

MLA STYLE SHEET – 9th EDITION

GUIDELINES FOR WRITERS OF SEMINAR PAPERS (PROSEMINAR / HAUPT- /OBERSEMINAR) IN LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES¹

I. Objectives

A seminar paper written in a “**Proseminar**” is supposed to demonstrate your ability to discuss a topic relevant to literary and/or cultural studies. You are supposed to be able to

- meet the deadline set for your paper,
- analyse a set number of primary texts,
- use appropriate scholarly terminology and methods,
- take into account relevant secondary literature.

A seminar paper written in a “**Haupt-/Oberseminar**” is – in addition to the aspects mentioned above – supposed to demonstrate your ability to

- discuss the (very) latest secondary literature,
- apply the high standard of scholarly reflection and methodological competence appropriate for advanced students.

II. Topic, content and style of a research paper

Topic:

Please note that you usually have to choose a topic yourself, but make sure you submit it to your instructor for approval **before** you start working on your paper.

Pick a topic that is of interest to you. There is nothing as difficult as trying to write a good paper on a topic you only chose because it seemed to be “easy”, but which you are not interested in. If you have severe problems structuring your paper, contact your supervisor during her/his office hours as soon as possible.

Content:

The content of your paper is to be determined by the heuristic value of the topic you choose. Always focus on the key aspects of your topic. Avoid all unnecessary quotations. As you will not be able to include all aspects of your research in your paper, you have to select your arguments and your sources carefully according to your heuristic interest. Structure your paper according to this selection.

Style:

A seminar paper should be written in academic prose aiming at terminological exactness, critical clarity, and readability.

III. Contents:

A seminar paper includes a(n)

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
The Table of Contents provides an overview of the paper’s structure; the page numbering that appears here must be consistent with the actual page numbers of your paper.
- Introduction
The introduction outlines the topic and the thesis of your paper, explaining the paper’s heuristic value. In addition, the introduction is the place to explain your criteria for choosing primary texts/material, point out prominent scholarly research (only strictly related to your topic, of course), etc. The introduction **should not simply paraphrase** the table of contents.

¹ These guidelines are based on the *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed. (The Modern Language Association, 2021).

- **Main section** (You must find a title for this section. Do not just call it “main section”.)
This section– typically subdivided into several subsections – discusses the thesis of your paper which you have outlined in the introduction, closely analysing the primary texts which your paper deals with. Quote and critically discuss adequate passages taken from the primary texts in order to address problems/aspects/issues relating to your topic. Base your argumentation on both your reading of the primary texts and relevant secondary literature. Do not forget to **document each direct or indirect quotation by means of parenthetical documentation** (see below).
- **Conclusion**
The conclusion briefly summarises the results of your discussion. The conclusion is also the place to raise scholarly questions related to your topic which have not yet been answered.
- **Bibliography / List of Works cited**
The bibliography / list of works cited includes all primary and secondary sources you either quote from or refer to in your paper. Order the entries alphabetically. Make sure you document your sources according to the **MLA style. Use this and ONLY this style throughout your paper.** For a brief outline of the different source types see below; for a detailed outline cf. the *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed. (The Modern Language Association of America, 2021).

IV. Useful research tools

Thorough knowledge of the research tools at your disposal is absolutely essential for writing academic papers. This is to say that you have to know how to use the departmental library and the SULB (Saarländische Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek). Make sure you are familiar with the Library Catalogue and the sections of the departmental library and know how to use the SULB's document delivery service (“Fernleihe”). Make sure you know how to use the various databases you can access through the SULB website. One of the most important databases is the **MLA Bibliography with Full Text**. Using this database will help you find the secondary literature necessary for your academic research. The catalogues of the British Library, the Library of Congress, the British National Library, the “Wissensportal” of the SULB and the “Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog” (KVK) are also important bibliographic tools that will help you to find secondary literature.

V. Last steps

Before handing in your paper, carefully proof-read it in order to rid it of typos and mistakes regarding spelling, grammar, and style.

