WORLD RELIGIONS & APOLOGETICS

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

…always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect…

1 Peter 3:15-16

General Objectives

- Gain a general understanding of the world's major religions, including "offshoots" of Biblical Christianity.
- Identify various "on ramps" to be able to engage people of other religions with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Experience a worship service/tour of a different religion (temples, mosques, etc.).
- Explore the history of Apologetics.
- Gain a working knowledge of the main areas of apologetics commonly used today: Existence of God, Reliability of Scripture, Resurrection of Jesus, The Problem of Evil/Suffering, Science and Faith, Historical and Archaeological Evidence, Truth and Relativism, Morality and Ethics.
- A sharp focus on "Apologetics at the Cross", understanding that people are not just *thinking beings*, but also *believing beings* as well as *desiring beings* and *feeling beings*. As a result, an effective modern apologetic needs to be holistic.
- Learning how to rely on the Holy Spirit to engage the unbelieving world effectively and compassionately.

Homework

- Students are expected to stay current on reading & video assignments and complete Discussion Questions from the books as assigned.
- Students will need to create a list of "talking points" to use when discussing faith with members of the other religions discussed in class.
- Heavy emphasis on class discussions and special projects like visiting a house of worship (Mosque, Buddhist Temple, Hindu Temple, Synagogue) and two interviews with members of another faith and/or another worldview (agnostic or atheist).
- These projects will require writing a short paper (500-word minimum) outlining the student's experience and main takeaways.
- Subscribe/Follow major players in the world of Christian apologetics via social media/YouTube (discussed in class) like Wes Huff, Frank Turek, Red Pen Logic, Dr. James Tour, Gavin Ortlund, William Lane Craig, Sam Shamoun (debates Muslims), and others.
- Prepare a TOP 10 LIST for the final class of your main takeaways from this course.

Grades

There are several different components that make up the overall grade:

- **5% Start-Up Testing/Why I Believe**
- **25% Personal Reflections** – These are a series of questions from assigned chapters in COOPER covering various major world religions, as well as personal "talking points" for engaging people of those faiths with a Christian worldview and the Gospel.
- **30% Religious Site Visits** – We will be taking tours/attending services of at least four different religious temples/sites. *Students must attend at least two.* After each site visit, students need to write a paper discussing

their impressions, reflections, and overall thoughts about the experience (500 word minimum).

- **40% Personal Interviews** – Students are required to complete two personal interviews with a member of another religion and/or has a different worldview (agnostic/atheist). There will be a series of prompting questions available to help students conduct the interview. This will help the students apply what they are learning in the "real world" as well as providing them with an opportunity to work on general engagement skills.

Required Materials

Apologetics at the Cross by Joshua Chatraw and Mark Allen, Zondervan Academic, 2018

Christianity and World Religions by Derek Cooper, P&R Publishing, 2013

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Frank Turek and Norman Geisler, Crossway, 2004

SYLLABUS

SPRING 2027

Week of 1/4:

Introduction: Why study other religions? What is the role of apologetics in the Christian life? What do you know right now? Goals for our semester together.

- Bring your "Why I Believe" short essay to class.
- Bring your 2 Intro Quizzes to class (World Religions + Christian Denominations – both on Canvas).
- Read the Introduction in COOPER *before class*.

For NEXT week:

- **Read Ch. 1 in COOPER and Chapter 7 of the Hindu Bhagavad Gita (easily found online).**

Week of 1/11:

Hinduism: In the Beginning. History. Religious Writings. Beliefs. Worship Practices. Point of Contact.

For NEXT week:

- **Read Ch. 2 in Cooper and the Gautma Buddha quotes on Canvas under Files – pick three that you can match to a passage of Scripture and list.**
- **Your Talking Points for engaging Hindus (at least 3).**
- **Hinduism Discussion Questions 1 & 3 in Cooper.**

Week of 1/18:

Buddhism: In the Beginning. History. Religious Writings. Beliefs. Worship Practices. Point of Contact.

For NEXT week:

- **Read Ch. 4 in COOPER.**
- **Talking Points for engaging Buddhists (at least 3).**
- **Buddhism Discussion Questions 4 & 5 in Cooper.**

Week of 1/25:

Judaism: In the Beginning. History. Religious Writings. Beliefs. Worship Practices. Point of Contact.

For NEXT week:

- **Read Ch. 5 in COOPER**
- **Talking Points for engaging Jews (at least 3).**

- **Judaism Discussion Questions 1 & 4 in Cooper.**

Week of 2/1:

Islam: Current Events Awareness. In the Beginning. History. Religious Writings. Beliefs. Worship Practices. Point of Contact.

