

THE MODERN AUTODIDACT

APOLOGETICS & WORLDVIEW

A Comprehensive Self-Directed Course

Duration: 9-12 Months

Daily Commitment: 1-2 Hours

Integrating Reformed Theology with Rigorous Intellectual Defense

Course Overview

This course provides a systematic foundation in Christian apologetics and worldview studies, designed for the self-directed learner seeking to understand, articulate, and defend the Christian faith. Following The Modern Autodidact System, the curriculum moves from broad foundational concepts to increasingly specialized engagement with primary sources and contemporary challenges.

The course emphasizes the integration of Reformed theological commitments with apologetic methodology, exploring both presuppositional and evidential approaches while maintaining charitable engagement with alternative worldviews. Special attention is given to the philosophical foundations undergirding worldview analysis and the practical application of apologetics in contemporary cultural contexts.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Define and analyze worldviews using established conceptual frameworks
- Articulate the distinctives of the Christian worldview across its major theological traditions
- Evaluate competing apologetic methodologies and their theological presuppositions
- Engage thoughtfully with common objections to Christianity from philosophical, scientific, and cultural perspectives
- Apply worldview analysis to contemporary cultural and ethical issues
- Develop a personal apologetic approach grounded in Scripture and informed by the broader tradition

Subdisciplines Covered

1. **Worldview Studies:** The concept, analysis, and comparison of worldviews
2. **Philosophical Apologetics:** Arguments for God's existence, religious epistemology, philosophy of religion
3. **Presuppositional/Reformed Apologetics:** Van Til, Bahnsen, Oliphint, and the covenantal approach
4. **Historical & Evidential Apologetics:** Historical reliability, resurrection evidence, archaeological support
5. **Science & Faith:** Creation, evolution debates, philosophy of science, design arguments
6. **Cultural Apologetics:** Engaging contemporary challenges including deconstruction, secularism, and identity questions

Phase 1: Foundational Reading

Duration: 6-8 Weeks

Focus: Accessible introductions to worldview concepts and apologetic thinking

Begin with contemporary, accessible works that introduce the core concepts without requiring extensive background knowledge. These texts will establish the vocabulary and conceptual framework for deeper study while confirming your genuine interest in the field.

Required Reading

Title & Author	Source	Weeks
<i>Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept</i> — James W. Sire	IN LIBRARY	1-2
<i>Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview</i> — Albert M. Wolters	IN LIBRARY	2-3
<i>The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog</i> — James W. Sire	ACQUIRE	3-5
<i>Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths</i> — Alister E. McGrath	IN LIBRARY	5-6
<i>Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith</i> — Alister E. McGrath	ACQUIRE	6-8

Supplementary Materials

- *Socrates in the City: Conversations on "Life, God, and Other Small Topics"* — Eric Metaxas (IN LIBRARY) — engaging conversations for orientation
- *Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense* — Francis Spufford (IN LIBRARY) — a literary, affective approach

Phase 1 Milestone

Write a 1,500-word reflection comparing Sire's worldview framework with Wolters' creation-fall-redemption schema. Consider: What are the essential components of a worldview? How does the Reformed tradition shape worldview analysis?

Phase 2: Broad Survey Through Online Courses

Duration: 8-10 Weeks

Focus: Structured lectures providing systematic overview of the field

Online courses provide the systematic structure of formal education while allowing self-paced engagement. Focus on one primary course while supplementing with shorter lecture series.

Primary Course

Defending the Faith — R.C. Sproul (Ligonier Ministries)

- 32 lectures covering apologetic methodology, classical arguments, and Reformed foundations
- Free at Ligonier Connect; pairs well with Sproul's written works
- Estimated time: 4-5 weeks at 1 hour/day

Supplementary Lecture Series

The Thomistic Institute: Aquinas 101

- Short video series on classical theism and natural theology
- Provides philosophical depth; useful for understanding the classical tradition

Hillsdale College: Western Heritage (selected lectures)

- Context for understanding Christianity's role in Western civilization
- Integrates with your History of Philosophy course

Reasonable Faith Podcast (William Lane Craig)

- Weekly engagement with contemporary apologetic issues
- Represents the evidentialist/classical approach for comparison

Phase 2 Milestone

Create a comparative chart of the four major apologetic methodologies (classical, evidential, presuppositional, cumulative case) with key proponents, core arguments, strengths, and criticisms of each.

