

Universität Koblenz-Landau, Campus Landau  
Fach Anglistik

## **Guidelines for Writing Your Research Paper**

by

Tamara Schmitt, Dr. Heidi Liedke, Dr. Monika Reif, Dr. Bernd Engelhart, Prof. Dr. Kathleen  
Starck, Dr. Achim Hescher

## **I.) Literary and Cultural Studies**

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Organisational Points .....	2
3. Ten Dos and Don'ts .....	2
4. Language & Style.....	4
4.1 Formal Aspects .....	4
4.2 <i>Cite and Write</i> .....	6
4.2.1 Direct and indirect quotes .....	6
4.2.2 Proper Citing: MLA style.....	6
4.2.3 In-text quotation .....	7
4.2.4 Bibliography.....	7
4.3 Language: style, grammar etc. ....	9
5. Structuring your paper.....	9
5.1 Introduction .....	9
5.2 Theoretical framework .....	10
5.3 Analysis of Literary Texts / Films .....	10
5.4 Conclusion.....	10
6. Statement of authenticity.....	11
7. Information on the Plagiarism Policy of the English Dept./Campus Landau .....	11
8. Appendix: Examples Cover Page / Content Page / Works Cited Page.....	11
<b>II.) Linguistics.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>III.) Didactics: Guidelines for Writing Your Lesson Plan and Your Course/Project Outline (TEFL).....</b>	<b>16</b>

## **1. Introduction**

A research paper should combine your own research of a topic with published criticism from reliable, scholarly sources. The following suggestions will be helpful both in the planning and writing phase of your paper. We encourage you to make use of more comprehensive academic writing guides, such as Roy Sommer's *Schreibkompetenzen*, John Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, or "Appendix A" in Laurie Kirschner's and Stephen Mandell's *Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing*, all of which are readily available from the university library. The suggestions presented here are meant to supplement these guides rather than to replace them.

## **2. Organisational Points**

Before you set out to write the paper, hand in the following to your course instructor: the title of your research paper, a thesis statement, a preliminary outline specifying your analytic focus within every chapter, and a preliminary bibliography, also accounting for the latest research. Only after you have received feedback from your instructor can you start writing your paper. The deadline for the submission of research papers is the last day of the semester in which you attended the related seminar. In the interest of fairness, an additional grace period is only granted in verifiable cases of exceptional circumstances, provided that you contact your course instructor before the expiry of the submission date.

## **3. Ten Dos and Don'ts**

1. *Do not start a research paper without consulting your course instructor.*

You are encouraged to choose a relevant topic you are interested in, but you need to discuss it with your instructor as early as possible before starting to write.

2. *Do not choose a topic which is too vague and general.*

Your title should be precise and specific. Do not call your paper "Analysing *Macbeth*", rather choose a more precise title like "Violence and Power Structures in *Macbeth*". It is of cardinal importance that you use the library and the MLA database because they help you to gain an

overview over the work that has already been done on the subject and further specify your research interest.

3. *Do not include a plot summary or an author's biography in your paper.*

Your instructors are familiar with your primary source and do not require a plot summary. A research paper is about demonstrating your ability to coherently structure and present your own academic approach towards a certain literary text or cultural artefact, and not about how well you can summarize a given text or film. The inclusion of your personal motivation for choosing a certain topic might ease you into getting started with your paper, but make sure that you do not dwell on the matter. In term papers for literary studies, there is no need to include an author's biography unless you focus on biographical criticism. Make sure to check with your course instructor whether s/he will accept a biographical reading as a topic for a term paper.

4. *Do start your paper with a succinct introduction.*

An introduction contains your hypothesis or thesis statement, explains your theoretical approach to the primary text, and ideally outlines relevant criticism. Together with the summary, it should form a textual frame for your main part. (See section 5.1 of this style sheet for further information on introductions.)

5. *Literary Studies: Do not use the concept of authorial intention but engage with the text itself and its salient features.*

Do not take the question of what 'the author wants to tell us' as a starting point or leading question for your literary analysis. Instead, focus on how the text creates meaning and what literary techniques are employed to guide reader-response.

