



**UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHWESTERN**  
ST. PAUL

OFFICE OF DUAL ENROLLMENT

# **PHI3057**

## **Christian Apologetics**

**SUMMER 2023**

**SYLLABUS**

Version: OLG v2:01/23

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# PHI3057 Christian Apologetics

University of Northwestern – St. Paul

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explains and argues for Christian beliefs about such topics as the existence of God, the reliability of Scripture, miracles, the problem of evil, science and the Bible, and other religions. Students will be introduced to different approaches to apologetics and investigate the relationship between apologetics and saving faith.

**Credits: 2**

**Prerequisites:** None

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Please see “Contacting the Instructor” on the course site.

## COURSE OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, a successful student will be able to

- CO-1. Defend the reliability of the biblical witness.
- CO-2. Explain the primary differences between the major approaches to apologetics that are found in the evangelical camp.
- CO-3. Articulate how evidence and the work of the Holy Spirit interact with one another in the generation of saving faith.
- CO-4. Analyze arguments for and against belief in God.

## MATERIALS

### Required Textbooks and Materials

Dickinson, T., Gould, P., Loftin, R. *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel*. Nashville: B&H Academic. 2018

Keller, T. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Penguin Random House. 2008

### Provided by Student

For this course, students will need access to Microsoft Office (available at no cost to students through the University of Northwestern-St. Paul), a PDF reader, and a standard internet browser. Please refer to the Tech Requirements found in the Technology Help section at the top of the course site for the full requirements.

## GRADING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Course Grade Explanation

Assignments	Grade Weight
Discussion Forums (11)	20%
Reflection Papers (3)	35%
The Problem of Evil Debate	5%

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Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale Percentages

A ≥ 93	B ≥ 83	C ≥ 73	D ≥ 63
A- ≥ 90	B- ≥ 80	C- ≥ 70	D- ≥ 60
B+ ≥ 87	C+ ≥ 77	D+ ≥ 67	F < 60

## Late Work

All assignments are due as described in the course syllabus and the course site. Students are responsible for meeting assignment deadlines. Late assignments will be automatically deducted one letter grade. The assignments will drop an additional grade per day it is late, up to a 50% deduction in grade; late assignments will not be accepted for a grade beyond one week past the original deadline. Forum discussion activities must be completed on time to earn points. Late forum posts will earn zero points. Students should contact the instructor via e-mail if an extenuating circumstance exists.

## Feedback Expectations

Students should expect feedback for their submitted assignments within 5 days of the assignment due date or the time of their submission, whichever is later.

## INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND SERVICES

### Guidelines and Information

Students are responsible for all content of the DE Student Handbook. The most recent version of the DE Student Handbook is located on [confluence.unwsp.edu](http://confluence.unwsp.edu) and includes the following policies and procedures:

- Deadlines for Dropping or Withdrawing
- Student/instructor Communication
- Appeals, Exceptions, Disciplinary Process, & Grievances
- Assignments (late work and plagiarism)
- Examinations
- Grading System

Instructors may have course-related expectations that further detail the policies and procedures outlined in the DE Student Handbook. Any such expectations must be provided to students in writing (e.g., handout, course site posting) prior to or at the beginning of the class.

Traditional undergraduate students enrolled in DE courses are subject to the traditional undergraduate student handbook for all non-course-specific policies and procedures.

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is theft—steal of someone else's words or ideas. It is claiming another's work as one's own. This would also include the following:

- Using the words or work of a former or current student in this class
- Recycling previously submitted assignments from a previous course attempt
- Using outside literature support sites such as, but not limited to, SparkNotes, Enotes or Schmoop that provide literary analysis of the texts we read throughout the semester

Students found plagiarizing are subject to discipline. The standard response ranges from loss of credit for the plagiarized assignment to earning an immediate “F” for the course to being placed on disciplinary probation. We should be committed to conducting ourselves with integrity in all things. Please refer to the DE Student Handbook for more detailed information about UNW’s honesty and integrity policies.

In every course, students are required to view the Understanding Plagiarism video and complete the Understanding Plagiarism Quiz prior to completing any of the course content. These items are part of the course orientation.

## Academic Achievement

UNW students requesting academic accommodations in association with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are directed to notify [Disability Services](#) to begin the application process. Academic Achievement also provides the following: [Writing Tutoring](#), [Subject Tutoring](#), advocating, transitional skill building, [Academic Coaching](#) (organization, time management, test taking, etc.).

Contact Academic Achievement for more information: [AcademicAchievement@unwsp.edu](mailto:AcademicAchievement@unwsp.edu) | 651-628-3316 | N4012 (Revised 07/22).

## COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

### Email and Announcements

Students are responsible to regularly check their Northwestern student email and the announcements in the course site in order to receive updates and information.

### Attendance

Students are expected to participate in all course activities. Students must contact the faculty member in advance or as soon as possible if unable to participate in all or part of the course activities for a given week because of a medical (which includes having to quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19 exposure or confirmed illness), family, or work-related emergency. Students should refer to their course syllabus and/or faculty member for specific requirements. Students who do not participate in course activities and fail to withdraw from the course will receive a failing “F” grade.

### Submission Standards

All written assignments should adhere to the following DE guidelines. Documents should be in the following format **unless directed differently by the syllabus or course instructor**:

- Submitted on the course site in Microsoft Word document format (.doc or .docx)
- Set in a traditional typeface 12-point font
- Double-spaced (unless the syllabus instructs otherwise)
- Set with one-inch margins
- Formatted in APA style for in-text citations and reference page (LIT1100 may ask for MLA documentation style)

- Labeled and submitted with the following information (APA papers require this information on a cover sheet, as detailed in A Pocket Style Manual): Student Name, Course Code and Title, Instructor Name, and Date.

## **Critical Response to Alternate Viewpoints**

When students are reading or viewing course materials, they may encounter viewpoints, words, or images that their instructors would not use or endorse. Students should know that materials are chosen for their value in learning to read, write, and view critically, not because the materials are necessarily Christian.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

See the course site for complete details on the assignments.

### **Required Reading**

Every week in the course has required reading, except those weeks with an exam. These readings are from the required textbooks as well as (if applicable) professor notes. The readings are intended to give you expert guidance on the subjects dealt with during the week's topic and the professor notes provide a more detailed outline of various other issues and insights that pertain to the topic that may not be covered in the reading. It is important to study the professor notes, especially since some exam questions are derived from these notes. The exams are focused on assessing the accuracy of your understanding of both the readings and the professor notes.

### **Reading Guides**

Reading guides are provided each week to help you analyze and reflect upon the big ideas of the assigned reading. While the reading guides are marked as "optional," it is highly recommended that you complete these since they are the best method of preparation for the midterm and final exams. You may use your completed reading guides during the midterm and final exams, however they should be your own work and not shared documents from others.

### **Discussion Forums**

The eleven discussion forums in the course present an opportunity for you to critically engage with others about the course materials. The purpose of these is to synthesize learning from the week, communicate what you are learning, both challenge and be challenged by fellow students, and to apply the content of the course. Weeks 1-5, 7-8, 10-13 have discussion questions intended for student-to-student interaction. To begin the discussion, respond to questions posted by your professor. Your initial response post is due by Wednesday and is worth 10 points. You are not able to view the answers of your classmates until you have posted your answers. Then, reply to at least two postings from classmates for 5 points each. This interaction should be at least a short paragraph and should include both points of agreement and disagreement. You are encouraged to respectfully challenge the positions of the initial post. See the rubric in the course site for response expectations and grading criteria.

### **Reflection Paper 1: The Role of Reason and Doubt**

In order to reflect on the first three weeks of content and apply what you have learned in Unit 1: Reason and Faith, write a reflection paper on the role reason and doubt have played in your faith. Based on the readings and professor's notes, explore what role reason has had in your journey as a Christian. Address such questions as:

- When has reasoning through your faith hurt your faith?
- When has reasoning through your faith helped your faith?

- Should we use reason in our faith if only God and our experiences with him are the transformative mode of change?
- Do you think you have been effected by postmodern thinking in how you process your faith?

This paper should be between 750-1000 words. Keep the paper personal, but incorporate the concepts you have learned from the first three weeks of the course. Cite at least two sources that we have looked at in these three weeks.

## **Reflection Paper 2: God, Evil, and Science**

In order to reflect on the content in Unit 2: God or No God and apply what you have learned, write a reflection paper on the role reason and doubt have played in your faith. In this paper you should address the following questions:

- What arguments for God do you find most compelling?
- What arguments against God's existence have you found to be most compelling?
- What evils in our world have caused doubt and frustration the most in your faith journey?
- What has helped you most in your wrestling with evil and suffering?
- Do you think science, scientific discoveries, or the scientific mindset has been a challenge or a help to your personal faith?

This paper should be between 750-1000 words. In reflecting on these questions, interact with the texts from Keller, Zacharias, and the professor's notes into your paper. You should cite at least two sources that we have looked at in during Unit 2.

