

Unit Outline



QTC



PE420/620 Christian Apologetics

QUEENSLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

About this Unit Outline

This unit outline contains information essential to finding your way around the unit **Christian Apologetics**. It provides a structure for your learning, giving details of lecture topics, assessment requirements, and key resources.

UNIT OUTLINE **SEMESTER 1 2016**

Important notice

While every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the information given below, **it is the personal responsibility of each student to check the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook**, copies of which may be found in the Library or online at www.actheology.edu.au

It is very important that students plan their time carefully to ensure that reading and especially assignments receive adequate attention and so as to prevent a bottleneck of work at the end of the semester.

It is very important that all quoted material in assignments be properly footnoted and acknowledged. The attention of students is drawn to the section in the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook, headed "**Academic Misconduct**". Failure to comply with the standards required will incur penalties as outlined in the ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook.

The attention of students is also drawn to the section in the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook, headed "**Guidelines for Essays.**" (see also the QTC Student Handbook) All essays should comply with these standards.

Information about this unit

Unit description

This unit is designed to help students explore and develop proficiency in the discipline of Christian apologetics, the task of defending the Christian faith from attacks and commending it against rival claimants. This involves examination of the biblical and theological foundations for apologetics, philosophical issues regarding the nature of truth and when there is epistemological warrant for beliefs, and some awareness of the history of apologetics throughout the centuries. From there the unit will consider the arguments for and against the major 'schools' or approaches to apologetics in the current era so that students may make an informed decision as to which approach best commends the gospel on its own terms. With this framework appropriated, the unit will then turn to the various classical arguments for the existence of God from natural theology, arguments for the Christian faith arising from special revelation, understanding the nature of various critiques on Christian claims and responses that have been made to these, as well as critical interaction with some of the main alternatives to Christianity.

Learning objectives

PE420 Learning Outcomes

Know and understand:

1. Apologetics as the defence and commendation of the Christian Gospel
2. Apologetics, theology and the nature of truth
3. Critiques of Christian faith
4. Alternatives to Christian belief
5. Strategies to defend and commend Christian faith

Be able to:

1. Discuss the nature of Christian apologetics
2. Assess critiques of Christianity from a Christian perspective
3. Evaluate alternatives to Christian belief from a Christian perspective
4. Engage in Christian apologetics
5. Present an analytical evidence-based argument or perspective

Be in a position to:

1. Integrate responses to critiques of Christianity into biblical interpretation and Christian thinking
2. Use Christian responses to critiques of Christianity for personal understanding and in ministry contexts
3. Defend and commend the truth claims of the Christian faith

PE620 Learning OutcomesKnow and understand:

1. Apologetics as the defence and commendation of the Christian Gospel
2. Apologetics, theology and the nature of truth
3. Critiques of Christian faith
4. Alternatives to Christian belief
5. Strategies to defend and commend Christian faith
6. Historic and contemporary approaches to Christian apologetics

Be able to:

1. Analyse the nature of Christian apologetics
2. Compare and contrast critiques of Christianity from a Christian perspective
3. Critique alternatives to Christian belief from a Christian perspective
4. Engage in Christian apologetics
5. Present a critical evidence-based argument or perspective
6. Evaluate historic and contemporary approaches to Christian apologetics

Be in a position to:

1. Integrate responses to critiques of Christianity into biblical interpretation and Christian thinking
2. Use Christian responses to critiques of Christianity for personal understanding and in ministry contexts
3. Defend and commend the truth claims of the Christian faith

How this Unit Contributes to the Course

The TH units in the ACT courses are designed to sum up biblical teaching in key areas and integrate your understanding of the content of the biblical texts taken as a whole with the insights of historical and contemporary theology on the matters in question. It is intended that this unit will assist candidates to be able to better know, worship and declare the God who is revealed in Scripture above all as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who has acted supremely towards humanity in the work of his incarnate Son. This unit aims to help integrate the findings of units in biblical studies and provide a foundation for ministry practices developed in the practical theology units.

Pre-requisites and Co-requisites

PE420 is an advanced-level (400-level) elective unit in the Diploma of Theology, Diploma of Ministry, Associate Degree of Theology (includes WordWorks), Bachelor of Theology and Bachelor of Ministry courses. PE620 is an advanced-level elective unit in the Master of Divinity & Graduate Diploma of Divinity.

