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**UNIVERSITÄT
BERN**

Manual for Writing Research Papers

Language and Linguistics and Literary Studies

Members of Teaching Staff of the Department of English, University of Bern
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1 General Remarks

This manual is aimed at students of English who are either at the beginning of their studies, maybe writing their first BA paper, or who are advanced, but would like to have an overview of the basic issues that occur when writing a research paper in literary studies or linguistics. It gives advice on how to choose a topic, how to structure and write a paper, and how to tackle some of the technical aspects involved. The manual is to be consulted in combination with the departmental style-sheets for literature and linguistics papers. Adherence to these style-sheets is mandatory. For further reference on issues of format and style, please consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper (for literature papers) or the online version of the APA style sheet at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (for linguistics papers).

1.1 Technical Matters

Spellings

Use UK or US spellings consistently. When in doubt, always check with the Oxford English Dictionary.

Capitalisation

Capitalisation should be used in the following cases: names, months/days/public holidays (e.g. Good Friday, Yom Kippur), religions (e.g. Christianity, Islam), deities (e.g. God, Allah), scriptures (e.g. the Bible, the Koran), names of countries and cities and their derivatives (e.g. Scotland/Scottish), specific places/buildings/monuments (e.g. Trafalgar Square, Big Ben, Empire State Building, Uluru, the Beehive), geographical names/areas (e.g. the River Thames, London's East End, the Coromandel), historical events/documents (e.g. World War II, The Magna Carta), awards (e.g. The Pulitzer Prize), organisations (e.g. United Nations), brand names (e.g. Apple Computer), adjective forms (e.g. Swiss chocolate, English tea). Consistent capitalisation should be used in titles and subtitles.

Dates and Numbers

Spell out 'twentieth century' (not: '20th century') and use hyphenation as in 'twentieth-century literary criticism'. Give dates consistently as either day/month/year (e.g. 5 April

1851) or month/day/year (e.g. May 22, 1978). Consult the MLA/APA Handbook for further information on numerals, depending which specialisation you are writing in.

Titles of Other Works

You should mark titles of literary works and other texts when you mention them in your paper, both in your writing and in the References/Works Cited section (see departmental stylesheets). If you refer to an autonomous publication (e.g. a book, a journal, an anthology, a newspaper) or play titles and film titles you should put the title into italics (e.g. *The Tempest*). If you refer to a text that has not been published independently (i.e. an article in a journal, a chapter in a book, a poem), then you should put its title between quotation marks (“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”).

1.2 Gender-Inclusive Pronouns

The generic use of *he/him* or *she/her* alone or an alternation of the two is no longer acceptable in scholarly writing. The literature section of our department of English uses the style guidelines provided by the *MLA*, and the *APA* guidelines used by the linguistics section are very similar. Their recommendations include the following:

- Use of “they” as a generic pronoun since this option steers clear of the gender binary and avoids any assumptions about a person’s gender.
- Revision of a sentence to use the plural or rephrasing to avoid pronouns altogether.
- Use of the pronouns a person identifies with, including the personal pronoun “they”.
- Should an author’s preferred gender pronouns be unknown, the *MLA* recommends the repetition of the author’s surname and the avoidance of using gendered pronouns.

1.3 Plagiarism

All the information on how to quote secondary literature within your text and on how to compile a reference section can be found in the departmental style sheets and the *MLA Handbook* (literature) or *APA style conventions* (linguistics). It is one of our aims to teach you how to write academic papers in which you correctly apply the conventions agreed on in the English Department and to assist you with questions on content. It is your responsibility, however, to make sure that you do not plagiarise, i.e. that you do not make us believe that a sentence or even an idea is from you, when you have actually found it in the literature or on the internet. The departmental style-sheets will help you to

acknowledge the sources you used correctly. Plagiarism is considered one of the worst offences in academia and will not be taken lightly by us. Please read the following section carefully. **Plagiarism is one of the most flagrant violations of academic standards. The consequences of plagiarism are accordingly drastic and severe.**

What is Plagiarism?

