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<https://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies/PHL501>

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DEFENDING THE FAITH  APOLOGETICS & EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

PHL 501 – Description, Rationale & Background

CURRICULAR AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

PHIL 501 is designed to familiarize the advanced undergraduate and graduate student with the nature and strategies for defending the Christian faith today. What worked 1200 years ago, 120 years ago, or even 12 years ago—does not necessarily work today. That is how fast challenges to Christianity evolve and multiply. Apologetical skills are critical to today’s scholar, teacher, preacher, or church member. Those who do not know how to defend the faith will not only find cracks in their own spirituality (a simultaneously good and bad effect), but will also communicate weakness, weak knees (or unused knees), and superficiality to others. There is a better way. Apologetics.

Peter articulated the command for learning to defend the faith (apologetics) quite well:

- ⌘ But in your hearts revere [the] Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (NIV)
- ⌘ But sanctify [the] Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect, (NASB)
- ⌘ But honor [the] Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. [Verse 16 begins: “However, do this with gentleness and respect, ...”] (HCSB)

**How** does one ensure that the Christ is **your** *raison d’être* (“your heart”)?

**About what** should you be ready to provide an explanation?

**Why** do we have difficulty providing our explanations gently and respectfully?

**Which** reason “for the hope within you” do you have the most difficulty explaining?

## JUST WHAT IS PHL 501

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This 3 hour graduate course is focused on developing the skills of providing listener/reader sensitive answers to the hope that is within us as believers in Jesus the Christ. We will review how to answer several key critics of Christianity, especially those which have current efficacy (Biblical paradoxes) and those which seem to appear and re-appear through history (e.g., questioning the deity of Jesus or His humanity).

### CLASS TEXTS

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Although other reading assignments will be made as requested and needed, these two textbooks will serve as the core of PHL 501 —

- ℵ Geisler, Norman L. Christian Apologetics, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Baker Academic Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2013. ISBN: 0801048540 (WW048548 – *both hard copy and eBook available*).
- ℵ Sproul, R. C. Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics. Crossway Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 2003. ISBN: 1433563789 (WW563782 - *hard cover*; ISBN: 9781433522796 (WW7591EB - *eBook*).
- ℵ Key Website for Accessing Additional Readings: <https://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies/PHL501>

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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- A. Read all textbooks and required reading to meet the minimum 675-page reading requirement and submit a signed affidavit concerning the completion of this requirement (to be provided).
- B. Attendance in all classes is required; the final exam is posed on the last class will be given then unless previous arrangements have been made with me.
- C. Complete a high-quality research paper that reflects the content of the textbooks as well as incorporating any insights from the reading assignment and may focus on a major topic of your choice on the course subject. The paper needs to be submitted one 168 hours (1 week) after the last class session (lateness will cause a grade deduction).
  - 1. Paper must be a minimum of ten (10) content pages in length, not including the title page and bibliography.
  - 2. Grammar, spelling, composition, neatness of presentation and depth of research are considered points of importance.
  - 3. Paper must be one-sided, double-spaced and no larger than 11 or 12pt Times New Roman font on a computer; 1 inch top & bottom, left & right margins.
  - 4. Suggested topics that could be used are:
    - a. Why Do You Believe the Bible?
    - b. The Existence of God
    - c. Proof that the Bible is the Word of God (not the Quran, Book of Mormon, etc.)
    - d. Good Versus Evil
    - e. How to Know That God Created Man
    - f. Jesus: His Deity and Humanity
    - g. How Can a Good God Allow Evil to Flourish
- D. Because this is a Master's level program of study, the student is expected to demonstrate a high level of insight and creativity in their work. Professionalism and original thought is highly desirable. Generic and vague papers will not be accepted. Expectations of the Master's student are greater than those of the undergraduate student.