Students enrolling in this unit need to have successfully completed two units (8cps) of 300 level OT and/or NT and /or CH and/or PE and/or TH.

How this unit is organized & what we expect of you

The unit is taught week by week right through the Semester of 13 weeks. There are three classes each week, each of 50 minutes duration. Some of these classes will be in traditional lecture format, others will be variously seminar-type discussions involving the whole group, small group discussions, or in-class student exercises.

This unit is worth 4 credit points towards your degree. At Bachelor level, a 4 cp unit is considered to require a total time commitment of 6-8 hrs per week, and 7-9 hours at MDiv level. Please speak with the lecturer as a matter of urgency if you are finding that you need to consistently spend more time than this on PE420/620.

Students are expected to attend all lectures, complete any set reading and complete any assessment tasks by the relevant due date. Please do be in touch with the QTC Registrar as soon as you can if you anticipate having any difficulties with your assessments or with meeting the due date. Note: Assignments submitted late and without an extension granted will incur late penalties (please refer to student handbook). Full attendance at lectures is required for all units in the ACT; repeated absences without reason and permission may result in application of the ACT's policy that your final assessment for this unit will not be marked, resulting in failure of this unit.

Teaching staff

LECTURER

Mark Baddeley

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Feel free to contact me with any questions during the Semester. We can discuss brief questions after class or at morning tea or lunchtime. If a longer time is required, please contact me by email to set up a time to talk.

Unit timetable: topics & teaching and learning activities

	LECTURE TOPIC
WEEK 1	Introduction, Theological Foundations
WEEK 2	Theological Foundations, Epistemological Considerations
WEEK 3	History of Apologetics
WEEK 4	Apologetic Frameworks
PREACHING CONFERENCE WEEK	No Lectures
WEEK 5	Apologetic Frameworks
WEEK 6	Cosmological, design, and moral arguments for the existence of God
EASTER HOLIDAYS	No Lectures
WEEK 7	Ontological and other natural theology arguments
WEEK 8	Arguments for the resurrection and the canon of Scripture
WEEK 9	The problem of evil and suffering
WEEK 10	The challenge to Christian exclusivity from the existence of other faiths
WEEK 11	The challenge to Christian truth claims from the OT and the doctrine of Hell
WEEK 12	Major alternatives to the Christian faith
WEEK 13	Constructing an apologetic approach

PE420 Assessments

Assessments are submitted online via Moodle.

In order to pass the unit, you must submit all assessment pieces and attain a mark of at least 50% for the unit as a whole.

Late submission of assessment, without prior permission, will be taken into account in determining your mark.

Your essays must also be within 10% of the required word limit and your ability to meet this requirement will also be taken into account in determining your mark. QTC seeks to prepare you for ministry, and in ministry delivering presentations on time & within an acceptable length are essential skills.

ASSESSMENT TASK(S)	DESCRIPTION
2500 Word Research Essay 50% of Final Grade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe and critically evaluate the apologetic strategy in one substantial extant work by one of the Apologists 2. Outline some of the key challenges to the Christian faith offered by the New Atheism and some of the ways in which these challenges can be met. 3. Is it possible to defend the rationality of the Christian faith without implicitly endorsing an 'I understand in order to believe' view of the relationship of faith and reason? 4. What difference, if any, is there in apologetic practice between arguing from general revelation and offering a natural theology? What are the implications of your answer for how we should undertake apologetics? 5. Critically evaluate the usefulness of Aquinas 'five ways' as an argument for the existence of God. 6. Critically evaluate two theodicies for their utility in responding to the problems of evil and/or suffering. 7. Critically evaluate the usefulness of the argument from the fine tuning of the universe for the existence of God
Take Home Exam 2500 words 50% of Final Grade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter to the editor for the newspaper (500 words) 2. Brief tract to be handed out to interested non-Christians (1000 words) 3. Item in the church bulletin (1000 words) <p>All three items will have a choice of topics selected from material covered in the unit to be the unit of that part of the assessment task.</p>

PE620 Assessments

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In order to pass the unit, you must submit all assessment pieces and attain a mark of at least 50% for the unit as a whole.

