

Syllabus: AP601



AP601: Introduction to Apologetics with Dr. Richard Lints

Table of Contents

[Snapshot of Course Requirements](#)
[Required Reading](#)
[Papers](#)
[Submitting Assignments](#)
[Interactivity](#)
[Course Outline](#)

Snapshot of Course Requirements

AP601 requires timely completion of the following **four** course requirements:

1. Required Reading
2. Papers (each paper is worth 50% of your final grade)
3. Interactivity (required for course grade to be submitted to registration office)
4. [Course Checkout/Reading Report](#) (after you have finished all course requirements above, see Interactivity Module)

Reading Requirement

Please stay current with your reading. At times this may be difficult because of the pressure from the other responsibilities in your life. But in order for you to get the most out of this class, it is vital that you do the reading as assigned so that you can then integrate what you learn from the reading with the lectures, with the discussions, and then with your subsequent practice of the material. The Course Outline (at the end of this syllabus) provides a list of the reading background for each lecture. You will be asked the number of books on the required reading list that you completed. Record this on the "Snapshot of Course" page found at the beginning of the Course Requirements section. (This "Snapshot" page is to be turned in to the Semlink office by the course due date.) Required reading will nudge your final grade up or down if your grade is borderline.

Now, allow me to introduce the textbooks. **First you will be reading Colin Brown's *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*** (ISBN-13: 978-0877847120). This is an excellent and relatively brief overview of the interaction between Christian thinkers and the reigning philosophical ideas of each age. It places the history of apologetics in a philosophical and theological framework. If you have had some philosophy before, this text will read straightforwardly. If this is your first foray into matters philosophical, this will be a little tough going—but don't lose heart. Stay with it, and in the end, you will see the benefits of the struggle.

Our second text for the course is one of your own choosing. It is to be a classic book from the history of Christian apologetics. Pick a significant Christian thinker from an earlier era of the church and then locate one of his works which serves as a defense of some aspect of the Christian faith. Examples include: Augustine, *The City of God*; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Against the Gentiles); Anselm, *Proslogion*; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1; Blaise Pascal, *The Pensees*; William Paley, *Lectures on Natural Theology*; Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*; and B. B. Warfield, "Faith in its Psychological Aspect." There are many others you can choose from beyond this list.

The third text is David Wells' *No Place for Truth* (ISBN-13: 978-0802807472), which serves as a very fine introduction to the nature of the challenge facing evangelical apologetics in the modern period. Wells places the issue of apologetics against the broader background of the analysis of modern culture and rightly urges evangelicals to be more conscious of their own apologetic interaction with that culture.

The fourth text is Kelly Clark's *Return to Reason* (ISBN-13: 978-0802804563). In this work, Clark introduces the work of a group of contemporary Christian thinkers led by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Clark examines many of the "great themes" of apologetics using several of the insights from these Christian thinkers and helpfully pushes the apologetic agenda forward.

The final text is D. A. Carson's work, *The Gagging of God* (ISBN-13: 978-0310242864). This is a fine work chronicling the rise of the pluralist challenge to belief in Christ. This may well be the most difficult of the modern challenges to the Christian faith, and Carson does a superb job in relating the contemporary issues to the framework of Biblical theology.

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Papers

The second major requirement for the course is the writing of two papers.

The first paper is an apologetic reflection on one of the major sermons in the book of Acts. This paper should include some background of the sermon's context, an indication of its audience, and the expectations of the sermon. You should also try to reflect upon the unique apologetic challenges of the context and examine how they were met in the particular sermon. This final part is really a matter of your own personal reflections on the text of Scripture and your examination of it in light of the challenge of unbelief.

The second paper is to address a major challenge to the Christian faith from modern culture. This might be the problem of evil, the problem of pluralism, or any other one in which you have a particular interest. The first half of the paper ought to describe the challenge as clearly as possible, citing where necessary proponents of the challenge. In the second half of the paper you ought to formulate a response to the challenge from a Christian perspective.

Both papers are to be roughly 10 pages in length (approximately 2500 words), double spaced with appropriate footnotes. Each paper will constitute 50% of the final grade for the course.

[\[TOP\]](#)

Submitting Assignments

Assignments can be submitted electronically through the Drop Box tool in Sakai. On the left menu, under "Project Tools," select "Drop Box." To add a file, click "Add" and upload from there.

Some guidelines for this process:

- Paper submissions should be in either .doc, .docx or .pdf format.
- Submitting your work through drop box is considered a formal (and final) submission. Nothing further will be needed on your part.
- All submissions are time/date stamped and will be retrieved by the Semlink office and routed to your professor for grading.
- Assignments may be returned to you electronically, in most cases through your Sakai drop box or via email. If your assignment was graded by hand, it will be scanned and delivered to you as a PDF file.
- Remember to use a full heading, including your name, professor, course, and date.

Please let the Semlink office know if you have any further questions about electronic submission. semlink@gordonconwell.edu or 978-646-4144.

[\[TOP\]](#)

Interactivity

As a member of the Association of Theological Schools, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary recognizes the value of interactivity in distance learning and complies with the standards for accreditation set by ATS which include interactivity as a compulsory component of any distance learning program that wishes to continue granting credit for its courses. The purpose of Semlink interactivity is to enhance learning by providing an online environment for students to engage meaningfully and substantively with professors, teaching fellows, and other students in order to achieve an enriching and academically challenging distance learning experience.

There are two interactivity requirements for this course:

1. **An online discussion forum:** converse with other students and with instructors on the Semlink forum. You are required to participate four (4) times in the discussions relating to your area of study. To ensure successful completion of this requirement, please complete your participation in the discussion forums at least one week prior to your course due date. This will allow sufficient time for you to resubmit any responses if necessary.
2. **Email-based conversation** with your Semlink teaching fellow. You are required to email a total of three (3) times, including your original response to the conversation starter. Please allow a minimum of one month to complete this conversation to allow time for the teaching fellow to respond. Allow five business days for a response to each of your submissions.

To begin your interactivity (and for more details about this requirement), see the Interactivity section under Modules. This section will explain in more detail what is expected for this requirement.

If you fail to complete the interactivity requirements, you will fail your course.

[\[TOP\]](#)

Course Outline

Section	Topic	Required Reading	Lecture Number
1	Introduction to Christian Apologetics	Begin reading Colin Brown, <i>Philosophy and the Christian Faith</i>	1
2	New Testament Material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One: Romans 1 and I Corinthians 1, Matthew and John • Part Two: Acts 	Finish reading Colin Brown, <i>Philosophy and the Christian Faith</i>	2-3
3	The Medieval Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One: Patristics and Augustine • Part Two: Anselm • Part Three: Aquinas 	Read a classic book from the history of Christian apologetics. (Please see above for a further description of this assignment.)	4-6
4	Reformation and Enlightenment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One: Context of the Reformation; Luther • Part Two: Calvin • Part Three: The Enlightenment and Nineteenth-Century Thought 	Finish classic book; Read David Wells, <i>No Place for Truth</i>	7-9
5	Modern Apologetic Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One: Evidentialism and Presuppositionalism • Part Two: Theistic Foundationalism and Plantinga • Part Three: Schaeffer; Summary of Models for Modern Apologetics • Part Four: Fundamental beliefs; Four Cultural Revolutions 	Read Kelly Clark, <i>Return to Reason</i>	10-13
6	Modern Apologetic Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part One: The Problem of Pluralism • Part Two: A Response to Pluralism • Part Three: The Problem of Plausibility • Part Four: The Historicity of the Resurrection • Part Five: The Problem of Evil 	Read D. A. Carson, <i>The Gagging of God</i>	14-18

[TOP]