6. *Do not overstructure or understructure your paper.*

Paragraphs ('thought units') and chapters should follow a coherent line of argument. If you produce mini-chapters or one-sentence-paragraphs, the development and coherence of your argument will suffer. Do not treat one sentence as a paragraph: a paragraph consists of at least two sentences.

7. *Do include close readings of your chosen literary text or cultural product (e.g. film, poster, advertisements).*

When analysing films, television series, or other cultural products, you are expected to pay close attention to the aesthetic techniques involved: focus on how, for instance, the characters

are presented by the camera, what the composition of the scene you are analysing is and how a shot is set up in a given scene. With regard to literary texts, the art of close reading requires that you use longer quotes and analyse them thoroughly, paying attention to form and style of the text, including its syntax and specific meanings of individual words or phrases. Hence you will need good dictionaries, reference books, and other tools of philological research. To paraphrase a quote before quoting is redundant: “The protagonist feels sick: ‘I feel sick.’ (p. 17)”. This is an unnecessary repetition and bad writing style.

8. *Do not treat a literary work or a film as a mere mirror of external reality, but as a medium which constructs a fictional, alternative reality.*

Do not treat literary texts/films as factual texts or simply as a stepping stone to moralize about life in general, as in the following example: “In Neil LaBute’s play *The Shape of Things*, the villain does not get punished. I think, however, that villains should always be punished because they are wicked, and nice people should not suffer because there are wicked people around.” Critical discussions of a literary text or a film should be based on an analysis of aesthetic techniques and their effects.

9. *Do not hand in a paper without checking its form, content and language.*

It is essential that you proofread your paper. Basic grammar mistakes, inconsistent arguments, sentence fragments, and formal mistakes have a negative impact on your grade. Numerous language mistakes (e.g. incorrect grammar, spelling, phrasing, punctuation) may result in a failing grade.

10. *Do not plagiarize.*

Always acknowledge your sources properly, including indirect as well as direct quotations, and summarized ideas taken from other papers; in short, any argumentation or information that is not your own. If you are unsure which sources need to be acknowledged, contact your course instructor.

## 4. Language & Style

### 4.1 Formal Aspects

- The **title page** bears the following: *Universität Koblenz-Landau, Campus Landau, Anglistik*, and the course for which you wrote the paper. In addition, provide the following information: the name of the course instructor, the semester of the course,

the title of the paper, the author's name, student ID, course of studies, *Fachsemester*, postal address, and email address.

- For the **table of contents**, use a decimal classification system. Please note: If you use Section 2.1, at least Section 2.2 must follow.
- Concerning the **length of your paper**: it should consist of a minimum of 4,000 (B.Ed. and 2-Fach-Bachelor) / 8,000 (M.Ed.) words and not exceed 4,100/8,100 words, not counting the title page, table of contents, works cited list, and annex. Papers below the minimum or exceeding the maximum will not be accepted. Please include an exact word count at the end of your term paper. Exchange students or students not permanently enrolled in a Landau University program need to write 6000 words and not exceed 6600, not counting the title page, table of contents, works cited list, and annex.
- **Typeface**: Times New Roman 12 p, spacing of 1.5 lines, use A4 format and set margins to 2.5 cm at the top, 2.5 cm at the bottom, and 2.5 cm on the left, and 3 cm on the right; use block alignment.
- **Page numbering**: use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) at the bottom of the page. Page numbers start with the Introduction, i.e. the first page that contains text, and end on the last page of the paper.
- **Indent paragraphs** according to their subject or theme. The first word of each paragraph should be indented by 5 spaces (ca. 1.2 cm). Exception: The first paragraph after a chapter heading (“Kapitelüberschrift”) is not indented.
- **Bibliography**: In **term papers**, you are required to list **at least eight titles** (books or scholarly articles; this rule holds both for B. Ed. and M. Ed. papers) in your bibliography which are of relevance for your topic and which were not discussed in the seminar. For a **bachelor or master thesis**, the number should be higher. **The general rule of thumb is: one title per written page**. If you hand in a paper with 15 pages, the bibliography should contain 15 titles, 20 titles in case of 20 pages of written text, and so on. If the bibliography is too short and not up to date, it will influence the grade.