For NEXT Week:

- **Research the basics of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventism, and Unitarian Universalism (links on Canvas).**
- **Talking Points for engaging Muslims (at least 3).**
- **Islam Discussion Questions 2, 3, and 5 in Cooper.**

Week of 2/8:

Christian Adjacent Movements: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventism, Christian Science, Unitarian Universalism.

For NEXT Week:

- **Read Ch. 7 and the Conclusion in Cooper and be ready to discuss in class.**
- **Talking Points for engaging (pick 2 of the Christian Adjacent groups).**
- **Begin reading excerpts from *The Augustine Way* (on Canvas), and in *Apologetics at the Cross* (you need to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 & 2 *before* we start Apologetics in Week 8).**

Week of 2/15:

Christian Denominations: Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. We will look at the major doctrines and differences between them and

discuss ways for effectively engaging for potential Gospel conversations as needed.

For NEXT Week:

- **Finish reading excerpts from *TAW* and chapters 1 & 2 in *AATC*.**

Week of 2/22:

Apologetics at the Cross: Why do we do apologetics? Thinkers/Feelers/Believers. Inside Out Apologetics. History of apologetics. Key terms and approaches.

For AFTER Spring Break:

- **Read chapter 5 & 8 in *Apologetics at the Cross*.**

Week of 3/1:

SPRING BREAK!

Week of 3/8:

Making Sense of the Methods: Classical Apologetics. Evidentialist Apologetics. Presuppositional Apologetics. Experiential/Narrative Apologetics.

For NEXT Week:

- **Read chapter 3 in *Atheist***
- **Make yourself familiar with The Cosmological Argument by doing some research online or via AI platforms like Grok or ChapGPT.**

Week of 3/15:

Appealing to the Whole Person + The Cosmological Argument: We need to meet people where they are, which involves a holistic approach. The Cosmological

Argument looks at origins and causation (Big Bang; Unmoved Mover; Causation; Why is there Something rather than Nothing?).

For NEXT Week:

- **Watch *Universe Designed* (available on Amazon to rent).**
- **Make a list of what you found to be the most compelling evidence for a Creator and bring to class.**
- **Read chapter 4 in *Atheist***

Week of 3/22:

The Teleological Argument: Maybe the reason our world, galaxy, and universe all look designed…is because they were. This argument considers intelligent design theory, fine-tuning, irreducible complexity, molecular complexity, and the anthropic principle. We will also be discussing *Universe Designed*.

For NEXT Week:

- **Read Chapters 12-13 in *Apologetics at the Cross*.**
- **Read chapter 9 in *Atheist*.**
- **Watch *Why I Choose to Believe the Bible* by Voddie Baucham (link in Files on Canvas).**

Week of 3/29:

Reliability of Scripture: Manuscript evidence, archaeology, prophecy, textual criticism. Comparing the bible to other religious books. Common attacks against the Bible.

For NEXT Week:

- **Watch J. Warner Wallace *Did Jesus Really Die and Come Back to Life?* (link in Files on Canvas)**
- **Look up to most common objections most critics raise against the historicity of Jesus' resurrection (stolen body, wrong tomb, swoon, etc.) and bring your list to class next week.**
- **Read chapter 12 in *Atheist***

Week of 4/5:

Jesus and the Resurrection: Extrabiblical sources for Christ, external evidence, minimal facts, lunatic/liar/lord, arguments against the resurrection.

For NEXT Week:

- **Watch *The Moral Argument: Why Good Suggests God* by Gavin Ortlund (link in Files on Canvas).**
- **Read pages 299-303 in *Apologetics at the Cross***
- **Read chapter 7 in *Atheist***

Week of 4/12:

The Moral Argument: Objective moral values and duties, necessity of God, syllogism, moral realism, the explanatory claim.

For NEXT Week:

- **Watch two videos on The Problem of Evil – Gavin Ortlund + Frank Turek (links in Files on Canvas).**
- **Bring your list to class of the most difficult topics for you to deal with re: evil in the world (e.g. infant death, abortion, sickness, tragedy, etc.)**
- **Read Appendix 1 in *Atheist* ("If God, Why Evil?")**

Week of 4/19:

The Problem of Evil: IF God is all good & all powerful…then WHY evil? What is evil, anyway? Freewill. A theodicy of evil. The Greater Good defense. Eschatological (future justice). Handling objections with your heart.

For NEXT Week:

- **Read chapters 1-2 in *Atheist*.**
- **Watch *9 Logical Fallacies* (link in Files on Canvas)**

Week of 4/26:

Truth, Logic, and Logical Fallacies: Absolute Truth, argumentation rights & wrongs, crafting a valid argument, avoiding/spotting logical fallacies.

For our FINAL Week:

- **Prepare your TOP 10 List of takeaways from this class and prepare to discuss & turn in.**

Week of 5/3:

Finishing Well…Where Do We Go from Here?