Late submission of assessment, without prior permission, will be taken into account in determining your mark.

Your essays must also be within 10% of the required word limit and your ability to meet this requirement will also be taken into account in determining your mark. QTC seeks to prepare you for ministry, and in ministry delivering presentations on time & within an acceptable length are essential skills.

ASSESSMENT TASK(S)	DESCRIPTION
3,000 word Research Essay 50% of Final Grade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe and critically evaluate Athanasius' apologetic strategy in <i>Against the Gentiles</i> 2. Outline the nature of the challenge to the Christian faith presented in Hume's <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> and some of the ways in which these challenges can be met. 3. How should a 'faith seeking understanding' view of the relationship of faith and reason influence our approach to apologetics? 4. Should apologetics focus more on arguments from creation or from special revelation (e.g. Scripture, the cross)? Why? 5. Critically evaluate the usefulness of the ontological argument and the argument that belief in God is a basic belief as arguments for the existence of God. 6. How should a Christian apologist respond to the challenge of the problems of evil and suffering? 7. Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for the existence of God from the existence of morality.
Take Home Exam 3,000 words 50% of Final Grade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter to the editor for the newspaper (500 words) 2. Brief tract to be handed out to interested non-Christians (1300 words) 3. Item in the church bulletin (1200 words) <p>All three items will have a choice of topics selected from material covered in the unit to be the unit of that part of the assessment task.</p>

Guide to Assessments

Research Essay

In this unit we are looking for the research essay to offer a *sustained persuasive argument*. This involves several factors.

First, it requires you to have *articulated a clear answer to the question*—preferably one that you have written out in a sentence or two before you begin writing the essay. This answer should be clearly stated in the essay—often in the introduction, but certainly in the conclusion. Stronger essays are ones whose answers demonstrate one or more of: grasping the essence of the issues, offering something comprehensive, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the issues rather than one that, while accurate, is at a more introductory level, and showing an understanding of the implications of the answer.

Second, it requires you to *offer evidence* for your answer. There should be information in the essay that is relevant to the question and which supports your answer. Some essays may also want to discuss evidence that could be used to reject your answer and show why it doesn't actually do that when understood correctly.

Third, it requires you to *show how* the evidence you include actually does support your answer. A common mistake students make is to include information—quotes, Scriptural passages or the like—and do nothing with them but to have them in the essay as though their significance for their answer is self-evident. It almost never is to the reader (however much it might be to the writer) without explicit commentary that takes the reader by the hand and explains how that information helps supports the case they are making.

Fourth, it requires you to try and *persuade your reader that your answer is the correct one*. Good apologetic essays don't treat the exercise as a case of 'show and tell'—where the idea is simply to get all the ideas and information out and the order in which they come doesn't matter. Instead, the writer thinks about how to organize their material so as to build a case for their answer in the most persuasive fashion they can.

Finally, it requires you to identify what material is critical for the type of question you are answering, and show how this source stands behind your answer. The challenge in apologetics is that potentially there are a wide range of possible reasons to give the answers that you do—the teaching of Scripture, theological considerations, philosophical issues or the findings of reasoned argument, reflection upon the world—all could potentially be invoked to justify an answer, and better answers will demonstrate an awareness of when to invoke support from these different resources and the kind of resources that they can offer, as well as where they are limited. There should also be signs that you engaged with scholars and critics of your answer.

Take Home Exam

The three tasks that comprise the take home exam are intended to assess your ability to do apologetics in practice. Most of the advice given for the research essay applies to the tasks involved in the take home exam, with three additional dimensions.

First, that the items need to be written in good popular prose rather than good academic prose. Vocabulary, sentence structure and the like should be chosen with a view to writing something that is easily read by an average reasonably well-educated reader.

Second, that each of the tasks involves a slightly different 'genre' of writing and a different audience. A letter to the editor, a blurb in a church bulletin, and an apologetic tract to be read by an interested seeker are all speaking to different audiences using slightly different 'rules' of persuasion. Identifying one's goals and the kind of arguments that will be persuasive to differing audiences is an important part of this task, one that demonstrates your ability to not simply grasp the theory of apologetics but also your proficiency with the practical task.