If you would like to additionally use **web sources**, make sure that these are not Wikipedia or private websites or blogs. If you are not sure about the origin of a website, check its imprint. Examples for reliable web sources: University websites,

established media (e.g. *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, BBC, CNN), websites of official institutions (e.g. British Library, British Museum, United States Census Bureau).

Within the bibliography, there is a spacing of only 1 line (see example in the appendix).

- **hand in your paper:** one hard copy (no hard cover binding!) and one electronic copy (DVD/CD), attached to the back cover of your paper.

## 4.2 Cite and Write

### 4.2.1 Direct and indirect quotes

Citing is about quoting from primary and secondary sources, the secondary sources being the findings from your research. You can quote a source directly or indirectly. Direct quotes are literal repetitions of utterances and stand between double inverted commas (“ / ”) or as indented free-standing blocks of text (see below, 4.2.3). If you do not reproduce the exact wording of the original utterance, you use an indirect quote. Indirect quotes paraphrase or summarize original utterances. Authors frequently use the abbreviation cf. (Lt.: confer = compare) when they reference indirect quotes, e.g., ‘... (cf. Everywoman 23).’

Although it is indispensable to directly or indirectly quote primary and secondary sources in order to back up your argument, **do avoid an accumulation of quotes in a row**. Your examiners must be able to track the development of your individual line(s) of thought, i.e. the arguments you put forth, the points you discuss, and the conclusions you draw when you refer to the primary and secondary sources.

A paper that mainly or exclusively consists of an enchainment of quotes from (or references to) primary or secondary sources is likely to be failed since it represents the work of others, not your own. Therefore, it is important that you analyze, elaborate on, assess and/or discuss the quotes in order for your examiners to see where your achievement lies.

Rule of thumb: do not exaggerate citing or referencing. Concentrate on the points you want to make.

### 4.2.2 Proper Citing: MLA style

The style of citation is close to the citation rules determined by the MLA. You can consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and you can find an overview of the most important MLA rules online. Since those standards are, however, subject to constant change and modernisation, **make sure you stick to the guidelines outlined in the following chapters**.

### 4.2.3 In-text quotation

When you use short quotations (fewer than 4 typed lines), make use of double quotation marks to indicate the start and end of your quote: “Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered” (Connell 71). At the end of the quote, a short reference giving the author’s last name and the specific page number of the quotation is required.

Longer quotes (4 typed lines and more) should be placed in a free-standing block of text without quotation marks, in a font size of 10 p and one line spacing, with a short reference at the end:

The association of murder and writing in an aesthetic that glorifies the transcendence of art and murder has been criticized recently by feminist critics who argue rightly that such an aesthetic is gendered: it is an inscription of male violence against a feminized object, whether that be a woman, a boy, or (...) the entire family. Thus the aesthetic that celebrates art as murder reinforces and legitimates a set of power relations (...). (McDonagh 222–223)

When creating in-text citations for media that have a runtime, such as a movie or podcast, include the range of hours, minutes and seconds you refer to, for example: (00:02:15-00:02:35).

### 4.2.4 Bibliography

Full references are gathered in the bibliography of your paper.

Citing a **book**:

Connell, Raewyn. *Masculinities*. Polity Press, 1995.

If a book has **two authors**, proceed like this:

Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

In case of **three or more authors**, use “et al.” after the first author’s name:

Wysocki, Anne Frances, et al. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. Utah State UP, 2004.

Your works cited list should be one continuous list. As can be seen in the above example, titles of books, as well as titles of journals and films, are in italics. Use inverted commas for

titles of **papers, poems**, and internet articles and provide full bibliographic information on the anthology, journal, etc:

McDonagh, Josephine. "Do or Die: Problems of Agency and Gender in the Aesthetics of Murder." *New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts*. Ed. Isobel Armstrong. Routledge, 1992. 222–37.

