

Contemporary Apologetics for the Classically Minded Student

Fall and Spring Semester

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Students of Contemporary Apologetics

Contemporary Apologetics is a two-part course intended for 11-12th grade students. This course is designed to prepare students to address questions relevant to today's postmodern culture. In a time where truth and morality are fluid, it is essential to understand that without unconditional standards, our society loses direction. As secularism has replaced faith in the public square, the concept of a transcendent God is no longer seen as necessary. The course will offer a historical, philosophical, and scientific overview of how Western Civilization shifted from a belief in an absolute creator to a belief that nature is all that exists. We will analyze current and historical arguments for and against the Christian World View as they relate to the questions of: What is truth? Does God exist? Why is there evil in the World? Is there a moral law? Are science and faith in opposition? What is the purpose and meaning of man (Aristotle's formal and final causes)? Students will discover fallacies as they apply logic and reasoning to secular arguments and gain the understanding that rational faith is essential to human flourishing. We will cover a variety of topics including the science and origins of the universe, identity as children of God, evil and suffering, the resurrection, morality, and more. Students will be expected to interact and bring thoughtful questions. They will be expected to read articles, contribute to online discussion topics, submit two short papers and a book review.

SCHEDULE FOR Contemporary Apologetics Fall and Spring

Fall Semester Part 1 starts Thursday, September 8, 2023, and will end Thursday, January 19, 2024.

Spring Semester Part 2 starts Tuesday, January 23, 2024, and will end Thursday, May 23, 2024.

Section 01 Tuesday, Thursday* 3:30 – 4:15 pm CT

Important Dates:

- September 19, 2023: last day to add/drop
- October 27, 2023: last day of Quarter 1 (closing of Q1 progress report)
- November 20 – 24, 2023: Thanksgiving holiday (no classes)
- December 15, 2023 – January 8, 2024: Christmas and New Year's holidays (no classes)
- January 19, 2024: last day of fall semester and Quarter 2 (closing of Q2 progress report)
- February 19 – Friday, February 23, 2024: winter break (no classes)
- March 22, 2024: last day of Quarter 3 (closing of Q3 progress report)
- Monday, March 25 – Friday, March 29, 2024: Holy Week/Easter holiday (no classes)

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday and Thursday mornings by appointment.

*These are anticipated dates for this course. However, they are subject to change as circumstances might dictate. Session(s) canceled will be rescheduled at an alternate time.

Contemporary Apologetics for the Classically Minded Student

Fall Semester Tentative Map for Contemporary Apologetics

First Quarter (September 8th - October 26th)

Topic 1: What is Apologetics?

Topic 2: What is Truth and Knowledge?

Topic 3: Greek Roots of Reality (Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Democritus).

Topic 4: Arguments for the reality of God (Anselm, Aquinas, Al Ghazali).

Topic 5: What is the purpose of Man: (Aristotle, Aquinas, Jesus).

Second Quarter (October 31st - January 19th)

Topic 6: The Problem of Evil: (Augustine, C.S. Lewis).

Topic 7: How we know the Bible is real? (Evidence from archeology and history, J. Morrow).

Topic 8. Is there proof for the resurrection? (Testimony of Early church Fathers: Ignatius, Justin Martyr).

Topic 9. Myths from the Middle Ages (Dark Age, Flat Earth, Church's suppression of science, Crusades).

Topic 10. Argument against the Copernicium Revolution and the demotion of man. (Neil deGrasse Tyson)

Spring Semester Tentative Map for Contemporary Apologetics

Third Quarter (January 23rd - March 21st)

Topic 1: What is philosophy? (Defining terms: Rationalism, Empiricism, Materialism, Realism, ...)

Topic 2. Is the universe a machine? (Descartes, William Paley)

Topic 3. Creation and Evolution (the arguments for both viewpoints will be discussed).

Topic 4. The Argument for Design (Stephen C. Meyer).

Topic 5. Are Miracles Possible? (C.S. Lewis, Hume).

Fourth Quarter (March 22nd - May 23rd)

Topic 6. Argument for morality (C.S. Lewis).

Topic 7. How does our Worldview affect our understanding of Truth? (Nancy Pearcey)

Topic 8. Argument for the Compatibility of Science and Religion (Michael Keas)

Topic 9. Agency, Common Sense, and the Limits of Reason (C. K. Chesterton, F. Schaeffer)

Topic 10. Can humans flourish without God? (Nietzsche, Dawkins, J.T. Pennington).

