NEW GENEVA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ST 513 · The History of Apologetics

Course Syllabus · Fall 2026 · 2 credit hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How has the church defended the faith over the last 2,000 years? This course traces the history of Christian apologetics, beginning with the biblical text itself and moving through church history to the modern day. We will examine how the prophets, the apostles, and the great defenders of church history answered pagans, philosophers, skeptics, and modern secularists. We will evaluate all historical methods from a firmly Reformed perspective, recognizing that true apologetics must defend the faith without compromising the authority of Scripture, the total depravity of man, or the sovereignty of God.

INSTRUCTOR AND COURSE DETAILS

INSTRUCTOR	Toby Holt, D.Min. — President, New Geneva Theological Seminary
COURSE QUESTIONS	connect@newgeneva.org
REGISTRATION & ACCESS	connect@newgeneva.org
CREDIT	2 credit hours
MEETS	Thursdays, 6:00–7:50 PM Eastern Time (US) — 1 hour 50 minutes, live by Zoom
SESSIONS	Twelve live sessions, 3 September – 3 December 2026
RECORDINGS	Video and audio are posted to the class page within a day of each session
SUBMITTING WORK	Email written work to connect@newgeneva.org

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the biblical mandate and methods for defending and contending for the faith.
- Trace the historical development of Christian apologetics from the early church right up to the contemporary era.
- Identify and critically evaluate the major apologetic methodologies (Classical, Evidential, Presuppositional) through a robust Reformed epistemological lens.
- Develop a working proficiency in the presuppositional method of Cornelius Van Til and its practical application.
- Equip students to confidently engage contemporary cultural, philosophical, and theological challenges within the context of the local church.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

> [13] And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." [15] But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; [16] having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.
>
> 1 PETER 3:13–16 (NKJV)

COURSE SCHEDULE

CLASS	DATE	TOPIC
1	Sept 3	**Introduction to Apologetics** Hour 1: Defining the Task · Hour 2: How Theology Drives Methodology
2	Sept 10	**Apologetics in the Old Testament** Hour 1: Polemics Against the False Gods · Hour 2: How the Prophets Contended for Truth
3	Sept 17	**Apologetics in the Apostolic Age** Hour 1: The Apologetics of Jesus · Hour 2: Paul and the Suppression of Truth
4	Sept 24	**The Early Church (2nd–3rd Centuries)** Hour 1: Response to the Rumors · Hour 2: Athens vs. Jerusalem
5	Oct 1	**Augustine and the Fall of Rome (4th–5th Centuries)** Hour 1: The City of God · Hour 2: The Corrupted Will and the Problem of Evil
6	Oct 8	**The Middle Ages and the Reformation Reset (11th–16th Centuries)** Hour 1: The Limits of Medieval Logic · Hour 2: The Reformation Reset
—	*Oct 15*	*Fall Recess — no class*
7	Oct 22	**The Three Approaches and the Classic Arguments** Hour 1: Classical, Evidential, Presuppositional · Hour 2: The Classic Arguments · **Midterm paper due**
8	Oct 29	**From the Enlightenment to Liberalism (17th–Early 20th Centuries)** Hour 1: The Age of Reason and the Evidentialist Trap · Hour 2: The Enemy Inside the Gates
9	Nov 5	**Theodicy, 20th Century Apologists** Hour 1: Suffering, One Way, and the Bible · Hour 2: The Church's Record; Schaeffer and Sproul
10	Nov 12	**Apologetics Today: Postmodernism and the Local Church** Hour 1: The New Battlefield · Hour 2: Equipping the Saints in the Local Church
11	Nov 19	**The Objections You Will Actually Meet** Hour 1: Scientism and the New Atheism · Hour 2: Suffering and the Hiddenness of God
—	*Nov 26*	*Thanksgiving — no class*
12	Dec 3	**The Sufficiency of Scripture in Apologetics** Hour 1: Scripture as the Ground of the Defense · Hour 2: The Spirit's Testimony and the Limits of Argument

COURSE READING

Required texts, for students taking the course for credit. Each week's reading is posted to the class page and announced in the preceding session. Complete it before class and come prepared to discuss it.

- Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd edition, ed. William Edgar (P&R, 2003) — Classes 1–5
- R. C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Crossway, 2003) — Classes 6–12
- Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* — for independent study

Recommended supplemental reading:

- Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*
- J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*

Auditors are not required to purchase these texts. You are welcome to read along, but nothing is assigned to you.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Reading Verification — 20%

Each week's reading is posted to the class page and announced in the preceding session. Complete it before class and come prepared to discuss it.

Quizzes — 20%

Three short quizzes on key figures, essential terms and methodological distinctions. Each is announced at least one week in advance.

Midterm Paper — 30% · 5–7 pages

Due at the start of Class 7, Thursday 22 October

Evaluate a historical apologist — for example Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Thomas Aquinas or William Paley. Another figure is acceptable if cleared with the instructor first. Your paper must:

1. Outline the apologist's core argument.
2. Demonstrate its historical strengths.
3. Show how the culture and age in which he spoke shaped his arguments.

Final Paper — 30% · 7–10 pages

Due Thursday 17 December

An essay making a sound, biblical defense of the faith against a specific modern worldview — for example secular humanism, atheism or postmodernism. Choose your worldview early; Classes 6–12 are the material it draws on.

Paper format. Double-spaced, 12-point serif, one-inch margins, with Turabian footnotes. Page counts assume that format.

Grading scale: A 90–100% | B 80–89% | C 70–79% | D 60–69% | F below 60%

COURSE POLICIES

Auditors are welcome. Students wishing to audit this course are warmly welcomed and encouraged to take a full part in classroom conversation and discussion. Auditors are not required to submit paperwork, complete assignments, sit quizzes or purchase texts, and do not receive academic credit. Your first New Geneva course is free to audit.

Attendance. This course meets live, and attendance means joining the session. Every class is recorded and posted, and anyone who misses is expected to watch the recording — but for students taking the course for credit a recording does not substitute for attendance. If you must miss a session, email Dr. Holt before it begins and the absence will be excused. Three unexcused absences reduce the final grade by one full letter; four or more may result in course failure.

Late assignments. Written work is due at the start of the class session named above. Late submissions incur a penalty of one letter grade per day. Work submitted more than four days late will not be accepted without prior approval.

Academic integrity and the use of AI. Original work is required, and plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade. Generative AI tools may not be used to draft, outline, or substantially revise any assignment you submit. You may use them as you would a search engine or a dictionary — to locate a source, check spelling and grammar, or clarify an unfamiliar term — provided the argument, the structure and the prose you hand in are your own. If you are unsure whether a particular use is permitted, ask before you submit rather than after.

Technology. You will need a computer or tablet with a working camera and microphone, a stable internet connection, and the Zoom client installed. The join link and any access details are published on the class page; if you have trouble getting

in, email connect@newgeneva.org and we will help.