

Taylor Seminary



# SYLLABUS

TAYLOR  
SEMINARY

## TH 634 Christian Apologetics Spring Semester 2019

**INSTRUCTOR:** Randal D. Rauser, PhD  
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**SCHEDULE:** May 13-17, 8:30 am-4:30 pm; Online

**CREDITS:** 3

### DESCRIPTION:

An introduction to the rational defense of the Christian faith including both the identification of evidence or grounds for Christian belief as well as evidence against non-Christian beliefs. We will also consider the biblical ground of apologetics, different models of apologetics, and the specific apologetic challenges of modernism and postmodernism.

### TARGET STATEMENTS:

Upon completion of this course,

Knowledge—Students will

- Identify and describe major arguments and evidences for and against Christianity.
- Describe the major divisions of apologetics
- Outline and reflect upon the lineaments of a sensitive and sound apologetic method.

Character—Students will

- Describe the value of thinking about Christianity critically and rationally as a means to strengthen one's own faith, improve the health of the church and empower evangelistic witness.
- Convey in writing their intention to serve the church and describe how they might serve the church by equipping the saints for the pursuit and defense of truth.
- Attend classes regularly, participate in class and online, and complete reading assignments.

Ability—Students will

- Demonstrate an ability to apply a major argument for and against Christian faith.
- Demonstrate an ability to reason with the loss of faith and note the issues surrounding the loss of faith.
- Plan and carry out a debate on a chosen topic that is relevant to the course.

## TEXTBOOKS:

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

Hautman, Pete. *Godless* New York: Simon Pulse, 2004.

Muehlhoff, Tim. *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World*. IVP Academic, 2017.

Rausser, Randal. *The Swedish Atheist, the Scuba Diver, and Other Apologetic Rabbit Trails*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.  
*[Available for purchase from Dr. Rausser for \$15]*

## ARTICLES:

All articles will be posted on the Apologetics Moodle website.

Rea, Michael. “Divine Hiddenness, Divine Silence.” In *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Louis Pojman and Michael Rea, eds. Boston: Wadsworth, 2012, 266-75.

Rausser, Randal. “Worshipping a Flying Teapot? What to do When Christianity Looks Ridiculous.” In *“God is Dead” and I Don’t Feel So Good Myself: Theological engagements with the New Atheism*. Ed. Andrew David, Christopher J. Keller and Jon Stanley. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010, 129-41.

Stump, Eleonore. “The Mirror of Evil,” in *God and the Philosophers*. Thomas Morris (ed.) Oxford University Press, 1994, 235-247.

## REQUIREMENTS:

### 1. Class Participation

It is important to attend regularly, arrive *on time*, appear to be sentient, and to be actively engaged in the discussion of topics.

Class participation grade includes in-class participation as well as participation in the forums (May 17-21) and student presentation forums (June 21-28).

**2. Text Readings (950 pp.) 50 hours****3. Review of *Winsome Persuasion* 5 hours**

Compose a review of Muehlhoff, *Winsome Persuasion*. Summarize the content of the book in about 750 words. Then in about 250 words you should reflect on particular questions/issues that arise out of the book as well as offering critical engagement. Does the book present an effective guide for persuasion in a post-Christian context? What are its strengths and weaknesses? All references to the book should be parenthetical rather than footnotes. Do not cite any other sources in your review.

(1000 words)

**Due Date: May 31**

Assignment accommodates knowledge and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding and Faithfulness, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #1, #4, #8.

**4. Analytical Reflection Paper on *Godless* 4 hours**

Pete Hautman's *Godless* tells the story of Jason Bock, a teenage Catholic who leaves the faith and develops his own religion based on the worship of the town water tower. Hautman writes:

“*Godless* is not about God. It doesn't weigh in on the existence or nature of a Supreme Being. It is not about which religion is the truest, or the best. It's about how people—teenagers in particular—deal with the questions that arise when their faith has been shaken.”

The purpose of this review is to consider the main reasons that Jason loses his faith from an apologetic perspective. What are Jason's intellectual problems with his Catholic faith? What sorts of arguments against faith are presented in the book? How do Jason's parents and other Christians around him fail to deal with his doubts? If you were Jason's parent how would you handle the apologetic issues differently?

Please note: this is *not* a reflection on how the book made you feel. Rather, it is a substantial critical analysis of the problems Jason has with his faith, the arguments he raises against it, and how you would propose countering those problems apologetically.

