



PRAIRIE COLLEGE

ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE SYLLABUS FOR TH 354 APOLOGETICS Edition 2, Published 2019 3 credit hours

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But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed for their slander (1 Peter 3:15, 16).

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to introduce students to the field of Christian apologetics. Attention will be given to the rationale for apologetics and its place in contemporary society. Students will be introduced to different methodologies, philosophical and theological correlation and historical development of the defense of the faith, we call apologetics. In addition, attention will be given to the limitation of apologetics as well as the impact postmodernism has had on this branch of theology.

II. COURSE RATIONALE:

Apologetics has been an important branch of theology ever since the spread of Christianity after Pentecost. The early Church has always been confronted by skeptics and different belief systems and has defended the faith on many fronts. Not unlike the early Church, contemporary Christianity is confronted by New Atheists, agnostics and different beliefs and must articulate the reasonableness and defend the faith against the many objections she will inevitably encounter. This course will equip the student with the tools needed to successfully stand firm in light of opposition and express the reasonableness of the Christian faith to those who ask.

III. COURSE OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course the student should:

1. Be able to recognize the importance of apologetics in the Christian faith
2. Be able to identify the weaknesses of apologetics
3. Be familiar with the important systems of apologetics
4. Be familiar with the historical trajectory of apologetics

5. Value the importance of thinking about the faith critically and rationally as a means to strengthen one's own faith, improve the health of the church, and empower evangelistic witness.
6. Serve the church by equipping the saints for the pursuit and defense of truth.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Beilby, James K. *Thinking About Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It*. Downers Grove ILL: IVP Academic, 2011.

Gundry, Stanley N., ed. *Five Views on Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.

Nyman, Bill. *Writing and Research Handbook*. Second edition. Three Hills, AB: 2013.

Penner, Myron Bradley. *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Performance Evaluation:

Course Outcome	Assignment	Weight
1, 2	Short Essays	40%
1, 2, 3	Forums	10%
1, 2, 5	Critical Review	20%
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Objection Research Paper	30%

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

For all papers you may want to consult the Research Handbook attached to your course. All papers are to be formatted according to the Chicago-Turabian guidelines. Every assignment requires a title page using Times New Roman and size 12 font.

1. Essays – 40%

a. Unit 1 Essay: “Importance of Apologetics to the Church” – 5%

Write a 500 word essay articulating your experience with apologetics and your view regarding the importance to our Church (include scripture and mention the passage that speaks to you the most regarding this topic.

b. Unit 2 Essay: “Theory of Truth” – 5%

Write a 1000 word essay on your view regarding ‘truth’. What theory of truth is, in your opinion most biblical. Is there such a thing as objective truth and certainty or must we adopt some form of relativity in our postmodern context. You are encouraged to use sources other than your textbooks. These might include: books, articles (T.S. Rendall databases), encyclopaedias, dictionaries and solid websites. A good paper makes use of

all the sources available. Any questions regarding the sources, email the instructor (bill.nyman@prairie.edu). Cite the sources Chicago-Turabian style (see Research Handbook).

c. Unit 3 Essay: “Pinnock’s View on Apologetics” – 5%

In a 750 word essay give a personal assessment of Pinnock’s view on apologetics and culture. Do you agree or disagree?

d. Unit 4 Essay: “Presuppositional Method” – 5%

Write a 1200 word essay in which you personally assess the Presuppositional Method. Give pros and cons and the reasons why you like/dislike this particular method.

e. Unit 4 Essay: “Reformed Epistemology” – 5%

Write a 1200 word essay in which you personally assess the Reformed Epistemology method. Give pros and cons and the reasons why you like/dislike this particular method.

f. Unit 4 Essay: “Classical Apologetics” – 5%

Write a 1200 word essay in which you personally assess the Classical Apologetic method. Give pros and cons and the reasons why you like/dislike this particular method.

g. Unit 4 Essay: “Evidential Apologetics” – 5%

Write a 1200 word essay in which you personally assess the Evidential Apologetic method. Give pros and cons and the reasons why you like/dislike this particular method.

h. Unit 4 Essay: “Cumulative Case Method” – 5%

Write a 1200 word essay in which you personally assess the Cumulative Case method. Give pros and cons and the reasons why you like/dislike this particular method.