For **online articles**, provide the address of the webpage and the date you accessed the site:

Dolby, Nadine. "Research in Youth Culture and Policy: Current Conditions and Future Directions." *Social Work and Society: The International Online-Only Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2008, [www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362](http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362). Accessed 20 May 2009.

If you refer to or analyse **images** (for example, when you write about illustrated narratives or graphic novels), put a scan of them in the main text – or in an annex if the image(s) are too big or too numerous. Number the items in the annex and refer to them in the main text. Provide the artist's name, the work of art italicized, the date of creation, the institution and city where the work is housed. Follow this initial entry with the name of the website in italics, and the date of access:

Klee, Paul. *Twittering Machine*. 1922. Museum of Modern Art, New York. *The Artchive*, [www.artchive.com/artchive/K/klee/twittering\\_machine.jpg.html](http://www.artchive.com/artchive/K/klee/twittering_machine.jpg.html). Accessed 22 May 2006.

**Online video and audio** sources need to be documented using the same basic guidelines for citing print sources in MLA style. Include as much descriptive information as necessary to help readers understand the type and nature of the source you are citing. If the author's name is the same as the uploader, only cite the author once. If the author is different from the uploader, cite the author's name before the title:

"8 Hot Dog Gadgets put to the Test." *YouTube*, uploaded by Crazy Russian Hacker, 6 June 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBlpjSEtELs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBlpjSEtELs).

List **films and movies** by their title. Include the name of the director, the film studio or distributor, and the release year. If relevant, list performer names after the director's name:

*The Usual Suspects*. Directed by Bryan Singer, performances by Kevin Spacey, Gabriel Byrne, Chazz Palminteri, Stephen Baldwin, and Benecio del Toro, Polygram, 1995.

When citing **episodes of a series provided by Netflix, Amazon Prime etc**, follow the format

below:

“94 Meetings”. *Parks and Recreation*, season 2, episode 21, NBC, 29 Apr. 2010. Netflix, [www.netflix.com/watch/70152031?trackId=200256157&tctx=0%2C20%2C0974d361-27cd-44de-9c2a-2d9d868b9f64-12120962](http://www.netflix.com/watch/70152031?trackId=200256157&tctx=0%2C20%2C0974d361-27cd-44de-9c2a-2d9d868b9f64-12120962).

If you want to cite the **entire series of a TV show**, use the following format:

Daniels, Greg and Michael Schur, creators. *Parks and Recreation*. Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2015.

#### **4.3 Language: style, grammar etc.**

Your research paper must be written in English. Use either British or American English consistently (do not switch between BE and AE within your paper). You should generally avoid contractions in academic writing (e.g. do not write “won’t”; instead: “will not”, etc.) and generally adopt a neutral register (e.g. write “children” not “kids”). Make sure that you heed punctuation rules in the English language (e.g. no comma before “that” and “because”!). Avoid excessive use of the progressive form.

### **5. Structuring your paper**

The general outline of a research paper is as follows: title page, table of contents, introduction, main part or body (theoretical part and literary analysis), conclusion. The works cited section comes after the conclusion and is followed by your signed statement of authenticity/affidavit.

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the introduction, you present and legitimize the topic (why does it make sense to write about this particular topic?) and raise the readers’ interest. The first paragraph of an introduction typically starts with an ‘attention-getter’ that engages the reader and paves the way to the topic. You are expected to then introduce either your research question or your thesis statement. Please check with your course instructor which option they prefer.

A thesis is an argument to be developed and proven in the paper by drawing on primary and secondary texts. In short, it is a statement you can agree/disagree with, e.g. “The lighting in *A Streetcar Named Desire* has a symbolic function” or “Ridley Scott’s *Alien* series stages the mother as an abject figure”. A thesis must not be banal or too general or obvious (e.g.

