



PHIL 5301-HYB – Christian Apologetics
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Division of Theology & History
Fall 2023: August 14 – December 6
HYBRID: Online, On-campus October 20-21

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

This course examines barriers to Christian faith as well as efforts to provide convincing presentations of Christian faith. Attention is given to biblical foundations, historical development, apologetic method, and contemporary issues related to apologetics.

Student Learning Outcomes

In order to obey the biblical mandate in **1 Peter 3:15**, the student, by the end of course, should:

1. Understand the basics of historic Christian theology and be able to recognize concepts that challenge Christian belief.
2. Value the following concepts:
 - “ Intellectual accountability in relation to the issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith.
 - “ Convincing presentations of Christian faith.
 - “ Insightful and effective defenses of the Christian faith.
 - “ Clear ways of stating the Christian hope to those who either reject or question the truth claims of Christian theology.
3. Be able to present and defend the Christian faith clearly and rationally.

Textbooks

(TA) Anderson, Tawa J. *Why Believe: Christian Apologetics for a Skeptical Age*. B&H Academic, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-0877-1298-7

(PC) Copan, Paul. *Is God a Vindictive Bully? Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments*. Baker Academic, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6455-7

(RD) Dawkins, Richard. *Outgrowing God: A Beginner's Guide*. Random House, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-9848-5391-2

(B&S) Dickson, John. *Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History*. Zondervan Reflective, 2021. ISBN: 978-0-310-11836-7

(DG) Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. 2nd edition. IVP Academic, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0275-9

NOTES: Groothuis (DG) and Anderson (TA) will be the primary texts for our week-to-week class schedule. Please buy a *used* copy of Dawkins' *Outgrowing God* on a platform like abebooks.com – we have no desire to put further royalties money into Mr. Dawkins' pocket, and purchasing a used copy takes it out of circulation.

Course Teaching Methodology

The course will involve the following methodologies:

1. Assigned required reading
2. Canvas video lectures
3. Online quizzes
4. In-person dialogues and discussion

Course Requirements

All students are required to complete all assigned reading and attend all class sessions.

Graded requirements for the course are as follows:

1. Quizzes (20%)

Thoughtful and comprehensive reading is an essential aspect of graduate education, particularly in philosophy and theology. To encourage consistent reading, there will be weekly readings quizzes for the first 10 Modules (weeks) of the semester (August 14 – October 30) covering the assigned reading in the Anderson and Groothuis texts. Quizzes will be administered online via Canvas, and **must** be taken by 11:59 P.M. on the respective Saturday night. **Quizzes are closed-book and no-notes:** you are not permitted to utilize any resources other than your own mind. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice and true-false questions, with occasional fill-in-the-blank or matching questions. There will be 15-20 questions on each quiz, and only 10 minutes to complete the quiz. Each quiz is worth 2% of your grade, for a total of **20%** of your final grade.

2. Theistic Argument Essay (25%)

Theistic arguments set forth reasons to believe that God (either in general or with more specifically-Christian attributes) exists. After reading the relevant assigned material (Groothuis chapters 8-19; Anderson chapters 4-6) and conducting some additional external research, students will write a 1750-2250 word defense of a theistic argument of their choice. Your essay must (a) introduce the significance and place of the theistic argument; (b) clearly articulate the logical contours of the argument; (c) provide supporting reasons and evidence for each step of the argument; and (d) identify and respond to objections to each step of the argument and the argument as a whole. Please see the Grading Rubric on Canvas for concrete expectations and grading guidelines. Your theistic argument essay is **due via Canvas by 11:59 P.M. on Saturday, September 16**, and is worth **25% of your final grade**.

3. Dickson OR Copan Analytical Book Review (20%)

Students will write an analytical review of either Dickson's *Bullies and Saints* or Copan's *Is God a Vindictive Bully*. Book reviews will be 1500-2000 words in length, formatted in Turabian style. Your book review should be approximately half summary, half analysis. That is, spend the first half of your book review articulating the purpose, structure, and primary contours of the book; spend the second half evaluating the book, adjudicating how successful Dickson/Copan has been at accomplishing his goals and persuading his readers.

The book review is **due via Canvas by 11:59 P.M. on Saturday, October 28 (Dickson)** or

Saturday, November 18 (Copan), and is worth **20% of your final grade**. A grading rubric for Book Reviews is posted on the Canvas book review assignment page. *If you choose to complete both Book Reviews, the lower book review grade will be applied as an extra credit bonus to your overall course grade at a 5% rate (i.e., an 80% on the book review will earn a 4% bonus to your final grade in the class).*

4. In-Class (October 20-21) Debate & Participation (20%)

For our in-person time together on Friday, October 20 (1:00-9:00 P.M.) and Saturday, October 21 (8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.), we are going to do something completely different! We will hold a series of student-led debates on a series of apologetic issues. A final schedule for the weekend, with debate assignments, will be published during the second week of class, after our class roster has been finalized. If you have a specific topic request for your debate assignment, please feel free to email that request directly to me and I will take it under consideration.