Please also check your paper with the plagiarism software “Turnitin”, which you can find here:

<https://www.uni-saarland.de/studium/organisation/alltag/turnitin.html>

VI. The format of your research paper:

[Please note that some of the following guidelines (e.g. regarding margins, spacing, justification) do not correspond to the MLA Handbook.]

The mechanics of writing are as important as the organisation and development of your argumentation. Your paper

- has to be written in an appropriate academic style,
- must not have any formal or factual mistakes,
- must not have any spelling mistakes.

1. Length

- a) Proseminar: 10-12 pages (excl. table of contents and bibliography)
- b) Haupt-/ Oberseminar: 12-15 pages (excl. table of contents and bibliography)—LS1 and LAB
15-20 pages (excl. table of contents and bibliography)—LS1+2 and MA

2. Typeface and type size

Always choose a **standard, easily readable typeface** such as **Times New Roman, Arial** or **Calibri**. Print **on one side** of the paper.

- a) Main body of text: **12 pt Times New Roman** or **11 pt Arial / Calibri**
- b) Footnotes: **11 pt Times New Roman** or **10 pt Arial**

3. Margins

Leave margins of **4 cm on the left side, 2.5 cm on all other sides**. Indent the **first word of a paragraph** five spaces.

4. Spacing:

- a) Main body of text: **1.5-spaced**
- b) Footnotes: **single-spaced**

5. Justification:

Centre justification: Justify the lines of your paper on both the left AND the right-hand side (= “Blocksatz”) Activate your word processor’s automatic hyphenation feature.

6. Page numbers:

Number all pages consecutively throughout your paper except for the title page and the table of contents. This is to say that pagination should begin with the text proper.

7. Title page:

The official title page is available online from the “Philosophische Fakultät: Strategie und Prüfungswesen”:

https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/fakultaet-p/studienkoordination/formulare/Deckblatt_neu.pdf

8. Footnotes:

Use explanatory footnotes only, there is no need to give bibliographical information. Use a smaller font and single-space (see above).

For example:

¹ For strong points of view on different aspects of the issue, see Public Agenda Foundation 1-10 and Sakala 151-88.

9. Documenting sources in the text:

When quoting directly or indirectly, you need to indicate your source by means of **parenthetical documentation (also known as in-text citation)**.

References in the text must clearly point to specific sources in the “Bibliography/List of Works cited”.

Author’s name in text (esp. used when using sources where no pagination is given, esp. electronic sources), for example:

Tannen has argued this point (178-85).

Author’s name in reference:

This point has already been argued (Tannen 178-85).

With a volume number:

Only one scholar has seen this relation (Daiches 2: 776-77).

If there is more than one author with the same last name:

(A. Paterson 183-85)

If there are two authors:

(Best and Marcus 9)

If there are more than two authors:

(Lauter et al. 2425-33)

If the work is listed by title, use title shortened or in full, in italics or in quotations marks (depends on title):

(“Death” 3) or: (*Hunger* 5)

If there is more than one work by the same author, add title, shortened or in full, after the author’s last name:

(Frye, *Anatomy* 237)

10. Quotations:

Learning how to quote correctly is eminently important for students of literary and cultural studies. Make sure you become familiar with the different ways of quoting from and referring to different sorts of texts.

Quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are particularly interesting, vivid, unusual, or apt, and keep all quotations as brief as possible. The accuracy of quotations is extremely important.

Indicate the sources of your quotes and references by the means of parenthetical documentation / in-text citation (cf. MLA style sheet). If you cite a **DVD**, always add the **time code** indicating the scene you are referring to in parenthetical references.

Prose:

If a prose quotation runs no more than four lines and requires no special emphasis, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it into the text. The parenthetical reference is made at the end of the quotation, and the sentence period is placed **after the reference**.

For example:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” says the narrator of Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* of the eighteenth century (35).

or

For the narrator of Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, the eighteenth century was both “the best of times” and “the worst of times” (35).