Contemporary Apologetics for the Classically Minded Student

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Designated notebook or 3 ring binder with pockets for handouts,
- *MLA Handbook* 8th Edition
- Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel (or equivalent software).
- Ability to create PDF files for submitting coursework is required.
- Printer with scanner (ability to print worksheets and scan homework)
- *How to Know God Exists* (2022) by Josh D. McDowell and Thomas Williams

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will think through and critique arguments from both a Christian and non-Christian perspective along a historical timeline leading up to today. They will learn how to use logic maps to identify the reasoning of classical and modern arguments for the various topics. They will also be expected to critique provided articles, essays, and to write a book review from an approved book on a covered topic of their choice. The goal of the course is to show how the Christian worldview allows for human flourishing in contrast with the self-refuting arguments of Post modernism.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

The expectations of parents are that they will ensure that their student has all required materials needed for the course, a stable internet connection, a distraction-free environment for class sessions, and adequate time to study and complete assigned work outside of class sessions. Parent assistance with assignments is not expected nor required. If your student is struggling with an assignment and asks for help, it is encouraged for parents to provide help. It is also strongly encouraged for students to reach out to Mrs. Joslin, either in class or via email for help or clarification.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS- EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Executive Function Skills are qualities and skill sets that students can develop and hone to better approach the courses, lectures, readings, and teachers they will encounter in their journey as a student and align closely with Student Virtues contained in the Student-Parent Handbook. Students in this class should exhibit the following Executive Function Skills throughout the year:

Engagement: The student views class sessions as opportunities to learn and be in fellowship with the instructor and classmates. He is polite and attentive during class sessions, listens actively when others are speaking, and supplies answers, asks questions, and participates in class discussions. The student keeps his video on and stays focused on viewing the Zoom screen (not distracted by other screens).

Self-Control: The student raises his hand during class, speaks when called on to do so (and not out of and turn), remains on-task, and shares relevant questions, comments, and ideas. He resists temptations to view other screens or use other devices, play games, work on other schoolwork or activities, or distract the instructor and classmates with disruptive behaviors.

Responsibility: The student completes and submits all assignments by the due date, arrives on time to all class sessions, regularly checks Canvas for class information and updates, communicates with the instructor promptly with questions and requests for help, and makes use of offered resources.

Initiative: The student thinks about his own learning and discerns whether he understands the lesson or topic. He receives instructor feedback humbly and applies it to future assignments. The student actively communicates with the instructor (and/or parents) to seek help and ask questions if necessary. He strives to take ownership of his own learning.

Contemporary Apologetics for the Classically Minded Student

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

The instructor will facilitate learning and will provide plentiful opportunities for practice and growth in our topics of study. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to be an active learner both in and out of the class sessions. The student must stay up to date with assignments and take initiative to ask the instructor and/or parents for help when it is needed.

The student is expected to:

- Arrive on time to class sessions with required materials.
- Attend the entire class with his video on.
- Listen attentively.
- Participate **actively** in class sessions – They should be willing to join class discussion, ask questions, and supply answers. Further, they should approach class time as an opportunity to grow in self-knowledge as well as historical understanding. Thus, they should expect to engage with others during each class. Embrace mistakes as opportunities to learn.
- Seek help if struggling with lessons or assignments.
- Use technology as approved by instructor to complete assignments.
- Complete and submit all assignments by the due date.

A student who has not completed assigned work prior to the start of a class session will not be well-prepared to learn or participate in the lesson. If there are extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from completing an assignment, students or parents should contact the instructor via email to request an extension.

Students will submit their work by scanning their assignment pages to PDF and uploading them to the Canvas. Unless otherwise approved, photographs of completed assignments will NOT be accepted as they are incredibly difficult to read.

STUDENT EVALUATION: GRADING

Students will work alongside the instructor and other students as they learn and grow in their ability to articulate and identify the ideas communicated in the arguments we will study. Grades will reflect the students understanding of concepts as well as class participation, class attentiveness, work ethic, and ability to collaboration with others. Grades are associated with the following levels of mastery:

Students whose work shows mastery of the objectives passed out at the start of each topic will be the *magna cum laude* students. They will receive a grade comparable to achieving a 90% or above - a letter A.

Students whose work shows approaching mastery of the topic objectives will be *cum laude* students. They will earn a grade comparable to 80-89% or a letter B.

Students who do adequate work will be designated *satis*, and *non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy. These students will earn a grade comparable to 79% or below. Students in this range will be encouraged to re-work the assignment and may be provided with additional tutoring if needed.

Contemporary Apologetics for the Classically Minded Student

STUDENT EVALUATION: TYPES AND WEIGHTS OF ASSIGNMENTS

Mrs. Joslin will maintain a record of grades within the Canvas Learning Management System. A student's grades will be comprised of:

Essays and Book Review (30%)

Class Participation and discussion feed (30%)

Presentations, logic map, quizzes, additional assignments (40%)

All assignments are due on Canvas by the start of class on the due date unless otherwise specified. If there are extenuating circumstances that prevent a student from completing a homework assignment, Mrs. Joslin should be notified by email (prior to class time if possible) to ask for an extension. Students and parents should understand that normally assignments turned in late will earn a 10% penalty. Assignments turned in more than one week past the assigned due date normally would not be awarded credit, nor would they be corrected.

STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students will often complete assessment tests and/or quizzes privately at home. Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be completed without the use of outside materials. Additionally, plagiarism and the use of homework websites/apps is a serious and punishable offense. Any assignment found to be completed dishonestly will result in a failing grade.

THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

We will be using the free online "virtual classroom" software provided by Zoom, one of the leading companies that provides such software. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio, and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video, and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (to be sent via email and posted on Canvas that will enable students to join the virtual classroom. Canvas will be used to convey course information and assignments, to communicate with the instructor, and upload and submit assignments. Students will use scanning technology/apps (like ClearScan) to create single-file PDFs of completed assignments to submit through Schoology.