Phase 3: Subdiscipline Deep Dives

Duration: 12-16 Weeks

Focus: Focused study in each major subdiscipline through targeted reading and course creation

3A: Philosophical Apologetics & Natural Theology

Duration: 4-5 Weeks

Title & Author	Source
<i>Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview</i> — J.P. Moreland & William Lane Craig (selected chapters)	IN LIBRARY
<i>Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith</i> — Douglas Groothuis (Parts I-III)	IN LIBRARY
<i>Why We Believe: Finding Meaning in Uncertain Times</i> — Alister E. McGrath	IN LIBRARY

Key Topics

- Arguments for God's existence: cosmological, teleological, moral, ontological
- The problem of evil and theodicy
- Religious epistemology: faith and reason, properly basic beliefs
- Divine attributes and coherence of theism

3B: Presuppositional & Reformed Apologetics

Duration: 4-5 Weeks

Title & Author	Source
<i>Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended</i> — Greg L. Bahnsen	IN LIBRARY
<i>Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith</i> — K. Scott Oliphint	IN LIBRARY
<i>The Reformed Worldview</i> — David J. Engelsma	IN LIBRARY
<i>Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word</i> — Voddie T. Baucham Jr.	IN LIBRARY
<i>The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics</i> — K. Scott Oliphint	IN LIBRARY

Key Topics

- Van Til's transcendental argument and critique of autonomous reason
- The role of Scripture in apologetic method
- Covenantal foundations: Creator-creature distinction, *sensus divinitatis*
- Critiques and defenses of presuppositionalism

3C: Science, Creation, and Faith

Duration: 2-3 Weeks

Title & Author	Source
<i>Inerrancy and Worldview</i> — Vern Sheridan Poythress	IN LIBRARY
<i>Darwin's House of Cards</i> — Tom Bethell	IN LIBRARY
<i>In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation</i> — John F. Ashton (ed.)	IN LIBRARY
<i>Tower of Babel</i> — Bodie Hodge	IN LIBRARY

Recommended Additions

- *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* — Nancy Pearcey & Charles Thaxton (ACQUIRE)
- *Return of the God Hypothesis* — Stephen C. Meyer (ACQUIRE — for intelligent design perspective)

3D: Cultural Apologetics & Contemporary Challenges

Duration: 2-3 Weeks

Title & Author	Source
<i>The Deconstruction of Christianity</i> — Alisa Childers & Tim Barnett	IN LIBRARY
<i>Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel</i> — Eric Mason (ed.)	IN LIBRARY
<i>To Be a Woman: The Confusion Over Female Identity</i> — Katie J. McCoy	IN LIBRARY
<i>Life at the Bottom: The Worldview That Makes the Underclass</i> — Theodore Dalrymple	IN LIBRARY
<i>Letters from a Skeptic</i> — Gregory A. Boyd	IN LIBRARY

Phase 3 Milestone

Develop a personal statement of apologetic methodology (2,000-3,000 words) that articulates your approach to defending the faith, drawing on both presuppositional and evidentialist insights while addressing how you would engage a specific contemporary challenge (e.g., religious deconstruction, scientific materialism, or identity ideology).

Phase 4: Canonical Works & Primary Sources

Duration: 10-14 Weeks

Focus: Deep engagement with foundational texts that have shaped the field

These are the grindstones on which you will sharpen your intellect. Read slowly, take extensive notes, and use secondary sources to deepen understanding. Each work repays careful, repeated engagement.

Primary Canonical Works

Title & Author	Significance	Weeks
<i>Pensées</i> — Blaise Pascal	The wager; human condition; heart vs. reason	2-3
<i>Mere Christianity</i> — C.S. Lewis	Moral argument; the Trilemma; accessible apologetics	1-2
<i>The Defense of the Faith</i> — Cornelius Van Til	Foundational presuppositionalism	3-4
<i>Always Ready</i> — Greg L. Bahnsen	Practical presuppositional application	2
<i>Orthodoxy</i> — G.K. Chesterton	Literary apologetics; paradox and wonder	2

Secondary Canonical Works

Title & Author	Notes
<i>The Abolition of Man</i> — C.S. Lewis	Natural law; moral objectivism
<i>The Everlasting Man</i> — G.K. Chesterton	Response to Wells; Christian history
<i>Warranted Christian Belief</i> — Alvin Plantinga	Reformed epistemology (advanced)
<i>Confessions</i> — Augustine	Existential apologetics; conversion narrative

Secondary Sources for Canonical Works

- *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* — Greg L. Bahnsen (essential companion to Van Til)
- *C.S. Lewis: A Guide for the Perplexed* — Joel Heck
- The Bahnsen-Stein Debate recording ("The Great Debate: Does God Exist?")

Phase 4 Milestone

Write a substantive comparative essay (3,000-4,000 words) analyzing the apologetic approaches of Van Til and Lewis. Address their epistemological foundations, their views on the role of evidence, and their understanding of the unbeliever's psychology. Argue for a synthesis or evaluate their respective strengths.