If a prose quotation runs more than four lines, set it off from the text by indenting ten spaces from the left margin and use line spacing 1.5 without adding quotation marks (MLA standard: 2.0). Set it off from the preceding line. **A parenthetical reference to a prose quotation set off from the text follows the last line of the quotation.** For example:

At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island: great, shuddering spasms of the whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

Instructors often prefer that students indent both left and right margin and use line spacing 1.5 for the text and 1.0 for the indented quotation. For example:

At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

⇒ The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island: great, shuddering spasms of the whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186) ⇒

Poetry:

If you quote part or all of a single line of verse, put it in quotation marks within your text. You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side (/) to separate them. Two slashes (//) indicate a new stanza (rare). For example:

Reflecting on the “incident” in Baltimore, Cullen concludes, “Of all the things that happened there / That’s all that I remember” (lines 11-12).

Use the word “line(s)” only when you first quote the poem; in later references, give the numbers alone.

Drama:

If you quote dialogue between characters, set the quotation off from your text. Capitalize the characters' names, follow the name with a period, and start the quotation. Indent all subsequent lines in that character's speech an additional three spaces.

Example a:

A short time later Lear loses the final symbol of his former power, the soldiers who make up his train:

GONERIL. Hear me, my lord.
What need you five-and twenty, ten or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

REGAN. What need one?

LEAR. O, reason not the need! (2.4.254-58)

Example b:

Marguerite Duras's screenplay for *Hiroshima mon amour* suggests at the outset the profound difference between observation and experience:

HE. You say nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.
SHE. I say everything. Everything. . . . The hospital, for instance. I say it. I'm sure I did. There is a hospital in Hiroshima. How could I help seeing it?
HE. You did not see the hospital in Hioshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima.
(2505-06)

Ellipsis:

If you quote only a word or a phrase, it will be obvious that you left out some of the original sentence. For example:

In his inaugural address, John F. Kennedy spoke of a “new frontier.”

If you omit parts of a sentence or longer passages, use three spaced periods to indicate the omission wherever it occurs:

Example a:

In surveying various responses to plagues in the Middle Ages, Barbara W. Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking, trapped in the theory of astral influences, stressed air as the communicator of disease . . .” (101-02).

Example b:

In surveying various responses to plagues in the Middle Ages, Barbara W. Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking . . . stressed air as the communicator of disease . . .” (101-02).

Other Alteration of Sources:

If you include the quotation in one of your own sentences, it is sometimes necessary to change the quotation for the sake of grammatical correctness. If you change the verb form or capitalization, use square brackets to indicate the change:

Original quotation from *Lord of the Flies*: “The tears began to flow and sobs shook him.”

Changes:

- a) verb form: With his “tears beg[inning] to flow”, Ralph realizes the horror of his actions.
- b) capitalization: When Ralph realizes the horror of his actions, “[t]he tears began to flow and sobs shook him.”

Comments or explanations that go inside the quotation must appear with square brackets, not parenthesis:

In the first act he soliloquizes, “Why she would hang on him [Hamlet’s father] / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on. . . .”

Use (sic) = Latin: “thus”, “so” to assure readers that the quotation is accurate even though the spelling or logic seems wrong. For example:

Shaw admitted, “Nothing can extinguish my interest in Shakespear” (sic).

If adding an emphasis – typically by italicizing the words in question – indicate the emphasis in the parenthetical reference following the quotation. For example:

Lincoln specifically advocated a government “*for the people*” (emphasis added).

11. Indirect sources:

Indirect sources are to be used sparingly. Whenever you can, quote from or paraphrase the original source. Only use an indirect source if the original source is not available. In the following example, the only available source for Samuel Johnson’s spoken remarks about Edmund Burke is Boswell’s published account of them (= an indirect source).

Samuel Johnson admitted that Edmund Burke was an “extraordinary man” (qtd. in Boswell 2: 450).

12. Reference to titles:

In titles and subtitles, **capitalize** the first word, the last word, and all principal words, i.e nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and subordinating conjunctions. Do not capitalize articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions and the *to* in infinitives when they fall in the middle of a title.

