

Approaches to Defending the Faith

Philosophy

Fall, 2024

Difficulty: Introductory

Teacher: Joseph Minich (j.minich@davenantinstitute.org)

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 habit 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 Delivery

Classroom Resources

[Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.

[Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page C onferences tab. C lass sessions are two hours weekly (2.5in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).

[Discord](#) may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

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:

Class Participation (20%): Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

Reading (40%): Students will be asked the percentage of reading they were able to accomplish.

Writing (40%): 3,000-4,000 word research paper due the last day of class. **A proposal is due on the 6th class period.** More specific instructions will be given in class.

Course Texts

Excerpts provided digitally:

The Epistle to Diognetus (PDF).

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

To purchase:

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

W. Norris Clarke. *The Philosophical Approach to God: A Thomistic Perspective* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

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).

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

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Reading
1	9/9-14	Introduction	Diognetus, Oliphint Review
2	9/16-21	The Stubbornness of the Religious	The Religious Sense, 99
3	9/23-28	The Religious Path	The Religious Sense, 100-106
4	9/30-10/5	Discovering God	Philosophical Approach, 190
5	10/7-12	Discovering Christianity	At the Origins, 1-108
6	10/14-19	Discovering Revelation	Philosophy of Revelation, 391

7	10/21-26	Re-Discovering Man & History	Philosophy of Revelation, 92-116, 192-245
8	10/28-11/2	Apologetics in Practice	Miracles, 1-70
9	11/4-11/9	Apologetics in Practice	Miracles, 71-171
10	11/11-11/16	Apologetics in Practice	Miracles, 173-273

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenportinstitute.org See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal : Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenportinstitute.org If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenport will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than

a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	

Passing ≥ 93 : A • ≥ 90 : A- • ≥ 87 : B+ • ≥ 83 : B • ≥ 80 : B- • ≥ 77 : C • ≥ 73 : C

Retake if Core 70–72: C- • ≥ 67 : D+ • ≥ 63 : D • ≥ 60 : D- • < 60 : F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com