## **Reflection Paper 3: Ex-Christian Testimonial Response Letter**

In order to apply your understanding of apologetics, your final paper will be a letter, responding to someone who has departed from the Christian faith. You will do this using the website [EXchristian.net](http://EXchristian.net) and looking at the "testimonials". Do not just respond to the first testimonials that show up (ten or so). Instead, scroll far to the bottom and click on previous years in the "Post Archives" on the right-hand side. Click on any previous year and month. There are thousands of testimonials to choose from. Read through a number of these until you find two that you would like to respond to where the arguments for departing the faith are different. You cannot respond to two testimonials that report departing from the faith for the same reason.

The paper should consist of two letters, one for each testimonial, that are 500-750 words each. In your letter, you must express a working knowledge of concepts explicitly covered in this course, giving two citations from course materials for each letter.

Optional: post your letter on the website and see if you get a response. If you do this, you can eliminate the citations in your online post. Also, be sure to be compassionate and loving if you choose to post online.

## **The Problem of Evil Debate**

Perhaps one of the most difficult apologetic issues to wrestle with is the Problem of Evil. It is one reason many people have a difficult time believing in, and continuing in their belief in God. Therefore, for week 6 and into week 7, the discussion forum will be replaced with a student-to-student debate where you will personally interact with another student (assigned by your instructor) in an extended discussion on the problem of evil. Two scenarios are presented that challenge the goodness of God in light of the problem of evil. The dialogue should take place in the following manner:

### **Debate 1**

1. The student with the last name that is first alphabetically (student A) will give a Christian defense of Scenario 1. This should be a thorough response that engages with the materials in Week 6. This response should be at least 400 words long and is **due on Wednesday of Week 6**.
2. The other student(s) will act as the voice of the skeptic and critique and question student A's defense of Scenario 1. The response(s) is **due on Friday of Week 6**.
3. Student A follows up with a rebuttal (**due on Friday of Week 7**).

## Debate 2

1. The student with the last name that is last alphabetically (student Z) will give a Christian defense of Scenario 2. This should be a thorough response that reflects engagement with the materials of Week 6. This response should be at least 400 words long and is **due on Wednesday of Week 6**.
2. The other student(s) will act as the voice of the skeptic and critique and question student Z's defense of Scenario 2. The response(s) is **due on Friday of Week 6**.
3. Student Z follows up with a rebuttal (**due on Friday of Week 7**).

## Midterm and Final Exams

The two exams for the course provide an opportunity for you to express the accuracy of your understanding of the materials read from the textbooks and professor notes. The exams consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. The midterm exam covers material covered in units one and two during weeks 1-8. The final exam is comprehensive and therefore covers material in all three units through the entire fifteen weeks.

You may use your reading guides, which conceptually correlate to the exam questions, and the textbooks for the exam. No other sources (friends, internet sources, professor notes, etc.) should be consulted or used during the exam. All reading guides consulted should be from your own work in engaging the materials and not shared documents from others.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Format

Everything needed to successfully complete this course in fifteen weeks is explained on the course site. Each assignment has been designed to work together during each week. When studying, be sure to follow the suggested format explained for each lesson.

For this course, students will receive access to each week's work as the semester progresses. There will be due dates during the week, but most weekly assignments will be due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday. Please refer to the schedule for the due dates of assignments.

Generally, for college-level work, students should expect to have an average of 5 hours of homework per week.

The last official class day in Week 15 varies from semester to semester. Please refer to the Semester Calendar found in the Academic Information section at the top of the course site for the actual last day of class. All course work must be completed and submitted by that day.

### Due Dates

All written assignments (outlined below) are to be submitted on the course site by 11:59 p.m. CT on Sundays at the end of each week in which they are assigned, unless otherwise noted.

For any questions regarding these assignments, contact the instructor.

## **Orientation**

- Read the Getting Started Page
- Participate in the Introductions Forum
- View and Complete Understanding Plagiarism Presentation and Quiz
- Complete Student Responsibilities Exercise

## **UNIT 1: REASON AND FAITH**

### **Week 1 — What is the role of apologetics in a life of faith?**

- Read Stand Firm, Ch. 1: An Introduction to Apologetics
- Read Week 1 Professor Notes

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to Week 1 Discussion Forum: Faith

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in Week 1 Discussion Forum: Faith

### **Week 2 — What is the role of doubt in a life of faith?**

- Read Stand Firm, Ch. 2: Truth, Knowledge, and Faith
- Read The Reason for God, Introduction
- Read Week 2 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 2 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to Week 2 Discussion Forum: Doubt

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in Week 2 Discussion Forum: Doubt

### **Week 3 — What is the role of reason in a life of faith?**

- Read DeWeese, Chapter 3
- Read Week 3 Professor Notes

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to Week 3 Discussion Forum: Reason