Complete novels, plays and collections of poems or short stories, individual poems which were originally published in the form of a single book should be **italicized**. For example:

The Awakening (novel)
The Importance of Being Earnest (play)
The Waste Land (poem published as a book)
Wall Street Journal (newspaper)
Time (magazine)
PMLA (journal)
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Web site)
It's a Wonderful Life (film)

Individual shorter texts published within larger works or unpublished material should be presented in **quotation marks** (i.e. a poem, a short story, an essay). For example:

"Literary History and Sociology" (journal article)
 "Sources of Energy in the Next Decade" (magazine article)
 "Etruscan" (encyclopedia entry)
 "The Fiction of Langston Hughes" (essay in a book)
 "The Lottery" (story)
 "Kubla Khan" (poem)
 "Mood Indigo" (song)

George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" was reprinted in the collection *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*.

a) Titles within Titles:

Italicize a title normally indicated by italics when it appears within a title enclosed in quotation marks. For example:

"*Romeo and Juliet* and Renaissance Politics" (an article about a play)
 "Language and Childbirth in *The Awakening*" (an article about a novel)

Enclose in single quotation marks a title normally indicated by quotation marks when it appears within another title requiring quotation marks. For example:

"Lines after Reading 'Sailing to Byzantium'" (a poem about a poem)
 "The Uncanny Theology of 'A Good Man is Hard to Find'" (an article about a short story)

Use quotation marks around a title normally indicated by quotation marks when it appears within an italicized title. For example:

"*The Lottery*" and Other Stories (a book of stories)
 New Perspectives on "*The Eve of St. Agnes*" (a book about a poem)

If titles normally identified with italics are part of another title in italics, the title within the title is neither in italics nor in quotation marks. For example:

From The Lodger to The Lady Vanishes: Hitchcock's Classic British Thrillers (a book about films)

b) Some Exceptions:

Sacred Writings, divisions of a text, and political documents are capitalized but formatted without italics or quotation marks. For example:

Bible, Koran, Talmud (but italicize individual published editions, e.g.: *The Interlinear Bible*)
 Preface, Introduction (only capitalized in in-text citation or List of Works cited, not in the text:
 "The author says in her preface . . .")
 Declaration of Independence, Magna Carta

13. List of Works cited:**AUTHOR/EDITOR:**

Baron, Naomi S. "Redefining Reading: The Impact of Digital Communication Media." *PMLA*, vol. 128, no. 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 193-200.

Jacobs, Alan. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "In History." *Callaloo*, vol. 24, no. 2, spring 2001, pp. 620-26.

Two authors:

Dorris, Michael, and Louise Erdrich. *The Crown of Columbus*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1999.

Three or more authors:

Burdick, Anne, et al. *Digital Humanities*. MIT P, 2012.

More than one work by an author:

Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. McClelland and Stewart, 2009.

---. *The Heart Goes Last*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

One Editor:

Nunberg, Geoffrey, editor. *The Future of the Book*. U of California P, 1996.

Two or more editors:

Holland, Merlin, and Rupert Hart-Davis, editors. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*. Henry Holt, 2000.

Baron, Sabrina Alcorn, et al., editors. *Agent of Change: Print Culture after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*. U of Massachusetts P / Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 2007.

TITLE OF SOURCE:

Puig, Manuel. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Translated by Thomas Colchie, Vintage Books, 1991.

Title of source + title of container:

Bazin, Patrick. "Toward Metareading." *The Future of the Book*, edited by Geoffrey Nunberg, U of California P, 1996, pp. 153-68.

Subtitle after main title:

Joyce, Michael. *Othermindedness: The Emergence of Network Culture*. U of Michigan P, 2000.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Bazin, Patrick. "Toward Metareading." *The Future of the Book*, edited by Geoffrey Nunberg, U of California P, 1996, pp. 153-68.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Edited by James Kinsley, Oxford UP, 2008.

Puig, Manuel. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Translated by Thomas Colchie, Vintage Books, 1991.

Other examples of contributors: [adapted by/directed by/illustrated by/introduction by/narrated by/performance by/general editor, John Doe](#)

VERSION:

Cheyfitz, Eric. *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*. [Expanded ed.](#), U of Pennsylvania P, 1997.

Newcomb, Horace, editor. *Television: The Critical View*. [7th ed.](#), Oxford UP, 2007.