The aim of writing an academic paper is to convince fellow scholars of the validity of your own opinion or viewpoint. Your readers will assume that the argumentation is yours and they will expect you to show reasons for, sometimes proof of, the legitimacy of your case. You will, however, almost always find it necessary, and it is perfectly justified, to use the ideas of other people, especially other scholars who have researched your topic before. You will use their ideas and sometimes their actual words in building up your own argument. Whenever you do this, you have a moral and professional responsibility to tell your reader clearly and precisely what ideas and which words you are using, and where you have found them, in other words, to indicate your sources. Failure to do so is called 'plagiarism', which is an extremely serious offence, the consequences of which are explained below.

Plagiarism is deceitful and dishonest. It must, therefore, be absolutely clear to you what plagiarism means. In the MLA Handbook plagiarism is defined and explained as follows: Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongs. Using another person's ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person's work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person's ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud. There are various types of plagiarism, from using someone else's exact words, to paraphrasing or using someone else's ideas. Some examples of what plagiarism is and is not are given below. As a student new to academic studies you may find you are plagiarising without realising what you are doing. You may be accustomed to using material taken from various sources, for example, books in the library or material downloaded from the internet and no one has informed you that you are duty bound to show your reader exactly where you have taken this material from. Plagiarised passages may involve particular words, whole sentences, or particular expressions; they may include someone's argument or line of argument; they may include another person's theory or terminology. This also applies to oral presentations in class. It is even an offence to use your own material, for which you have already received credit, in a new paper, without stating that you are doing so.

Furthermore, as a learner of a foreign language you may even find yourself using special phrases that you have learnt almost unconsciously from a book or from the internet. This might also be considered plagiarism. Plagiarism does not include references to knowledge which would be shared by students and scholars of English studies (e.g. that William the Conqueror invaded Britain in 1066, or well-known proverbs or famous quotations). If you are not sure about what constitutes plagiarism in such cases, please ask your teachers. Ultimately, the most important criterion is honesty: do not present material which is not your own as if it were.

To avoid plagiarising, you should keep detailed notes of anything you read when preparing your paper and make sure that when you use this material you acknowledge it, firstly, in your own text, and, secondly, in your Works Cited (literature) or References (linguistics) at the end of your paper (see departmental style sheets for details). Every paper handed in for assessment must include the plagiarism declaration signed by the student.

Consequences of Plagiarism

- All cases of plagiarism are reported to the Head of Department.
- The Head of Department makes a decision in consultation with the instructor. In all cases the paper will have to be revised. Depending on the severity of the case, there are additional options:
 - Grade deduction.
 - The paper is failed, i.e. the student has to write a new paper.
 - The student has to redo the course.
 - The student is given the mark 1, which is reserved for cases of deception (RSL Art. 25).
- Unless it is a very minor case of plagiarism (e.g., a paper in which all sources but one are acknowledged and which is otherwise very carefully written), the student will have to talk to the Head of Department, who may want to involve the Dean.
- The name of the student will be entered in the Department's student records for strictly internal use only.
- If plagiarism is committed in a final thesis or if a student is caught plagiarising a second time, he or she may be excluded from the study programme (RSL Art 25.2).

Examples

Note: all correct examples follow the bibliographical style used in literary studies; linguistics uses a different bibliographical style, the author-date style, e.g., (Shklovsky, 1988, p. 20) rather than (Shklovsky 20) for student version 1 below. Consult the departmental style sheet for information on citing in linguistics.

Original Passage (by Victor Shklovsky, a member of the Russian Formalist school of literary theory, who seeks to define the nature and purpose of art): And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.

Student Version 1:

Early twentieth-century critics sought to define the nature and purpose of art. For the Russian Formalists, art enables us to “recover the sensation of life;” it refreshes our experience of the world and “exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony” (Shklovsky 20).

Comment: Correct. The student uses his or her own words in order to paraphrase Shklovsky’s argument, puts the original words in quotation marks and indicates the source. They use Shklovsky’s opinion for the development of their own thesis.

Student Version 2:

Shklovsky argues that “art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. [...] The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (20).

Comment: Correct. The quotation marks acknowledge the words of the original writer and the information in bracket tells us the source of the quote. (The complete reference must be given in the works cited section).

Student Version 3:

Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make the stone stony. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar.’

Comment: Obvious plagiarism. Word-for-word repetition without acknowledgment.