“Gender is a societal construct”). Its reference to the primary text(s) must be clear and the thesis must be specific enough to make the paper worthwhile writing.

Pointers for writing a strong thesis statement in literary/cultural studies:

- What does the text/film do? (Example: The short story/film affirms, criticizes, challenges, subverts...)
- How does the text/film do this (e.g. by means of colour imagery, satiric exaggeration, etc.)?
- Your thesis statement may become stronger by drawing on a specific theory (e.g. gender studies, psychoanalysis etc.) or a concept (e.g. the uncanny).

## **5.2 Theoretical framework**

Every paper should consist of a theory-related part and an analytical part in which the theory is applied to the text/material in question. Theory serves as a toolset to gain insights; your theoretical approach enables you to specify your research interest and focus on the most relevant parts of the primary source(s) in the following analysis.

The theory and analysis parts should stand in a ratio of about 1:4 or max 1:3 (i.e. in a 20-page paper, about four to five pages should be theory-related). Depending on the subject matter of the paper, the theory share may also be larger or smaller than that; this should, however, be discussed with your course instructor.

## **5.3 Analysis of a Literary Text / Film**

The analysis of your literary text or film should be guided by drawing on the theoretical framework previously introduced. In the main part, you are to substantiate your thesis by providing evidence from the primary text(s) and the secondary literature. The secondary literature you refer to may consist of classic works on the subject, but it should first and foremost account for the more recent research done in the field.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The conclusion connects your findings with your key thesis in the introduction. You may discuss your findings and offer an outlook (e.g. which avenues for further research your findings invite), but please note: Do not painstakingly repeat your arguments from the main part. Your instructor has just read the paper and does not require such an extensive reminder. Ideally, you summarize your main arguments and findings to create a textual frame around the

main part of your paper and offer insights which occurred in the analytic unfolding of your guiding question or in the proving of your thesis.

#### **6. Statement of authenticity**

It is mandatory to attach the following statement, dated and signed, on a separate sheet to your research papers:

“Ich versichere, dass ich die beiliegende Arbeit ohne Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel einschließlich des Internets angefertigt und die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe.”

#### **7. Information on the Plagiarism Policy of the English Dept./Campus Landau**

If a term paper is plagiarized, a penalty grade will be given and the course instructor will no longer act as an examiner for that student. In especially blatant cases, the student may be barred from all further English exams at the University of Koblenz-Landau. In addition, according to a university senate resolution from July 7, 2017, the names and matriculation numbers of students guilty of plagiarism or other attempts at deception will be documented in the central registry of the university.

#### **8. Appendix: Examples: Cover Page / Content Page / Works Cited Page**

Universität Koblenz-Landau, Campus Landau  
Anglistik  
Victorian Sensations  
Prof. Dr. Hermione Summer  
Summer Term 2017

**The Mysteries at Our Own Doors?**  
**Deconstructing the Sensationalism of Wilkie Collins's**  
***The Woman in White* (1860)**

Marianne Fröhlich  
Student ID: 123456789  
BA (Ed.) Anglistik & Germanistik  
3. Fachsemester

Friedenstr. 1  
123456 Landau  
fröhlich@fmail.com

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction: The Production Context of <i>The Woman in White</i> .....	1
2. The Unsettling Potential of the Other and Gender: Key Terms and Debates .....	2
2.1. Victorian Anxieties .....	2
2.2. Gender and Sensation Fiction .....	4
3. The Subversive Sensationalism of <i>The Woman in White</i> (Critical Consensus).....	7
3.1. The Foreign Other as Threatening and Contagious: Count Fosco .....	7
3.2. Marian, the ‘Unnatural’ Woman.....	10
4. Subversive Sensationalism Deconstructed.....	13
4.1. The Domestication of the Foreign Other: Fosco De-Counted .....	13
3.2. The ‘Unnatural’ Woman ‘Naturalized’: Marian, the Aunt.....	16
5. Conclusion.....	19
6. Works Cited.....	20
7. Statement of Authenticity .....	21

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## II.) Linguistics

The guidelines for term papers in linguistics will be up-loaded within the next three weeks. Please note that the citation rules for linguistic term papers are based on APA style (see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> ).