(1500 words)

**Due Date: June 7**

Assignment accommodates knowledge, character and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding and Faithfulness, Presence, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #1, #2, #5, #8.

### 5. Analytical Reflection Paper on *The Swedish Atheist* 4 hours

The main purpose of this paper is to reflect on the exchange between Sheridan and Randal. Did you agree with the way Randal presented his arguments? Where would you have done things differently? What do you think are Sheridan's strongest points? Provide examples to support your points. And remember that you are critically engaging with "Randal" the character in the book rather than Randal the author of the book.

(1000 words)

**Due Date: June 14**

Assignment accommodates knowledge and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding and Faithfulness, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #1, #4, #5, #8.

### 6. Apologetics Topic Paper 15 hours

The task of this assignment is to survey a particular topic of debate in apologetics, noting the major positions and drawing conclusions on the topic. The methodology of the paper is an *inquiry* that seeks to understand the arguments for and against a particular view. The paper will focus a topic for/against Christianity and/or theism or a topic for/against a competing belief system (e.g. atheism, naturalism, Mormonism, pluralism). **Every student must choose a separate topic approved by the professor as the paper will serve as a basis for a class presentation.** Here is a partial list of topics:

- i. Theism and the problem of animal pain
- ii. Religious pluralism
- iii. Definitions of Naturalism
- iv. Jesus Mythicism
- v. The Argument from Desire
- vi. Divine command theory of ethics
- vii. Natural disasters and the problem of natural evil; hell
- viii. Archaeology and the Book of Mormon
- ix. Reincarnation
- x. Islam and the historical Jesus
- xi. Miracles today
- xii. Out of Body Experiences/Near Death Experiences and life after death
- xiii. The Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism
- xiv. The Argument from Reason
- xv. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony
- xvi. Jehovah's Witness and the Bible
- xvii. The meaning and coherence of the Trinity
- xviii. The problem of divine hiddenness

In writing your paper, follow the guidelines of the Taylor Seminary Guide for Research and Writing including title page, footnotes or endnotes, and bibliography. The Guide is available here:

<https://www.taylor-edu.ca/taylor/pdf/SeminaryGuideforResearchandWriting.pdf>

You should have a minimum of ten academic sources (journal articles and books) on your bibliography excluding assigned readings.

(3000-4000 words)

**Due Date: June 12**

Assignment accommodates knowledge, character and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding, Faithfulness, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #3, #4, #8.

## 7. Presentation

After completing your apologetics topic paper, you should compose a 15 minute presentation summarizing the topic for your fellow students. The presentation should be in video format and uploaded to YouTube. Please contact me if you need directions in how to make a presentation or upload it to YouTube. On the day it is due, please send me the URL for the presentation. I will embed each presentation in the Moodle site and your fellow students will then have one week to view each presentation and post discussion questions in the accompanying forum for each presentation. Student presenters are expected to answer the questions in the forums in a timely manner.

**Presentation Due Date: June 21**

**Presentation Forum Discussions: June 21-28**

Assignment accommodates knowledge, character and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding and Faithfulness, Presence, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #1, #4, #5, #8.

## 8. Final Exam

**7 hours**

The final exam will be inclusive of all lecture material as well as William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*. The test will be online and *closed book*. Thus, you may not consult any resources during the writing of the exam. The student will be granted a 24 hour period in which to log in to the course site and write the exam from 10 pm May 23-10 pm May 24. Once you open the exam you will have 2 hours to complete the exam.

**Date: May 23-24**

Assignment accommodates knowledge and ability target statements, develops competencies in Proclamation, Shepherding, Faithfulness, and addresses requirements in Outcomes #4, #8.