Student Version 4:

Art enables us to regain the sensation of life; it exists to make us feel things more vividly, to make the stone stony again for us.

Comment: Still plagiarism. A few words have been changed or omitted, but the student does not use their own words.

Student Version 5:

Art makes the world unfamiliar and thus refreshes our perception and experience of it.

Comment: Still plagiarism. The student uses their own words but fails to indicate the source of the idea. Adding (Shklovsky 20) before the full stop would make this a perfectly correct example.

Student Version 6:

Art helps us recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony (Shklovsky 20).

Comment: Still plagiarism. Merely indicating from where you have taken the idea alone is not enough. The language is the original author’s, and only quotation marks around the quoted passage (plus the reference in brackets) would be correct.

1.4 Generative AI

Recent years have led to the development of “generative digital tools”: computer programs based on artificial intelligence (AI) that produce text, images, videos, or code based on user input. The quality of these tools has improved significantly since 2022, as can be seen in, for example, *OpenAI’s ChatGPT 3.5* (text generation), *Dall-E* (image generation), and *Midjourneys* (image generation). AI-supported generative technology, such as chatbots or image and multimedia generation programs, are now capable of producing academically relevant output.

Nonetheless, these tools have notable weaknesses: in particular, they frequently make serious factual errors and sometimes freely invent facts, including bibliographical

references. Biases that exist in available online materials are often reinforced by these tools. Furthermore, your own original thoughts and ideas are not protected and may become accessible to others before you intend that to happen.

Is the use of AI-supported tools allowed during one's studies?

The *University of Bern* does not have a general prohibition on the use of AI-supported tools. It is vital, however, that students learn how to handle these tools sensibly, responsibly, and critically. This involves an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of AI tools, of academic integrity, and of legal parameters. Academic writing skills will continue to be essential: comprehensive subject knowledge, along with familiarity with academic methods and style are needed to be able to critically evaluate and improve the output of AI tools.

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Under what conditions is it permitted to use AI-supported tools in student work in the Department of English?

Students **may not under any circumstances** use generative AI tools in *Core Curriculum Courses* or in the courses of the *Language Module*, except for the authorized explorations that will take place in class to build and improve critical AI literacy. Students in classes beyond the *Core Curriculum* and the *Language Module* are permitted to use generative AI under specific conditions (illustrated in detail in “Guidelines on the use of Generative AI on the official *Department of English* website).

All submitted work may be subject to oral examination to verify the authorship of the work. Plagiarism rules apply. Failure to correctly log, cite and reference each use of AI tools in written work will be deemed to constitute a case of plagiarism (*see above*). Please

read the conditions and guidelines on the correct use of generative AI in “Guidelines on the use of Generative AI” on the the official *Department of English* website.

2 Language and Linguistics

All students in Language and Linguistics will eventually encounter the “Writing Skills” session run every semester in the BA and MA Colloquia. We see no reason, however, why students should not view the podcast version sooner:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/1z7c2tkr1xze5z/Writing%20Skills.mp4?dl=0>

When considering how to write a university-level paper in Language and Linguistics, it seems only appropriate to expect you to do this in the same way as the professionals do – we therefore draw heavily below from guidelines published in two of the leading journals in the field: *Journal of Sociolinguistics and Discourse Studies*. We have collated the following guidelines based on this expert academic practice; we expect you to follow them when planning, researching, writing, and submitting your own work for us. (See also the Language and Linguistics Style Sheet.)

- In your paper, you should address broad issues or questions about language (and communication) from the perspective of “sociocultural linguistics”; that is, fields such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse studies and/or linguistic anthropology. Fascinating data and specific case studies are good, but their academic interest and relevance to these fields needs to be made clear. Explain why your data or case study is important for, say, sociolinguists.
- Ensure that your work is based on a sufficient scholarly foundation to be convincing. You need a strong, explicit orientation to theory and methods from “sociocultural linguistics”. As a new or emerging scholar in the field, you should start by identifying at least two or three published papers/studies similar to the one you are thinking of writing yourself – use this as a way to start grounding your own writing in terms of format and style.
- Make sure your paper tells a research story: address the ‘so-what’ question. A scholarly paper needs a point, an argument. Present the point or argument early, and not suddenly near the end of the article. Your paper needs a setup which gives a rationale for what is to follow, and a structure which makes this clear throughout and

leads naturally into the conclusion. Get your readers' attention right away, and remind them throughout what the point of the story is.