2. **Forums** – 10%

A “good” forum post is an intelligent response to the question posted and interaction with the comments of the instructor or other student(s). The length of the forum is irrelevant. Content is more important than length.

a. Forum 1 – 5%

Read from C.S. Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters*, Letter One. What are the reason(s) behind Screwtape’s admonition to Wormwood and do you agree with the idea behind this admonition? This forum is at the end of Unit 3.

b. Forum 2 – 5%

What do you think of Robin Parry’s post, “The Dangers of Apologetics”, regarding his approach to apologetics, especially in light of Penner’s book? This forum is at the end of Unit 5.

3. **Critical Review** – 20%

Write a Critical Review of Myron B. Penner's *End of Apologetics*. Your critique should be 3-4 pages in length. This assignment is due at the end of Unit 5.

4. **Objection Research Paper** – 30%

The objection research paper should be 2700-3000 words length, and aim to explain in detail one difficult objection or challenge to Christianity and then defend against this objection. Please do not choose a “soft ball” objection that is easily answered. Consider using an objection that genuinely causes people to struggle with their faith (e.g., the various problems of evil, challenges from contemporary science, objections to the resurrection, textual issues, etc.). I want this to be a valuable exercise for you in your own faith, as well as in ministering to others.

You should spend about 30%-50% of your paper developing the objection before you start defending against it. Your paper should obviously demonstrate that you have thoroughly researched a variety of academic resources, both in the development of the objection and the position you defend. You must use at least seven academic sources, all of which should be peer reviewed and published. If you want to use a website as a resource, it must be approved by the professor (please do not use someone's blog as a resource for this paper).

This assignment is due at the end of Unit 5.

VI. ACADEMIC POLICIES

Plagiarism:

“Plagiarism [is] [t]he presentation or submission of the work of someone else as the student's own, including but not limited to work in print and electronic media. ‘Substantial plagiarism’ is the use of an author's phrases, sentences, thoughts, or arguments without adequate citation or credit. ‘Complete plagiarism’ is the copying and presentation of an entire work as the student's own. ‘Inadvertent plagiarism’ is plagiarism which, to the best of the instructor's belief, results from the student's carelessness or ignorance.”

There are light to very serious penalties for this kind of offence and they are indicated in section 7.2 of the DE Academic Guide.

Grading and Response Time:

My timeline for grading and assignment feedback is 7-10 days. I will endeavour to respond to student communications within 2 days, except on weekends, holidays, and vacation time.

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Rating	Point Value
A+	90-100		4.0
A	85-89	Excellent	4.0
A-	80-84		3.7
B+	77-79		3.3
B	73-76	Good	3.0
B-	70-72		2.7
C+	67-69		2.3
C	63-66	Satisfactory	2.0
C-	60-62		1.7
D+	55-59		1.3
D	50-54	Poor	1.0
F	0-49	Failure	0.0
P	-----	Pass	
AU	-----	Audit	
I	-----	Incomplete	
W	-----	Withdrew	

Numerical course grades are not rounded.

Most students get B's. I try to keep A's and C's to a relatively small number. F's are extremely rare, but I have given a few.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Unit	Reading	Assignments
1. Introduction, Relevance and Limitations of Apologetics	Beilby pages 11-35 and 113-156	Essay "Importance of Apologetics to the Church"
2. Apologetics and Theology		Essay "Theory of Truth"
3. Historical Assessment of Apologetics	Beilby pages 37-86 Pinnock's article "Cultural Apologetics" C.S Lewis' <i>Screwtape Letters</i> , Letter 1	Essay "Pinnock's View on Apologetics" Forum on Screwtape Letters
4. Apologetic Methods	Beilby 87-111 Louis Markos' "The preapologetics of Francis Shaeffer"	5 essays: - "Presuppositional Method" - "Reformed Epistemology"

	Alvin Plantinga's "Theism, Atheism, and Rationality"	-"Classical Apologetics" -"Evidential Apologetics" -"Cumulative Case Method"
5. Postmodernity	"The Return to Myth: Apologetics for Postmoderns" by Louis Markos	Objection Research Paper <i>End of Apologetics</i> critique Forum on Parry and Penner