

Directed Study in Religion (Rel. 385): Spring 2014
Instructor: Dr. Kelly Denton-Borhaug; Office: Comenius 109, x7104
Office Hours: T/TR 11 - 1
Class Time: TR, 2:35 -- 3:45; meet in the Rel. Phil. Commons

Course Description:

Religion 385 presents senior religion majors with the opportunity to focus on a question, conundrum or problem related to the study of religion. This may be a question that you began to study in a religion course, or a problem that you always have wanted to investigate. It might be something related to the career you envision yourself pursuing after Moravian College. In any case, students should choose something that will be meaningful and important for their own lives and thinking.

“Directed Study” is the name of this course because it represents for many students a leap into independent study on one large project, and for many students this is the first time they will have experienced this opportunity. Over the course of the semester, working with your faculty mentor, you will develop a coherent statement or abstract of the question or problem you plan to investigate and research. You will develop an appropriate academic bibliography and work your way through it. Your work in 385 will culminate in an approximately 30 page paper that you will work on in stages throughout the semester. In addition, you will be required to present your work in a number of venues; before your 385 peers; at Scholarship Day before the college community; and perhaps before the Religion Dept. as a whole, including invited alumni (this last presentation is still in development). For Scholarship Day you will either a) work with Studio South to develop a poster that outlines your project and participate in a poster session with other students; or b) give a 15 minute presentation as part of a presentation session. More information will be provided about Scholarship Day once the date has been set.

This is a required course for religion majors. The course consists of two main parts:

(1) The First Part involves the individual research project described above under the direction of a faculty mentor. The faculty mentor who is directing and supervising your individual project is fully in charge of this part of your work and will assign your grade. You will work with your mentor to set up regular meetings and receive appropriate guidance and oversight for your project.

(2) The Second Part of the course involves study and reflection on the methods we employ in Religious Studies to study religion. In this part of the course, we explore different models of explanation of human actions, in order to explore different methods that have been used in Religious Studies to investigate religions, e.g., Phenomenology, Functionalism, and Interpretation- Hermeneutics of human action. We will focus on a brief overview of methods early in the semester, as you are outlining your own research project and making decisions about how to proceed.

Course Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of different views on religion.
- To demonstrate understanding of the diverse methods employed in Religious Studies.

- To share and discuss individual projects with a group of classmates, and learn from diverse feedback and perspectives on your project.
- To develop skills of analyzing and evaluating religious phenomena vigorously, fairly, and with sympathy.
- To exercise scholarly fairness, sympathy, and tolerance toward different conflicting views, and expand our intellectual horizon.
- To diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation and open questioning.
- To enrich our intellectual imagination.
- To think creatively, and to be able to imagine alternatives to familiar views and situations.
- To improve our understanding of the complexities of problems in the study of religion(s), and the rationale behind different positions.

I will share a number of selections from different sources at the beginning of the semester related to understanding religious study and method.

Attendance at Weekly Peer Meetings: We will meet once weekly; I ask that you inform me with at least a day's notice if you have a compelling reason (family emergency, religious observance, or serious illness) why you cannot attend. Otherwise there are no excused absences.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510).

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Course requirements:

- (1) One in-class presentation on the project you are working on.
- (2) Consistent, faithful and engaged work with your faculty mentor; regular attendance at all scheduled meetings with your mentor.
- (3) Demonstration of initiative, independence and hard work on your project.
- (4) Participation in Scholarship's Day, with your poster or presentation ready on time.
- (5) Submission of your paper in the required stages; meeting all deadlines; consistent, regular and hard work on all aspects of your project.

Tentative Lecture Schedule and Deadlines: We will arrange this schedule together

All 385 projects will include a Works Cited Page. You may use either APA or MLA citation formats (please consult these formats for other aspects of your paper, including title page, pagination, etc.). Your final project should be submitted BOTH to your faculty mentor and to Dr. KDB on the day of the final deadline.

Your grade will be adversely affected by not meeting deadlines. It is up to individual faculty mentors to determine how this will factor into your overall grade.

Students should plan to work a minimum of 10 hours per week in this course, including class time. The most important advice is this: DO NOT PROCRASTINATE! Good thinking, and good work take time! Give yourself the supreme luxury in this project of taking sustained and quiet time to research, read, and think. Take more time to talk about your project regularly with any and everyone willing to listen and respond. Your work will be the better for it.

You also are advised to make regular use of the Writing Center. Get in the habit of taking every draft to the Center before you are required to submit it. Also, make use of the reference librarians in Reeve's. You can save a lot of time and research more efficiently by asking their assistance with your project. Make an appointment with one of the research experts in Reeve's, explain your project, and ask for their help as to how best to proceed with research.