- Use references to the literature strategically, as a way to situate yourself in the exchange you are participating in, to explain the significance of your work, or to recognize crucial contributions you are building on. Make sure that you are up to date with the most recent literature on your subject, and also that you acknowledge early foundational work. Do not over-reference, however. We need to know not that you have read a lot, but that you have understood what you have read, and can selectively point to the most relevant work and the most relevant ideas in this work.
- Give a clear exposition of your research questions, research design, method, and analytic procedures. Cover all the basic information readers need to know about the empirical side of your study – such as when and where it was conducted, how many participants, appropriate biographical information on speakers, background on local geography or politics. Good sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic work should contextualize the linguistic phenomena or practices being studied.
- Justify your choice of data, ensuring it is more than anecdotal or random. Is it really representative or typical of the phenomenon you are discussing? Is it adequate and appropriate to warrant the generalizations you are making? In other words, can it answer your research questions properly? A qualitative study often needs to indicate the relative prevalence of a phenomenon – and quantitative findings usually benefit from qualitative examples.
- Make sure your data collection has met high ethical standards, for example in researching vulnerable groups or getting permissions to record spoken language. Give detail in your article and always follow the principle of informed consent.
- Do not assume that readers will share background knowledge about the local context or the sociolinguistic/discourse analytic problem you are addressing. Tell us what we need to know in order to understand the data and its broader significance. Describe references to places, times and so on appropriately. The world does not share a single

seasonal calendar, therefore ‘spring’ is not a meaningful time descriptor in an international context. Nor does it have a single school system, so ‘Grade 5’ will mean nothing in some places, and will mean different ages in other countries. If you use terms like ‘the North-West’ or ‘the East Coast’, make sure it is obvious where you are writing about, and what this refers to. Clear and simple maps may be useful for situating your study.

- Go beyond the descriptive. Present *analysis*, not just commentary (see next section). Balance the relative weight of the components of your paper. Keep an appropriate ratio between data (such as extracts, tables or figures) and your analysis and interpretation of it. Ensure you get to your own findings before the half-way point of the paper. Have a substantive conclusion that is worth stating.
- If you are analysing written or spoken language for a discourse analysis, it is not enough to simply summarize, paraphrase or repeat fragments of talk or text – you must analyse or interpret what people have said or written and especially how they have said or written it. Think, for example, about the structural or stylistic properties of the language used and/or the communicative strategies or functions served. Try always to link your analysis at every step to key concepts and existing research.
- Tables and figures are intended to clearly present data that a paper is covering. Figures especially are meant to clarify and illustrate, not to obfuscate. They should contain the minimum of detail needed to make their main point, and should be simple, uncluttered and still legible when published in black-and-white hard copy. Give figures and tables clear and explicit titles. (Again, see Style Sheet.) If you use statistics, make them as transparent as possible. Explain the point of the tests you conducted. Do not clutter the actual text with the numerics of the statistical results.
- Aim always for transparent, accessible writing. Avoid looseness, repetition, and jargon. Here, again, we recommend viewing our “Writing Skills” colloquium session which describes the logical and rhetorical nature of academic writing.

- Finally, get the mechanics of the paper right. Take care with page numbering and spacing, numbering of tables and figures and bibliographic style. Format the paper clearly, carefully and consistently. (See our Style Sheet.) Avoid too many footnotes or endnotes. Check references. Proof-read. And then proof-read again!

3 Style Sheet for Language and Linguistics

All work submitted to academic staff in Language and Linguistics should be formatted as described below. This format comes from the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, one of the world's leading peer-reviewed journals which publishes a wide range of research in "sociocultural linguistics" (e.g., sociolinguistics, discourse studies, linguistic anthropology). Wherever possible or sensible, you should present your submissions in the same format and using the same style in which articles are published in this journal.