Finally, that this task remains an essentially academic exercise, and so while there needs to be a serious attempt made to produce an actual piece of writing along the lines set, nonetheless the main focus will be on the content of the argument rather than the rhetorical and polemical constructions used to drive the arguments home. Most words should be used for offering apologetic arguments rather than communication devices that harness minimal actual apologetic content.

Learning Resources

ESSENTIAL REFERENCES

There are two essential references for this course. Students may also find specific items from the other references section sufficiently valuable to them to warrant purchase.

Cowan, S. B., (ed.), *Five Views on Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Groothuis, D., *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011

OTHER REFERENCES

Key references:

Campbell-Jack, C. et al., eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. Leicester: IVP, 2006.

Craig, W. L., *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. 3rd ed. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008.

Section A: Apologetics and the Nature of Truth

Alexander, D. (ed.), *Can We be Sure about Anything? : Science, Faith and Postmodernism*. Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

Cowan, S. B., (ed.), *Five Views on Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Dulles, A. R., *A History of Apologetics*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.

Edgar W., *Reasons of the Heart; Recovering Christian Persuasion*. 2nd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.

Oliphint, K. S., L. G. Tipton, eds., *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007.

Oliphint, K. S., *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending our Faith*. Phillipsburgh, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003.

Sire, J. W., *Why Good Arguments Often Fail: Making a More Persuasive Case for Christ*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.

Stackhouse, J. G., *Humble Apologetic: Defending the Faith Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Taylor, J., *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Section B: Critiques of the Christian Faith

Astley, J., et al., *Problems in Theology: Science and Religion*. London: T & T Clark, 2004.

Barnett, P., *Finding the Historical Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Copan, P. and W. L. Craig, *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering New Atheists & Other Objectors*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2009.

Demski, W. A. and J. M. Kushiner, eds., *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001.

Dickson, J., *The Christ Files: How Historians Know What They Know About Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010

Falk, D. R., *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds Between Faith and Biology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Hunter, C. M., *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001.

Johnson, P., *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

Kaiser, W. C. Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2001.

Keller T., *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Penguin, 2008.

McGrath, A., and McGrath, J. C., *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Samples, K. R., *World of Difference, A: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Stackhouse, J. G., Jr. *Can God Be Trusted? Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008.

Section C: Alternatives to Christian Belief

Baggini, J., *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Clifford, R. and Johnson, P., *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age: Communicating Christ in Today's Spiritual Supermarket*. Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2001.

Dickson, J., *A Spectator's Guide to World Religions: An Introduction to the Big Five*. Sydney: Blue Bottle Books, 2004.

Glaser, I., *The Bible and Other Faiths, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Green, M., *But Don't All Religions Lead to God?: Navigating the Multi-faith Maze*. Leicester: IVP, 2002.

Hart, K., *Postmodernism: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004.

Johnson, E. L. and Stanton, S. L., eds. *Psychology and Christianity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

Netland, H., *Encountering Religious Pluralism The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001.

Smart, S., *A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews: Ten Ways of Understanding Life Five*. Sydney: Blue Bottle, 2007.

Zacharias, R., *Jesus among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*. Nashville: Word, 2000.

Classics:

Bush, L. R., ed. *Classical readings in Christian apologetics, A.D. 100-1800*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Lewis, C. S., *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948.

Lewis, C. S., *The Abolition of Man*. New York: Macmillan, 1975, 1st Published 1947.

McGrath, A. E., *Bridge-building: Effective Christian Apologetics*. Leicester: IVP, 1992.

Montgomery, J. W., *Faith Founded On Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics*. Nashville and New York: Thomas Nelson, 1978.

Newbigin, L., *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Richardson, A., *Christian Apologetics*. London: S.C.M., 1955.

Schaeffer, F., *The God Who is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1998.

Van Til, C., *The Defense of the Faith*. 3rd ed. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967.

ACT Standards: Grades

Grades in assessment instruments are awarded in the following categories-

Grade	Score	GPA
Fail (F)	0-49%	0
Pass (P)	50-57%	1
Pass+ (P+)	58-64%	1.5
Credit (C)	65-74%	2
Distinction (D)	75-84%	3
High Distinction (HD)	85+%	4