### **III.) Didactics: Guidelines for Writing Your Lesson Plan and Your Course/Project Outline (TEFL)**

While the guidelines set forth in Sections 1-8 (Chapter I: Literary and Cultural Studies) are generally applicable or transferable to lesson plans and course/project outlines, this section details some additional recommendations for the submission of TEFL-related papers.

#### **A.) Lesson plans (Module 7.1)**

As the TEFL seminar in Module 7 is intended to prepare you for your *Referendariat*, the lesson plan follows the classic structure of a German style *Unterrichtsentwurf*. Extensive guidelines for lesson plans submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Module 7.1 have been provided by Achim Hescher and are available on OLAT. These guidelines also pertain to the practical part of TEFL-related BEd and MEd theses (see below).

#### **B.) Course/project outlines (Module 9.1)**

The purpose of the assignment in Module 9.1 is to ascertain that you have acquired the methodological skills to create an English language course/project outline that provides meaningful and challenging tasks for your students and takes into account different learner types and abilities. In contrast to the assignment in Module 7.1, the main focus is on your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and your ability to participate in and contribute to scholarly and professional discourses on TEFL-related topics in global communities, e.g. *iatefl.org* (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) and *teachingenglish.org.uk* (British Council/BBC).

#### **Procedure:**

1. Describe briefly your target learner group (real or fictional).

Include the following:

- type of school, year
- a brief description of students' levels in the four basic skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading)
- group dynamics, personality issues etc.

The best thing to do is take a learner group you taught during one of your internships.

If you don't remember the details of the group, your ex-mentor is certainly willing to

provide them.

2. Specify the goals and objectives (please use the template provided in the seminar or your own adapted version).
3. Analyse the language of teaching resources for lexical, grammatical/syntactic and phonetic/phonological features. It is recommended that you revisit language-acquisition-related goals and objectives after completing your analysis.
4. Develop a course/project outline indicating precisely the different stages/phases of your project.

**Refer to literature and research on the methods to be applied in the project.**

### **C.) BEd and MEd theses in TEFL**

Theses submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degrees of Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Master of Education (MEd) generally fall into a theoretical and a practical part. The guidelines for the practical part (lesson plan) are the same as those for Module 7.1 (see above). The theoretical part should provide a thorough methodological grounding for the methods applied in the practical part.

### **More dos and don'ts**

1. Do not cite redundant or superfluous references. Avoid truisms (“English is a world language”) and generalisations (“Der Stundenbeginn muss den SchülerInnen immer einen Orientierungsrahmen geben”). Remember that while some observations and ideas may have been revolutionary in the average post-war German English classroom, they may now be old hat, irrelevant or no longer state-of-the-art.
2. Do not rely on the most general of sources (e.g. *Einführung in die allgemeine Pädagogik, Didaktik leicht gemacht, Lehrer sein für Dummies*). In all likelihood, titles like the above will not provide much evidence to support your suggestions and/or conclusions. Remember that

you are writing about English lessons and courses which are to be delivered to a very specific target group and not about teaching in general.

3. Do consult and cite articles from scholarly periodicals. You will often find that these are more pertinent to your methodological approach(es) than are the classics on TEFL methodology as they provide more specific information and examples (this does by no means preclude reference to the classics).

4. Do make sure you use English TEFL terminology. There may not always be an English equivalent for certain terms which are highly frequent in German TEFL lingo, as some concepts and categories are essentially different from the ones traditionally applied in Germany. Do not try to do a word by word translation; instead, make sure you acquire a decent knowledge and command of English TEFL-speak by reading a wide range of native-speaker-authored books, articles and lesson plans, taking part in global forums, attending webinars etc. Italicise and/or paraphrase German TEFL terms for which there is no English equivalent.

5. Do not just regurgitate other people's concepts and theories (including your lecturer's).