We recommend that you start by taking a careful look at one or two articles from the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* in order to familiarize yourself with the layout, style, etc. In doing so, you will recognize a few things:

- We are not expecting you to produce "camera-ready copy" – a version which looks exactly like a professionally typeset and published paper.
- Do note, however, that sans serif fonts are not used in most academic publishing; please use something equivalent to Times New Roman 12pt.
- In the final published version of a Journal of Sociolinguistics paper, justified margins are used for main text, but not reference lists. It is more usual, however, for a submitted manuscript (like your papers) to be prepared without justified margins.
- You will see that section headings are capitalized. Sub-headings are not capitalized but bolded and italicized. This is fine (but not essential) for your work too.
- When it comes to your thesis, the structure is of course different from a journal article, with a proper cover page, stand-alone abstract, table of content, etc. In this case, your document will obviously be formatted somewhat differently to a journal article.

3.1 Title page

Include the following information: your name and contact details, matriculation number, instructor's name, type of assessment (BA/MA seminar paper, independent study, BA/MA thesis), title, date of submission.

3.2 General

- Text: 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman 12pt.
- Page: 2.5 cm margins on all sides.

- The first line of each paragraph is indented by 1.25 cm. Do not indent paragraphs after titles, subtitles or block quotations. Do not leave empty lines after each paragraph.
- Include page numbers.
- Use endnotes, not footnotes.
- Seminar papers and assignments must be handed in with the submission sheet which includes a plagiarism statement. This applies also to all work submitted electronically.
- Printing: talk to your supervisor about the format (paper/digital, etc.) in which to hand in your paper. For instance, check with your supervisor whether printing on both sides is an option or preference.
- For BA and MA theses, include a signed plagiarism declaration. A model plagiarism declaration can be found in the document “What is Plagiarism” in the Writing Academic Papers section of our website.

3.3 Extracts, Tables, Figures

Your essays/reports/theses may include extracts, tables and/or figures. (Note: images are labelled like graphs as “figures”.) The rules below should be followed:

- Extracts, tables, and figures should be self-contained and complement, not duplicate, information contained in the text.
- They should all have a numbered title which should be concise but comprehensive. Typically, the title for extracts and tables appears above the extract/table, while figures are labelled below the figure.
- The extract/table/figure itself, the text attached to the extract/table/figure (e.g. x and y axes of a graph), and key must be understandable without reference to the main text. See example figure below.
- All abbreviations must be defined.
- Include definitions of any symbols used and define/explain all abbreviations and units of measurement.
- If you use colour for your figures, remember that in some circumstances (e.g. if you submit it online to your teacher) it may ultimately be read in black and white. Please ensure that all such figures and images are legible even when read or viewed in black and white.

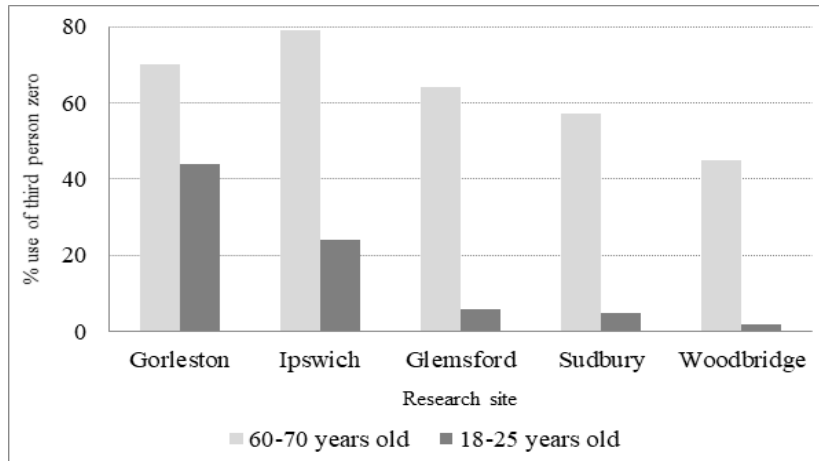


Figure 1: The use of third person present tense zero forms among younger and older speakers in five East Anglian towns and villages.

If you are doing discourse analysis and using extracts, you should find a paper from the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and carefully follow the layout and formatting practices used (see example figure below).



Figure 5. A 'best in the world' infinity pool in Tanzania. Reproduced with permission.

3.4 General Style Points

The following points provide general advice on formatting and style.

