

## **BT 364 - APOLOGETICS**

### **COLLEGE MISSION**

The mission of Emmaus Bible College is to glorify God through the teaching of the Bible and through educating and equipping learners for service and leadership in their ministries, communities, and vocations.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An introduction to the task and methodology of Christian apologetics. This course will explore common objections to the Christian faith and prepare students to respond in reasonable and appropriate ways. Students are also introduced to the impact of postmodernism in our culture, and the challenge it presents for the apologetic enterprise.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course the student should:

1. Understand the nature and task of Christian apologetics.
2. Be familiar with the different approaches to doing apologetics (methodologies).
3. Be equipped to respond to common objections to biblical Christianity, and to articulate, defend and commend his or her Christian faith.
4. Be familiar with the challenges for apologetics that stem from our postmodern aversion to truth claims.
5. Have a strengthened confidence in the truthfulness of the Christian faith.

### **COURSE TEXTS**

Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. Dutton: New York, 2008.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952 [various reprint editions].

Sire, James W. *Why Good Arguments Often Fail: Making a More Persuasive Case for*

Christ. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

### **Textbooks**

The course textbooks are designed to supplement one another. *Mere Christianity* is a broad defense of the Christian faith. It illustrates a particular approach (or method) of apologetics. *The Reason for God* deals with several common objections to the Christian faith, as well as presenting a positive case for Christian belief. *Why Good Arguments Often Fail* will help us frame better arguments for the faith and identify fallacious ones.

The reading assignments are listed on the course schedule.

To order a textbook that is referred to above, please contact our Librarian.

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Through the course of the semester, as you come across various arguments, evaluate them to see if they might be added to your list. Here is a brief example:

### **Contradictory Premises**

*Establishing a premise in such a way that it contradicts another, earlier premise.*

Examples:

- “If God can do anything, He can make a stone so heavy that He can’t lift it.”
- All claims to truth are relative. There is no absolute truth.

### Apologetic Questions/Objections

1. How can we know there is a God?
2. The Bible is full of errors and contradictions.
3. How can we know the Bible is true?
4. Jesus was just a good teacher, not God.
5. Maybe Jesus was God. What difference does it make?
6. How can God exist when there is so much evil and suffering in the world?
7. If God is love, why does he allow suffering?
8. Aren’t all those miracle stories in the Bible just myths?
9. Science proves the miracles of the Bible are not true.
10. You expect me to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead?
11. Maybe Jesus did rise from the dead. It doesn’t affect my life.
12. I believe all paths (religions) lead to God.
13. How can Jesus be the only way to God?
14. What about people who have never heard of Jesus?
15. Aren’t God and Allah the same?
16. What about the Qur’an? Isn’t it the Word of God/Allah?
17. Evolution proves there is no creator.

18. Couldn't God have created us but used evolution to do it?
19. If God is love, why would he send people to hell?
20. Why do Christians reject homosexuals?
21. Christians are so intolerant.
22. Christianity is full of hypocrites.
23. It seems that Christians can't agree about anything. Who am I supposed to believe?
24. Why should I become a Christian, isn't it too strict and boring?
25. I'm a pretty good person; I don't need to become a Christian.

## Participation

This course is designed to be interactive. One of our goals for you is to gain confidence in speaking about Christianity and some of the difficult issues related to it. This class is a "safe" environment; everyone shares the same faith. Thus it is a good setting to dialogue together and raise questions regarding common objections to Christianity. Apologetics is often carried out in more hostile settings with people who are not sympathetic to Christianity. This class then can be a "trial run" so that when we do have discussion in the more hostile settings, we will be better prepared. All that to say, I am encouraging you to participate in class discussion.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Session	Session	Reading
1	<i>Nature and Task of Apologetics</i>	Lewis
2	<i>Overview of the History of Apologetics; Introduction to Apologetic Methodology</i>	Lewis; Sire: 11-32
3	<i>Classical Apologetics (Part One- A Method)</i>	Lewis; Sire: 33-56
4	<i>Classical Apologetics (Part Two)</i>	Lewis; Sire: 57-79
5	<i>Evidentialism (Part One)</i>	Lewis; Sire: 80-105
6	<i>Evidentialism (Part Two)</i>	Lewis; Sire: 106-126
7	<i>Reformed Apologetics (Part One)</i>	Lewis; Sire: 127-155
8	<i>Reformed Apologetics (Part Two)</i>	
9	<i>Fideism</i>	Sire: 156-185
10	<i>Integrative Apologetics</i>	Keller: ix-xxiii
11	<i>Postmodernism</i>	Keller: 3-21
12	<i>The Existence of God (Part One)</i>	Keller: 22-34
13	<i>The Existence of God (Part Two)</i>	Keller: 35-50
14	<i>The Reliability of Scripture</i>	Keller: 51-67

15	<i>The Identity of Jesus Christ</i>	Keller: 68-83
16	<i>The Problem of Evil and Suffering (Part One)</i>	Keller: 84-96
17	<i>The Problem of Evil and Suffering (Part Two)</i>	Keller: 97-114
18	<i>Miracles</i>	Keller: 115-123
19	<i>The Resurrection of Jesus</i>	Keller: 127-142
20	<i>Pluralism</i>	Keller: 143-158
21	<i>The Problem of Hell</i>	Keller: 159-173
22	<i>The Challenge of Ethics (homosexuality)</i>	Keller: 174-185
23	<i>The Problem of Christian Hypocrisy</i>	Keller: 186-200
24	<i>Embracing Christianity</i>	Keller: 201-212
		Keller: 213-226
		Keller: 227-240

### Sample Resources

See also chapter 12 (“Framing Effective Arguments: A Guide to Literature) in Sire’s *Why Good Arguments Often Fail*

Campbell-Jack, W. C. and Gavin McGrath. *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig. *Contending with Christianity’s Critics: Answering New Atheists and Other Objectors*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.

Frame, John M. *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1994.

Geisler, Norman L. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

Geisler, Norman L. and Frank Turek. *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.

Knechtle, Cliffe. *Give Me an Answer That Satisfies My Heart and Mind*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

McDowell, Josh. *A Ready Defense: The Best of Josh McDowell*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993.

McFarland, Alex. *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity*. Ventura: Regal, 2007.

Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Zacharias, Ravi and Norman Geisler, eds. *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.