The precise structure of each mini-debate will depend upon final class enrollment; but the basic layout will be as follows:

- a) Position A – 10 minutes (approximately 1750 words)
- b) Position B – 10 minutes
- c) A vs. B interaction & class questions/dialogue – 10-30 minutes

There will be two components to your Debate grade. First, you will submit (via Canvas in the assignment portal) your written 10-minute (~1750-word) speech that you will present in defense of your position on the assigned topic [**150 points = 15% of final grade**]. That written assignment will be graded on (a) coherence, (b) rational/evidential persuasiveness, and (c) written/rhetorical style. Your written debate speech must be submitted via Canvas **by 11:59 P.M. on Thursday, October 19**. Second, you will be graded on your attentiveness and participation in the other in-class debates [**50 points = 5% of final grade**]. Altogether, your written and verbal performance during the in-class debates is worth **20% of your overall course grade**.

My goal is to make our in-person weekend a valuable enhancement to our semester-long on-line class. You will see and hear a lot of me via the online video lectures: during our intensive weekend we will have opportunity to dialogue and converse together, hearing more from each of you rather than from me.

5. Final Project: Dawkins Book Review (15%)

In lieu of a traditional final exam, students will engage with Dawkins' highly critical (anti-Christian) *Outgrowing God*. Your Dawkins book review must provide a brief synopsis (2-3 paragraphs) of the entire book, but will focus on one of the five major sections addressed in class lectures: Introducing Dawkins (chs 1-2); Dawkins on Scripture (chs 3-4); Dawkins on Morality (chs 5-6); Dawkins on Design (chs 7-10); or Dawkins on Evolutionary Religion (chs 11-12). Your review will provide a more substantial summary of your chosen section of *Outgrowing God*, focusing particularly on a critical refutation of Dawkins' primary arguments and contentions. Book reviews will be 1400-1600 words in length, formatted in Turabian style. Your final project is **due via Canvas by 11:59 P.M. on Monday, December 4**, and is worth **15% of your final grade**. A grading rubric is posted on the Canvas assignment page.

Evaluation of Grade

The student's grade will be computed as follows:

Quizzes	10 @ 2%/ea	20%
Theistic Argument Essay	September 16	25%
Dickson / Copan Book Review	Oct 28 / Nov 18	20%
In-Class Debate Manuscript	October 19	15%
In-Class Participation	October 20-21	5%
Final Project: Dawkins Book Review	December 4	15%

NOTE: All late work will receive an automatic and non-negotiable 10% late penalty. Late submissions will not receive substantive feedback. All late assignments must be turned in by Wednesday, December 6 @ 11:59 A.M.

GRADING SCALE

- A: 93 - 100
- B: 85 - 92
- C: 77 - 84
- D: 70 - 76
- F: below 70

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Because of the nature of the hybrid intensive, students who miss any portion of the class may receive a grade of "F" for the course.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas.NOBTS.com Click on the "Help" button for technical questions/support requests regarding the NOBTS Canvas System. You can also email questions to Canvas@nobts.edu.
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Policy for Late Submissions

All late work (quizzes as well as written assignments) will receive an automatic penalty of 10% *regardless of the reason for which the work was submitted late*. Late work must be turned in no later than Wednesday, December 4 @ 11:59 A.M., and late written assignments will receive less substantive feedback.

Classroom and Online Decorum

Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of the others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity is expected at all times.

Help for Writing Papers at “The Write Stuff”

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or can be located online at the Writing Center’s page on the seminary website at: <https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

A high standard of personal integrity is expected of all NOBTS students. Copying another person’s work, submitting downloaded material without proper references, submitting material without properly citing the source, submitting the same material for credit in more than one course, and committing other such forms of dishonesty are strictly forbidden.

Although anything cited in three sources is considered public domain, we require that all sources be cited. Any infraction may result in failing the assignment and the course. Any infraction will be reported to the Dean of Graduate Studies for further action. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for further definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Course Schedule

All Module assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the Saturday night. Our pace will be demanding and unrelenting. Plan ahead; work ahead; be diligent; don't fall behind!

Module		Lecture	Reading	Assignments
1	UNIT 1: Apologetic Preliminaries August 14-19	Lecture 1: Course Overview Lecture 2: Who Cares about Christian Apologetics? Lecture 3: The Biblical Mandate for Apologetics Lecture 4: The Ministry Mandate for Apologetics	DG Intro (1-6); TA Intro & ch 1 (1-26) DG ch 1 (9-35) TA ch 2 (27-44)	Quiz #1
2	August 21-26	Lecture 5: The Laws of Logic & Worldview Analysis Lecture 6: Apologetic Methodology Lecture 7: What We Are and Aren't Defending (Christian Worldview) Lecture 8: Defending Truth Lecture 9: Truth in Troubled Times	DG ch 2a (36-53) DG ch 2b (53-66); Anderson reading (Files) DG chs 3-4 (67-119) DG ch 5 (120-35); TA ch 3 (45-64) DG chs 6-7 (136-58)	Quiz #2
3	UNIT 2: Positive Apologetics Part A: God August 28 - September 2	Lecture 10: Introducing Theistic Arguments Lecture 11: Cosmological Arguments Lecture 12: Design Arguments Lecture 13: Christianity & Darwinism	DG chs 8-9 (161-81) DG ch 11 (201-29); TA ch 4a (65-88) DG ch 12 (230-53); TA ch 4b (88-104) DG chs 14-15 (267-327)	Quiz #3
4	September 4-9	Lecture 14: Ontological Arguments Lecture 15: Moral Arguments Lecture 16: Arguments from Beauty	DG ch 10 (182-200); TA ch 5a (105-19) DG ch 16 (328-63); TA ch 5b (119-35) DG ch 13 (254-66)	Quiz #4

