komoszewski/Sawyer/Wallace, Part 3
Dec 2	Is Scripture the Word of God? <i>Critique of Alternatives</i>	
Dec 4	Cultural Critique: Consumerism	Michael Andres, "Will Evangelicals Teach Them Economic Obedience or

Dec 9	Health and Wealth Gospel	Consumer Theology?"
Dec 11	Canaanite Conquest	
Mon, Dec 15	<u>Final Project Analysis Due</u>	