

COURSE SYLLABUS

Exploring Approaches to Apologetics

Course Lecturer: Gordon Lewis, PhD
Senior Professor of Christian and Historical Theology at Denver Seminary

Course Description

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (I Peter 3:15). Peter’s words ring true in today’s world. In this course, learners compare biblical, historical, and recent approaches to defending faith in God, Christ, and Scripture. The course emphasizes the apologetics of Peter among Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2), and Paul among the Gentiles in Athens (Acts 17). It compares the influential approaches of Augustine and Aquinas, but focuses primarily on the approaches of six apologists who led in the resurgence of evangelicalism during the last half of the 20th century.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Explain the nature of apologetics and the need for implementing a ministry based on sound reasoning.
- Sum up relevant biblical teaching and examples of the use of apologetics, comparing and contrasting Peter’s approach to Jews and Paul’s approach to Gentiles (Jerusalem and Athens).
- Compare and contrast the approaches to defending the faith in Augustine and Aquinas.
- Describe the roots and characteristics of non-Christian belief systems and three basic worldviews that challenged twentieth century apologists.
- Compare and contrast six distinct ways of reasoning in support of evangelical Christian faith with some objectivity and fairness.
- Develop a coherent approach synthesizing the strengths of the six as the base for verifying religious beliefs and living a life faithful to them.
- Mature in the art of communicating the faith to varieties of people from radically different worldviews and their cultural expressions.

Course Lecturer



Gordon Lewis, PhD

Education:

- Syracuse University, MA and PhD
- Faith Theological Seminary, MTh
- Gordon College, BA

Teaching Career:

- Senior Professor of Christian and Historical Theology, Denver Seminary
- Professor at Denver Seminary since 1958
- Professor, Baptist Bible Seminary (1951-1958)
- Adjunct professor, Union Biblical Seminary in Yeotmal, India and London
- Guest lecturer in Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand

Other Career Highlights:

- Ordained Baptist minister
- Associate or interim pastor for six churches
- Advisory Board member, Where Is God Ministries (beginning in 1999)
- Member of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission in London (1996)
- President, Evangelical Theological Society (1992)
- President, Evangelical Philosophical Society (1985)
- Associate to the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, specializing in reaching cultists (1984)
- Consulted for his expertise in cult development
- Work in cult development for United States government and multiple parachurch organizations

Publications:

- Numerous books, including *Confronting the Cults, Judge for Yourself, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims*, and his magnum opus, *Integrative Theology*, a book he coauthored with Dr. Bruce Demarest

Recommended Reading

Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

Lewis, Gordon R. *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1976. Reprint: Lanham, New York: London University Press of America, 1990.

Emphasizes the need for the science of apologetics, a well thought through epistemological method of reasoning from the logical starting point to the conclusion.

McGrath, Alister E. *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith through Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.

Wisdom on the art of person-centered apologetics for relating the faith in dialogues with varied individuals, talks in different classes and messages for culturally different congregations.

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*. Fourth edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Helps to understand the multiple worldviews Christians face at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Course Methods

The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

Course Assessment and Requirements

To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Listening to all 24 audio lectures.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.