

THEO 539: CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS EXPLAINING AND COMMENDING OUR FAITH

Alister McGrath

May 17 – 21; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

Live online & Recorded

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the basic themes of Christian apologetics. It considers how we can respond to the questions and concerns of our culture, and how we can best commend the rational and imaginative aspects of our faith. Topics to be considered include the relation of science and faith, the 'New Atheism' of Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, difficulties people have in understanding aspects of the Christian faith (such as the Trinity), and the challenges of relativism and skepticism. The course will consider a range of approaches, including engaging recent apologists such as G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy L. Sayers, C. S. Lewis, and Marilyn Robinson. Some influential approaches to apologetics, such as that of Francis Schaeffer, stress rational defences of faith; this course takes full account of these, while also engaging other important approaches, including narrative apologetics, which affirm the appeal of the gospel at the rational, imaginative, and emotional levels. The course will offer participants a rich range of reflections on how best to understand, defend, and commend the Christian faith, with the object of helping each participant to craft their own distinct approach.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. Understand the methods, resources and possible outcomes of Christian apologetics;
2. Critically assess the approaches of some leading Christian apologists, including being aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and particular relevance to certain issues and situations.
3. Appreciate the importance of cultural developments in raising new apologetic questions or giving a new urgency or focus to existing questions, using the case study of the "New Atheism" as an example.
4. Develop their own approaches to apologetics, drawing on their own history and experiences, in dialogue with leading writers in the field.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1	May 17	Introducing Apologetics; Making Sense of Things: Christianity as a "Big Picture"; Faith, Understanding and Doubt
Day 2	May 18	Explaining Christianity: Questions People Ask; Reason, Imagination, and Beauty; Narrative Apologetics: Rediscovering Stories
Day 3	May 19	Apologetics and Fiction: Four Approaches; Engaging our Culture: The Case of Science; Clues, Pointers, and Proofs: Gateways and Discovery
Day 4	May 20	The Heart's Desire: Christianity and Human Fulfilment; Christianity and the Meaning of Life; Objections to Faith: Engaging with Concerns
Day 5	May 21	Generality and Specificity in Apologetics: The Importance of the Audience; An Apologetic Case Study: What can we learn from the "New Atheism"?; Conclusion: Handing Over

REQUIRED TEXTS

Chatraw, Josh. *Telling a Better Story: How to Talk about God in a Skeptical Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020.

McGrath, Alister E. *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.

Looking for textbooks? Please [contact](#) the Regent Bookstore, or check out their [direct-fulfillment website, Aerio](#).

Note: Aerio prices are in USD.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses. The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

