

ST5450 Apologetics

J. V. Fesko

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Class Meeting Days and Times: January 4-8, 2027, Mon-Fri, 3:00pm – 9:15pm

Course Description

Students examine the various approaches to apologetic methodology and engage the most frequently raised objections to the Christian faith.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this class is to help students (1) understand the role apologetics plays in the life and work of the ministry, (2) develop an effective apologetic method grounded in Scripture and consistent with the Reformed standards; and (3) identify and engage various common challenges, objections to, and attacks upon Christian faith on the contemporary scene.

Recording of Class Lectures

Students may not record class lectures.

Methods of Instruction

Reading, lecture, classroom discussions, essay papers, and an examination.

Required Texts

Holy Bible (any version)

J. V. Fesko, *An Introduction to Reformed Apologetics: Warring with Idols* (Baker Academic, 2026).

Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

Westminster Standards (post-1788 American revisions): WCF = Westminster Confession of Faith, WLC = Westminster Larger Catechism, WSC = Westminster Shorter Catechism

Note, there are several PDF readings listed below in the lecture schedule marked by an asterisk (*) and available on CANVAS.

Recommended Texts

C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

Course Assignments

Course Readings (20%): completion of all assigned reading. Please report your reading by the last day of class through Canvas. **Late reports will not be accepted and will result in an assignment failure.** Course readings include all assigned textbook reading and PDFs available through Canvas.

Participation (10%): attend and actively participate in lectures and class discussions. Note the following grading rubric:

A (100-94)	B (93-84)	C (83-78)	D (77-69)	F (69 – 0)
Provided many good ideas for class consideration; inspired others; clearly communicated desires, ideas, questions, and comments. Was respectful of others.	Participated in discussions; shared questions and comments. Was respectful of others.	Listened mainly; occasionally asked a question or offered a comment. Was respectful of others.	Seemed bored with discussions; rarely spoke up, and questions or comments were off topic. Was disrespectful of others. Or, dominated class time by not permitting others to ask their questions.	Failed to attend class—missed more than three lecture periods total.

Research Paper (35%): you must write a 12-15 page research paper written in a 12 point Times New Roman font, with 10 point Times New Roman footnotes, double-spaced, footnotes single-spaced. Place your name at the top of the first page (no title page required) and no bibliography needed. Please use *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers* for a style guide. You may write on any topic related to apologetics. **Your paper is due Friday, February 19, 2027.** You must also include the following in your paper to avoid the following automatic point deductions:

- **Abstract (5 pts)** – state the argument of your paper in approximately 100 words
- **Thesis (5 pts)** – ensure your paper has a clear thesis statement
- **Three steps (5 pts)** – ensure your paper states the three steps of your argument, i.e., how you will prove your thesis
- **Ten sources (10 pts)** – you must have ten academic sources (Bibles, confessions, web sites, blogs, newspaper articles, music are not academic sources but may be used)
- **Three journal articles (10 pts)** – you must use three academic journal articles from reputable academic journals
- **Length (10 pts)** – ensure your paper is 12-15 pages. Do not space-out your paper to stretch it to make it longer. This will result in a ten-point deduction as well.
- **Style guide check (5 pts)** – ensure your footnotes are in proper form.
- **Biblical languages (5 pts)** – make sure you appeal to the biblical languages in your paper (Greek and Hebrew fonts are not required but encouraged)
- **Late submission (10 pts per calendar day)** – submit your paper on time by the deadline to avoid this penalty

- **Papers will not be accepted after they are five days late. The professor will not contact you to remind you to submit your paper.**

Note the following grading rubric:

A (100-94)	B (93-86)	C (85-78)	D (77-70)	F (69 – 0)
Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages primary sources; provides analysis, not simply rehearses information.	Follows assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; engages minimal primary sources and is more reliant upon secondary sources; has more repetition of information than analysis	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; does not engage primary sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively; has minimal analysis.	Fails to meet assignment rules re. format, length, and sources; relies upon secondary sources exclusively, and has no analysis.	Fails to submit paper or significantly fails to meet assignment rules.

Final Exam (35%): Students will sit for a two-hour exam on CANVAS that covers questions drawn from lectures and assigned readings. **A failure to take the exam during the exam window will result in a failure on the assignment. The exam is due February 19, 2027.**

Lecture Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
Mon	Our Present Context	Fesko, 17-42
	What Makes Apologetics Reformed?	Morley, <i>Mapping Apologetics</i> , all; Fesko, 43-62; WCF I.v
	The Apostle Paul at Mars Hill: The Stoics	Acts 17:16-34; WCF V; WLC qq. 14, 18-20; WSC qq. 8, 11-12; Fesko, 63-74
	The Apostle Paul and Providence: The Epicureans	Acts 27:27-28:5; Fesko, 75-88.
Tues	Aquinas and the Reformed Tradition	*Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , qq. 1-3
	Calvin and Apologetics	Fesko, 89-104.

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SYSTEM

	Reformed Natural Theology	*Muller, "Bavinck and Kuyper on Natural Theology," 5-35; WCF I.i, vi; X.iv; XX.iv; XXI.i; WLC qq. 2, 60, 121, 151.3
Weds	Reformed Natural Theology, cont.	
	The Macrocosm: Creation	WCF IV.i; VI; WLC q. 15; Fesko, 105-40.
	The Microcosm: Humanity	Fesko, 141-78; WCF IV.ii; VII.i-ii; X.iv; XIX.iv; WLC qq. 17, 120; *Steinbeck, <i>Pastures of Heaven</i> , selections
Thur	The Resurrection	WLC q. 87; Fesko, 179-206
	Evil and Suffering	WCF I.v; Fesko, 207-34.
Fri	Evil and Suffering, cont.	
	Apologetics and Love	WCF XI.ii; XXVI.i; WLC qq. 122-51; WSC qq. 42, 63-83; Fesko, 235-54

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST5450 Apologetics

Professor: J. V. Fesko

Campus: Houston, TX

Date: Winter 2027

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	STRONG	Students are required to participate in discussions as that analyze assigned readings.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	STRONG	One of this course's foci is the exegetical foundations for apologetics.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	STRONG	The course situates apologetics within the Reformed theological tradition and examines the Westminster Standards.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	STRONG	A key point of this course is to love God by giving witness to Christ and to loving our neighbor's humbly, and sacrificially.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	STRONG	The course is about telling others about Christ and convincing them of the truthfulness of Scripture, whether inside or outside the church.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	STRONG	Defending the faith with love is a key emphasis.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	STRONG	Apologetics is about teaching believers and unbelievers to love and worship God.