**Total: 90 hours**

**HOW TO SUBMIT AN ASSIGNMENT:** Assignments should be emailed to [randal.rauser@taylor-edu.ca](mailto:randal.rauser@taylor-edu.ca) before 11:59 pm on the day they are due to ensure you do not receive a late penalty. Do not submit a hard copy. When you email your assignment it is recommended that you request a read receipt to ensure that your assignment has been received. *You are responsible to ensure that the assignment is received.*

**TITLING YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** Please follow this template for naming assignment documents:

Book Review:	Last name-Book Review-1 (e.g. Jones-Book Review-1)
Term Paper:	Last name-Term Paper

**LATE PENALTIES:** Assignments automatically receive a 5% penalty for every day that they are late. Assignments late more than one week will receive 0%. (Weekends count as one day.) Extensions will not be granted **except in the case of a specific personal or medical crisis.**

<b>EVALUATION:</b> Class Participation	10%
Muehlhoff, <i>Winsome Persuasion</i> Book Review	10%
Hautman, <i>Godless</i> Analytical Reflection	15%
Rauser, <i>Swedish Atheist</i> Analytical Reflection	10%
Term Paper	25%
Presentation	15%
Final Exam	15%

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Please note that attendance and participation is an essential part of this course. (Yeah, I know, that *should* be obvious.) As a result, late arrival, unexcused absences and lack of participation may adversely affect your grade. Furthermore, *more than three unexcused absences will result in failure for the course.*

### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

#### *1. MOODLE*

Taylor Seminary's Moodle is located on a shared platform with our partner seminary, Sioux Falls Seminary. Bookmark this site on your computer for easy, regular access: <https://moodle.sfseminary.edu>

Moodle log-in is the first initial of your first name and your last name - all in lowercase, with no spaces. For example, if your name is John Calvin, you would log-in as jcalvin

The default enrolment key is the course code (all in lowercase, with no spaces). The course code consists of the course prefix followed by the course number. For example, Old Testament Introduction's key is: ot417

If you are having trouble logging into Moodle or self-enrolling, please email [teresa.seibel@taylor-edu.ca](mailto:teresa.seibel@taylor-edu.ca)

## 2. COURSE WRITING

### *Formatting*

All studies and papers should be typed and formatted according to the Society of Biblical Literature writing style as outlined in the Seminary's *Guidelines for Research Writing in Religion & Theology (SBL)*. For the full stylesheet, please refer to Patrick H. Alexander, et al., ed., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) which is in Reading Room.

### *Research Language.*

You should employ acceptable research language for your paper which is not too informal yet reads inclusively. Avoid the use of gender specific language (e.g., Do not refer to "man" generically or to "mankind," "men," "he"; rather use "humankind," "humanity," "person," etc.)

### *Plagiarism.*

Academic honesty and integrity is essential to the academic enterprise and the Seminary community. All written work submitted *must* be your own. *Guidelines for Research Writing* defines plagiarism as the failure to give credit where credit is due: "To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written something original which in fact you have borrowed from another without acknowledging that other person's work" (*Guide for Research and Writing*, 2016, p. 11-13). If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, or include direct quotations in your written assignments, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly by in-text citation or footnote. It is also wrong to copy another person's work or to submit an assignment previously handed in for credit in another course. **Students guilty of plagiarism may receive a grade of zero for the assignment and may be brought to the attention of the Seminary's Academic Committee.**

## 3. COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY

After the period for which tuition refunds are available, a "W" will be placed on the transcript of a student who withdraws from any course. Beyond those dates, an "F" will be recorded on the student's transcript.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

## TOPIC

## READINGS

**Introducing apologetics**

	Apologetics: Meaning, Method, and Value	Craig, Introduction
	Defending the Faith in Modernity	Craig, Chapter 1
	Defending the Faith in Postmodernity	Rausser essay

**Existence of God**

	Arguments for God's Existence	Craig, 172-204
	Kalam Cosmological Argument	Craig, Chapter 3
	Teleological Arguments and Intelligent Design	Craig, 157-72

**Revelation and Jesus Christ**

	The Resurrection of Jesus The Gnostic Gospels	Craig, Chapters 5-8
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**Major Challenges to Faith**

	Evil and natural evil	Stump essay
	Divine Hiddenness	Rea essay
	Biblical violence (includes a 20 minute online interview with Eric Seibert at the Moodle site)	No reading

**Debates and Discussion (Moodle Site: May 17-21)**

	<b>An atheist and a Christian walk into a Church:</b> Randal Rausser and Justin Schieber field questions at Sherwood Park Alliance Church (1 hour)	No reading
	<b>Does God Exist?:</b> a debate between atheist Stephen Law and Christian William Lane Craig (2 hours)	No reading
	<b>Devil's Advocate Debate:</b> radio debate between atheist Michael Ruse and Christian Randal Rausser. Ruse defends Christianity and Rausser defends atheism. (1 hour)	No reading

**Student Presentations (Moodle Site: June 21-28)**

	Student presentations and discussion forums	No reading
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**A VERY SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Alston, William. *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Boa, Kenneth D. and Robert M. Bowman, Jr. *Faith has its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005.