	Module	Lecture	Reading	Assignments
5	September 11-16	Lecture 17: Arguments from Religious Experience & Desire Lecture 18: Arguments from Human Nature: Mind/Consciousness Lecture 19: Arguments from Human Nature: Free Will & Rationality Lecture 20: Pascal's Anthropological Argument Lecture 21: Divine Hiddenness	DG ch 17 (364-87); TA ch 6a (137-48) DG ch 18 (388-414) TA ch 6b (148-58) DG ch 19 (415-32) DG ch 20 (433-47)	Theistic Argument Essay Due Quiz #5
6	Part B: Christianity September 18-23	Lecture 22: New Testament Textual Integrity Lecture 23: New Testament Historical Reliability Lecture 24: Bullies & Saints I – The First Century Lecture 25: Bullies & Saints II – To Constantine & Beyond	TA ch 7a (163-83) TA ch 7b (184-204) B&S Intro (xix-xxiv), chs 1-4 (1-43) B&S chs 5-8 (44-95)	Quiz #6
7	September 25-30	Lecture 26: Can We Know Anything About Jesus? Lecture 27: Was Jesus Divine? Lecture 28: The Atonement Lecture 29: The Incarnation Lecture 30: Bullies & Saints III – Emerging Christendom	DG ch 21 (448-881) DG ch 22 (482-510); TA ch 8 (205-38) DG chs 23-24 (511-48) DG ch 25 (549-66) B&S chs 9-12 (96-136)	Quiz #7
	October 2-6	FALL BREAK	NO MODULE	NO ASSIGNMENTS
8	October 9-14	Lecture 31: In Defense of Miracles Lecture 32: In Defense of Resurrection Lecture 33: Bullies & Saints IV – Medieval Christendom	DG ch 26 (567-81); Hume reading (Files) DG ch 27 (582-608); TA ch 9 (239-60)	Quiz #8

	Module	Lecture	Reading	Assignments
9	HYBRID WEEK October 16-21	In-Person Class Debates Fri Oct 20 (1:00-9:00) Sat Oct 21 (8:00-5:00)	N/A	In-Class Debate Manuscript (Due Thursday, October 19 @ 11:59 P.M.)
10	UNIT 3: NEGATIVE (Responsive) APOLOGETICS October 23-28	Lecture 34: The Logical Problem of Evil Lecture 35: The Evidential Problem of Evil Lecture 36: The Existential Problem of Evil Lecture 37: Bullies & Saints V – The Modern Church	DG ch 31 (668-94); TA ch 10a (261-85) DG ch 32 (695-702) B&S chs 19-25 (210-86)	 Quiz #9 Dickson Book Review Due
11	October 30 – November 4	Lecture 38: Religious Pluralism Lecture 39: Confronting Islam Lecture 40: Faith, Science & Reason Lecture 41: Vindictive Bully I – Old vs. New Testament Lecture 42: Vindictive Bully II – The Law of Moses Lecture 43: Vindictive Bully III – Old Testament Crime & Punishment	DG ch 29 (627-55); TA ch 10b (285-94) DG ch 30 (656-67) TA conc (295-300) PC chs 1-4 (3-34) PC chs 5-9 (35-70) PC chs 10-12 (71-88)	 Quiz #10
12	November 6-11	Lecture 44: Vindictive Bully IV – Divine Love, Hatred, & Smitings Lecture 45: Vindictive Bully V – Women & Slaves in Scripture Lecture 46: Vindictive Bully VI – Divine Warfare & Genocide Lecture 47: Vindictive Bully VII – The Consistent Character of God	PC chs 13-19 (89-148) PC chs 20-25 (149-88); DG App2 (717-31) PC chs 26-31 (189-238) PC chs 32-34 (239-60)	NONE!

	Module	Lecture	Reading	Assignments
13	November 13-18	Lecture 48: Outgrowing God I – Introducing Dawkins Lecture 49: Outgrowing God II – Dawkins on Scripture Lecture 50: Outgrowing God III – Dawkins on Morality	RD chs 1-2 (3-46) RD chs 3-4 (47-92) RD chs 5-6 (93-144)	Copan Book Review Due
	Nov 20-25	THANKSGIVING BREAK	NO MODULE	NO ASSIGNMENTS
14	November 27-30	Lecture 51: Outgrowing God IV – Dawkins on Design Lecture 52: Outgrowing God V – Dawkins on Evolutionary Religion	RD chs 7-10 (145-224) RD chs 11-12 (225-78)	
	Finals Week November 30 – December 6			Dawkins Book Review (Final Project) Due – Monday, December 4 @ 11:59 P.M.

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