

Apologetics: The Challenge of Secularism, the New Atheists, and Islam

GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Arizona Campus

L3300-51 Special Studies in Philosophy, Apologetics

James White

Summer, 2009

602-973-4602

ahl.al.kitab@aomin.org / <http://www.aomin.org/articles/bio.html>

Course Description: Two great challenges to the Christian faith will be examined in this intensive summer course. The first will be the challenge of the “New Atheism,” the media-friendly, university based attack upon the Christian faith exemplified by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Bart Ehrman. While this movement is not “new” in reality, its attacks must be answered by each generation of faithful believers. On the other end of the spectrum we have Islam, a major world religion that cannot identify its own theology outside of a negation of Christian belief. Both are major players in our world today, and both call for the Christian to know their faith in-depth so as to proclaim the gospel with clarity and power.

Course Learning Outcomes: A functional familiarity with the worldview and argumentation of the modern atheists will give the student an understanding of the basic foundational truths of the Faith that he or she must master so as to be able to give “a reason for the hope within” (1 Peter 3:15). A full and balanced knowledge of Islamic belief, and an understanding of Islamic practice, will give to the student a deeper appreciation of the centrality of Jesus Christ, the cost of discipleship, and a call to evangelization of the Muslim people. J1, J2, F11, F14, M15, M17, R19.

Course Objectives: This course will seek to allow the student to advance in understanding and knowledge of the specific claims and argumentation of modern day atheists, as well as the history and form of religious expression within Islam, and in providing an evangelistic and apologetic response thereto. This will involve:

- 1) Understand the conflict of worldviews that underlies the apologetic task in responding to modern naturalistic materialism/humanism/Darwinianism.
- 2) Understand the central core of Christian beliefs that need to be fully grasped so as to engage in the apologetic task.
- 3) Understanding and appreciating Islamic religious practice, the Five Pillars, and the all-controlling aspect of Islamic law.
- 4) What of Dawah and Jihad? How do we respond to Islamic apologetics and related challenges?

Evaluation: This is a summer intensive course, hence, students need to get an early start on the reading so as to be able to participate in class discussions. Likewise, such short classes preclude a great deal of research. Given the schedule of the class, there is an “open” week between the two weeks of classroom instruction. The first set of book reviews will be due at the end of that week; the second set five days after our last class. *These are short time periods and the student should schedule his or her activities in light of these strictures.* In general, the topic of the New Atheism and a biblical response thereto will come in the first week, and Islam will be covered in the second.

Grading will be based upon the following items:

Book reviews: Students are to write a 3-4 page review of four of the textbooks. These reviews should briefly outline the major points of the work and provide positive and negative commentary. **The first two reviews of Komoszweski/Sawyer/Wallace and Richard Pratt will be due Monday, June 15th in class at the beginning of the second week of instruction.**

The second two reviews of Ellass and White are due Friday, June 19th. Please submit these in electronic format (Word, PDF, RTF) to the e-mail address above.