- Clark, Kelly James. *Return to Reason*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig (eds). *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering the New Atheists and Other Objectors*. B&H Academic, 2009.
- Craig, William Lane. *On Guard: Defending your faith with reason and precision*. David C. Cook, 2010.
- Craig, William Lane and Chad Meister (eds.). *God is Great, God is Good: Why believing God is rational and responsible*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009.
- Hill, Daniel and Randal Rauser. *Christian Philosophy A-Z*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Kreeft, Peter and Ronald K. Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004.
- Moreland, J.P. *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997.
- Murray, Michael J., ed. *Reason for the Hope Within*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty in Christian Discipleship*. London: SPCK, 1995.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Plantinga, Alvin and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1983.
- Rauser, Randal. *Angels to Zeus: Apologetics in One Long Conversation*. Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Let Reason Be Your Guide? A Brief Introduction to Reformed Epistemology*. Leicester: RTSF, 2001.
- Stackhouse, John. *Humble Apologetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Is there a God?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Coherence of Theism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1979.

## ONLINE SOURCES:

\*Note: There is an excellent apologetics bibliography provided at the end of the chapters in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*. The online resources here are offered as a supplement. Please note that **most of these are not appropriate research sources**. They are offered instead for background reading and interest.

<http://www.apologetics315.com/>

One of the best apologetics resources on the web.

<http://www.apologetics.com/>

A useful resource for articles and apologetics radio.

<http://www.apologetics.org/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

An apologetics website which is sponsored by the CS Lewis Society and the Trinity College of Florida.

<http://apologetics315.blogspot.com/>

One of the leading apologetics blogs on the internet with a wealth of debates available for listening and/or viewing.

<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/>

A very good, peer reviewed, academic online journal of philosophy and religion.

<http://bethinking.org/audio.php>

The website of UCCF. There are helpful online articles and mp3 lectures available for download.

<http://www.biola.edu/academics/professional-studies/apologetics/>

Biola University has the largest graduate apologetics program in North America.

<http://www.carm.org/>

The website of the Christian Apologetics Research Network. This is a good website for introductory information on reasons for the faith, major cults (new religions) and worldviews, etc.

<http://philreligion.nd.edu/>

Notre Dame University's Center for Philosophy of Religion. An excellent resource.

<http://commonsenseatheism.com/>

This is the website of Luke Muehlhauser, the "common sense atheist". It is one of the more popular atheist blogs on the internet. Luke has since quit blogging but he maintains the site.

<http://www.equip.org/>

The website of the Christian Research Institute and the 'Bible Answer Man'. (Though be warned: he doesn't quite have *all* the answers.)

<http://www.infidels.org>

An important website of religious skeptics that reminds us the world is more complex than we might think. Among other things, there is an extended list of critiques of the philosophical and theological positions of various Christian apologists at:

<http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/theism/christianity/apologetics.html>

<http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/apologet.html>

An excellent collection of articles on a variety of topics by a number of Christian intellectuals. See also:

<http://www.leaderu.com/menus/apologetics.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/faithandreason/>

The website for the program 'Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason'. An excellent resource.

<http://randalrauser.com/>

My website with a blog, podcast, and the audio for several of my debates.

<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer>

Excellent! William Lane Craig's homepage is a goldmine of print and media resources.

<http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/index.html>

Reformed apologetics, largely reflecting the perspective of Cornelius Van Til.

<http://www.str.org/site/PageServer>

Greg Koukl's conservative Christian apologetics website, includes a broadcast and podcast of his program *Stand to Reason*.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/unbelievable>

The website of "Unbelievable", a first-class apologetics radio debate show from Britain hosted by Justin Brierley.

[www.veritas.org](http://www.veritas.org)

Indispensable! The website of the Veritas Forum, a movement that is student and faculty led which provides a forum on public and private university campuses to explore the 'big questions' and the relevance of Jesus Christ for them. The website includes dozens of audio and video Veritas lectures by leading Christian intellectuals that are available for viewing or download. This is an absolutely fantastic resource for clearing out the mental cobwebs!