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in Week 3 Discussion Forum: Reason
- Submit Reflection Paper 1: The Role of Reason and Doubt



## **UNIT 2: GOD OR NO GOD?**

### **Week 4 — Can we argue for God's existence?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 8: The Clues of God
- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 9: The Knowledge of God
- Read Week 4-5 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 4 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to Week 4 Discussion Forum: Existence

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in Week 4 Discussion Forum: Existence

### **Week 5 — Where does morality come from?**

- Read Lewis, Mere Christianity: Part I
- View the CSLewisDoodle videos (Optional)
- Read Week 4-5 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 5 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to Week 5 Discussion Forum: Morality

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in Week 5 Discussion Forum: Morality

### **Week 6 — How can a good God allow for evil and suffering?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 2: How Could a Good God Allow Suffering?
- Read Stand Firm, Ch. 9: The Problem of Evil
- Read Week 6 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 6 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Participate in The Problem of Evil Debate

#### **Due Friday**

- Participate in The Problem of Evil Debate

### **Week 7 — How can a good God send people to hell?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 4: How can a loving God send people to hell?
- Complete Week 7 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 7 Discussion Forum: Hell

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 7 Discussion Forum: Hell
- Complete participation in The Problem of Evil Debate

### **Week 8 — Are religion and science compatible?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 6: Science Has Disproved Christianity
- Read God on the Brain, Chs. 2 and 3
- Read Week 8 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 8 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 8 Discussion Forum: Science

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 8 Discussion Forum: Science
- Submit Reflection Paper 2: God, Evil, and Science

### **Week 9 — Midterm Exam**

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete and submit the Midterm Exam

## **UNIT 3: CRITIQUES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

### **Week 10 — Is the Bible reliable?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 7: You Can't Take the Bible Literally
- Read Week 10 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 10 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 10 Discussion Forum: Defend or Proclaim

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 10 Discussion Forum: Defend or Proclaim

### **Week 11 — Why the resurrection?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 12: The (True) Story of the Cross
- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 13: The Reality of the Resurrection
- Read Week 11 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 11 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 11 Discussion Forum: Resurrection

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 11 Discussion Forum: Resurrection

### **Week 12 — Is it Christian to be exclusive?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 1: There can't be just One True religion
- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 3: Christianity is a Straitjacket
- Read Week 12 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 12 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 12 Discussion Forum: Exclusivity

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 12 Discussion Forum: Exclusivity

### **Week 13 — Why do Christians do such horrible things?**

- Read The Reason for God, Ch. 4: The Church is Responsible for So Much Injustice
- Read Week 13 Professor Notes
- Complete Week 13 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Wednesday**

- Post initially to the Week 13 Discussion Forum: Christians

#### **Due Friday**

- Complete participation in the Week 13 Discussion Forum: Christians

### **Week 14 — What do our lives say?**

- Read Stand Firm, Ch 8: Is Jesus the Only Way?
- Read Stand Firm, Ch 12: Standing Firm and Going Out
- Complete Week 14 Reading Guide (Optional)

#### **Due Friday**

- Submit Reflection Paper 3: Ex-Christian Testimonial Response Letter

### **Week 15 — Final Exam**

*The final week varies in length based on the semester. Please refer to the Semester Calendars found in the Academic Information section at the top of the course site for details.*

#### **Due on the last day of the semester**

- Complete and submit the Final Exam

## APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

These resources are not required but are recommended if you want to continue developing in your understanding of Christian Thought, Worldviews, and Apologetics.

### Christian Thought and Worldview:

- Colson, Charles. *How Now Shall We Live?*
- Craig, William Lane and J.P. Moreland. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*
- Kerr, Hugh T. *Readings in Christian Thought* (Second Edition)
- Lane, Tony. *A Concise History of Christian Thought*
- Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*
- Moreland, J.P. *Love Your God with All Your Mind*
- Nash, Ronald. *Life's Ultimate Questions*
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*
- Sire, James. *The Universe Next Door*
- Wilkens, Steve. *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives*

### Apologetics:

- Craig, William Lane. *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Conviction*
- Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*
- Collins, Francis S. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*
- Kreeft, Peter and Ronald K. Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*
- Geisler, Norman. *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences*

### Critiques of the Christian Faith:

- Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*
- Dennett, Daniel C. *Breaking The Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*
- Hitchens, Christopher. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*
- Harris, Sam. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and The Future of Reason*
- Krauss, Lawrence. *A Universe From Nothing: Why There is Something Rather than Nothing*
- Russell, Bertrand. *Why I'm Not a Christian*