Phase 5: Content Creation & Synthesis

Duration: Ongoing (begin during Phase 3)

Focus: Internalization through teaching and creating

Knowledge becomes yours through the act of expressing it. Begin creating content as soon as you have enough foundation to articulate insights meaningfully.

Recommended Projects

Apologetics Commonplace Book

- Collect significant quotations, arguments, and your reflections
- Organize by topic: existence of God, problem of evil, resurrection, worldview analysis
- Include your own responses and developing positions

Book Reviews & Summaries

- Write substantive reviews (1,000-2,000 words) of major works
- Create chapter-by-chapter summaries of canonical texts
- These integrate well with your broader autodidact approach

Argument Maps & Comparative Charts

- Diagram major apologetic arguments (cosmological, moral, transcendental)
- Create visual comparisons of worldviews using Sire's framework

Capstone Project: Personal Apologetics Handbook

- Compile your methodology, key arguments, and responses to common objections
- This becomes a living document refined through ongoing study and conversation

Phase 6: Specialization & Continued Growth

Focus: Follow curiosity into specialized areas

By this point, you will have developed particular interests and identified gaps worth pursuing. Here are potential specialization tracks:

Historical Apologetics: Deep dive into resurrection evidence, manuscript reliability, early church history. Key authors: N.T. Wright, Michael Licona, Craig Blomberg.

Philosophy of Religion: Sustained engagement with analytic philosophy of religion. Key authors: Plantinga, Swinburne, Pruss, Rasmussen.

Engaging Specific Worldviews: Islam, secular humanism, Eastern religions, New Atheism. Develop expertise in understanding and engaging one competing worldview.

Theological Integration: Connect apologetics to your systematic theology course. Explore the relationship between dogmatics and apologetics in the Reformed tradition.

Resources & Community

Online Lecture Resources

- **Ligonier Ministries** (ligonier.org) — R.C. Sproul's teaching library
- **Reasonable Faith** (reasonablefaith.org) — William Lane Craig's ministry
- **The Thomistic Institute** (thomisticinstitute.org) — Catholic classical theism
- **Reformed Forum** (reformedforum.org) — Van Tilian and Reformed resources
- **Closer to Truth** (closer to truth.com) — interviews with leading philosophers and theologians

Podcasts

- **Reasonable Faith Podcast** — William Lane Craig
- **Unbelievable?** — Justin Brierley (debates and dialogue)
- **The Alisa Childers Podcast** — cultural apologetics and deconstruction
- **Theology in the Raw** — Preston Sprinkle
- **The Bible Project Podcast** — biblical theology and worldview

YouTube Channels

- **Capturing Christianity** — Cameron Bertuzzi
- **InspiringPhilosophy** — philosophical and historical apologetics
- **Whaddo You Meme??** — Jon McCray
- **Cross Examined** — Frank Turek

Books to Acquire

The following titles are recommended additions to strengthen your library:

1. *The Universe Next Door* — James W. Sire (worldview catalog — essential)
2. *Mere Apologetics* — Alister E. McGrath
3. *The Defense of the Faith* — Cornelius Van Til
4. *Always Ready* — Greg L. Bahnsen
5. *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* — Greg L. Bahnsen
6. *Pensées* — Blaise Pascal
7. *Mere Christianity* — C.S. Lewis
8. *Orthodoxy* — G.K. Chesterton
9. *The Soul of Science* — Nancy Pearcey & Charles Thaxton
10. *Return of the God Hypothesis* — Stephen C. Meyer (optional)

Suggested Schedule Overview

Phase	Focus	Duration
Phase 1	Foundational Reading	6-8 weeks
Phase 2	Online Courses & Broad Survey	8-10 weeks
Phase 3	Subdiscipline Deep Dives	12-16 weeks
Phase 4	Canonical Works & Primary Sources	10-14 weeks
Phase 5-6	Content Creation & Specialization	Ongoing
TOTAL		9-12 months

Integration with Your Other Courses

This course complements and reinforces your other autodidact studies:

History of Philosophy: Understanding the philosophical tradition is essential for grasping both the arguments for Christianity and the intellectual challenges it faces. Your philosophy course provides context for figures like Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, and the modern philosophical critics of theism.

Systematic Theology: Apologetics and dogmatics are intimately connected. Van Til insisted that apologetics is the application of systematic theology to the question of unbelief. Your theological foundation shapes your apologetic method.

Economics & Finance: Worldview analysis applies to economic thought. Works like Dalrymple's expose how secular worldviews shape economic behavior and social outcomes.

Biblical Hebrew: Careful attention to the biblical text in its original language strengthens both your theology and your ability to engage textual criticism and historical arguments.

Soli Deo Gloria