NUMBER:

Rampersad, Arnold. *The Life of Langston Hughes*. 2nd ed., [vol. 2](#), Oxford UP, 2002.

Wellek, René. *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*. [Vol. 5](#), Yale UP, 1986.

Baron, Naomi S. "Redefining Reading: The Impact of Digital Communication Media." *PMLA*, [vol. 128, no. 1](#), Jan. 2013, pp. 193-200.

PUBLISHER:

Jacobs, Alan. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. [Oxford UP](#), 2011.

Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. [Penguin Press](#), 2008.

PUBLICATION DATE:

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no.1, [2010](#), pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stabel/41403188. Accessed 01 Oct. 2018.

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist – and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The Atlantic*, [28 Dec. 2014](#), www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/. Accessed 01 Oct. 2018.

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist – and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The Atlantic*, [Jan.-Feb. 2015](#), pp. 92-97.

How to refer to a month: [Jan.](#), [Feb.](#), [Mar.](#), [Apr.](#), [May](#), [June](#), [July](#), [Aug.](#), [Sept.](#), [Oct.](#), [Nov.](#), [Dec.](#)

LOCATION:

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "On Monday of Last Week." *The Thing around Your Neck*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2009, [pp. 74-94](#).

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist – and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The Atlantic*, 28 Dec. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/. Accessed 01 Oct. 2018.

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3, May 2000. *Project Muse*, <https://www.doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2000.0021>. Accessed 21 Mar. 2015. [doi=digital object identifier]

DATE OF ACCESS:

"Under the Gun." *Pretty Little Liars*, season 4, episode 6, ABC Family, 16 July 2013. *Hulu*, www.hulu.com/watch/511318. Accessed 23 July 2013.

SUPPLEMENTAL ELEMENTS:

Date of original publication:

Franklin, Benjamin. "Emigration to America." 1782. *The Faber Book of America*, edited by Christopher Ricks and William L. Vance, Faber and Faber, 1992, pp. 24-26.

City of publication:

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*. Translated by John Oxenford, new ed., London, 1875.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London, Bloomsbury, 1997.

Book series title:

Neruda, Pablo. *Canto General*. Translated by Jack Schmitt, U of California P, 1991. *Latin American Literature and Culture* 7.

PUBLICATION TYPES:

Monograph/whole essay collection:

Jacobs, Alan. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Kröller, Eva-Marie, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

Essay, story or poem in a collection or anthology:

Coulombe, Joseph. "Rhetorical Narrative Theory and Native American Literature: The Antimimetic in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*." *Narrative, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, edited by James J. Donahue et al., Ohio State UP, 2017, pp. 123-36.

Bishop, Elizabeth. "One Art." *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, edited by Margaret Ferguson et al., 6th ed., Norton, 2018, p. 1595.

Article in a journal:

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2010, pp. 69-88. [printed article]

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3, May 2000. *Project Muse*, <https://www.doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2000.0021>. Accessed 21 Mar. 2015. [in a database, with a doi]

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, spring 2010, pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

Accessed 24 Sept. 2012. [in a database, with a permalink]

Albert-Abrams, Hannah. "Machine Reading the *Primeros Libros*." *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2016, www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/10/4/000268/000268.html. Accessed 01 Oct. 2018. [from an online journal]

Dictionary entry:

"Emoticon, N." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/249618.

Film:

Blade Runner. 1982. Directed by Ridley Scott, performance by Harrison Ford, director's cut, Warner Bros., 1992.

E-Book:

Gikandi, Simon. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Cambridge UP, 2000. *ACLS Humanities E-Book*, hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07588.0001.001.

Streaming:

"94 Meetings." *Parks and Recreation*, season 2, episode 21, NBC, 29 Apr. 2010. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/70152031.

TV episode:

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Complete Fourth Season*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, episode 10, Mutant Enemy, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

The MLA Style Center: <https://style.mla.org/>

The Writing Center of Saarland University:

<https://www.uni-saarland.de/fachrichtung/anglistik/writing-center.html>

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL):

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html