

# **Approaches to Defending the Faith**

Dr. Joseph Minich, Instructor

## **Course Description**

There are as many arguments for the Christian faith as there are Christians to believe them. In this course, we take a rhetorical approach to defending the faith. While we give pride of place and deference to the classical school of apologetics, the actual apologetical encounter is fundamentally an encounter between whole persons. And it is all the tools of persuasion which coalesce to persuade one's interlocutor. This course functions to train Christians to learn how to cultivate all these tools (and habits of soul) in themselves in order that they might be more effective witnesses for the Lord in their own community. The major apologetical schools will be surveyed, and their strengths and weaknesses discussed.

## **Course Format**

The format of the course will be a roughly equivalent mix of lecture and guided discussion. It is assumed that students will come having read and engaged with the text selection for that day, and with thoughts (and critical questions) prepared to contribute. Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Supplementary student interaction (both informal and formal) is highly encouraged, and I also aim to make myself available to you.

## **Course Objectives**

This course aims (1) to introduce students to several of the rhetorical approaches that have been deployed to defend the Christian faith, (2) to dialogically engage, learn from, and help train students in the art of thinking well, and (3) to encourage students concerning the veracity of the Christian faith by means of an expanded (rather than calcified) imagination.

## **Course Requirements**

1. Weekly reading (due before each class). 40% of grade.
2. Weekly participation in class discussion. 10% of grade.
3. Paper proposal (due on the 6th class session). 10% of grade.
4. 12-16 page integrative paper (due on the final day of class). 40% of grade.

## **Course Texts & Schedule**

*The Epistle to Diognetus* (PDF).

Joseph Minich. Review Article of K. Scott Oliphint, “Covenantal Apologetics” (PDF).

Henri de Lubac. *The Discovery of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

Luigi Giussani. *The Religious Sense* (Chicago: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997).

Luigi Giussani. *At the Origins of the Christian Claim* (Chicago: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998).

Herman Bavinck. *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, Edited by Cory Brock & Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody: Hendreckson, 2018).

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: HarperOne, 1974).

N.T. Wright. *Broken Signposts: How Christianity Makes Sense of the World* (New York: HarperOne, 2020).

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Discussion Topics</b>	<b>Reading</b>
1	TBD	Introduction	Diognetus, Oliphint Review
2	TBD	God	de Lubac, 1-116
3	TBD	God (Again)	de Lubac, 117-220
4	TBD	Religion	Giussani, <i>Religious Sense</i> , 1-145
5	TBD	Christianity	Giussani, <i>At the Origins</i> , 1-108
6	TBD	Revelation	Bavinck, 1-116
7	TBD	Revelation (Again)	Bavinck, 117-212
8	TBD	Miracles	Lewis, 1-106
9	TBD	Miracles (Again)	Lewis, 107-213
10	TBD	Jesus	Wright, 1-116