- *Quotes:* Use double quote marks for “quotations” and single quote marks within quotations. Always give the page number of reference for direct quotations. Translations or glosses should appear in double quotes.

- *Symbols/marks*: Ensure that phonetic or other non-orthographic symbols are clear, especially diacritic marks. We recommend Lucida Sans Unicode for the reproduction of symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet.
- *Abbreviations*: In general, terms should not be abbreviated unless they are used repeatedly and the abbreviation is helpful to the reader. Initially, use the word in full, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Thereafter use the abbreviation only.
- *Numbers*: numbers under 10 are spelled out, except for: measurements with a unit (8mmol/l); age (6 weeks old), or lists with other numbers (11 dogs, 9 cats, 4 gerbils).

3.5 Citations

As with the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, we require that students follow the citation and referencing practices and formats adopted by the *American Psychological Association*: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

This means:

- In-text citations should follow the author-date method whereby the author's last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, for example, (Jones, 1998).
- Page numbers are cited as e.g. Labov (1972, pp. 269-270). Use semicolons between each reference in a sequence of references by different authors.
- For works with up to five authors, use all authors' names on first citation: (Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta, 1968); then use et al. on subsequent citations: (Fishman et al. 1968).
- Same-author references appear in date order. Same-date references by the same author should be identified as: Labov 1972a, 1972b, 1972c, etc. Multiple-authored works follow all sole-authored works by the first author, in alphabetical order of second (and subsequent) authors.

3.6 References

The complete reference list of works you mentioned in your essay/report/thesis should appear alphabetically by name at the end of the paper. (Note: This section is called References not bibliography which is something different.) Please note that for journal

articles, issue numbers are not included unless each issue in the volume begins with page 1. Your reference list should follow these formats:

- Journal article
 - Heller, M. (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7, 473-492.
 - Shelton, B. A., John, D., Gibbs, J. T., Huang, L. N., Ruble, D. N., Martin, C. L., ... Seltzer, M. M. (1996). The division of household labor. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 299-322.
 - Note: for more than seven author names, list the first six with three dots and then the last author name.

- Book
 - Benor, S., Rose, M., Sharma, D., Sweetland, J., and Zhang, Q. (2002). *Gendered practices in language*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

- Chapter in Edited Book
 - Herbert, Robert K. (2002). The sociohistory of clicks in Southern Bantu. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.) *Language in South Africa*. (pp. 297-315). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Unpublished paper presented at a meeting
 - Androutsopoulos, J. (2004). *Towards a typology of language contact in computer-mediated communication*. Paper presented to Sociolinguistics Symposium 15, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

- Unpublished thesis
 - Modan, G. (2000). *The struggle for neighborhood identity: Discursive constructions of community and place in a U.S. multi-ethnic neighborhood*. Unpublished thesis, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

- Textbook
 - Winford, D. (2003). *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

- Internet Document
 - Norton, R. (2006, November 4). *How to train a cat to operate a light switch* [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vja83KLQXZs>.

4 Literature

4.1 The Literary Paper¹

4.1.1 Definition and Preliminaries

The literary paper is a specific genre of writing; as such it is governed by its own rules and regulations. The following pages are designed to familiarise or reacquaint you with the basic codes that underlie an essay in literary studies. As a writer, you are first and foremost tasked with presenting a persuasive and coherent argument. In order to do so, you should adopt an academic register, which includes formal and non-personal language. However, in contrast to what you may have been taught in other subjects, the occasional use of first-person pronouns is accepted in English academic writing. In general, make sure to be as precise as possible in your writing and to state your points in a clear manner. Furthermore, be advised to start early enough to have plenty of time to revise and edit the literary paper before submission.

4.1.2 The Ideal Reader

Writing papers is one of your core assignments as a student of literary studies. It is, thus, tempting to assume that you write your papers solely for your instructor. However, imagine instead that you address an ideal reader, a person who has **some but not detailed knowledge of the primary text(s) or field of study** under investigation. This allows you to write for a broader audience and to contribute to on-going academic debates, which is essentially the goal of writing papers. Your task as a writer is to convince a critical thinker of the validity of your argument. This requires that you guide your reader through the essay, provide them with all the information necessary and elaborate on your claims.

4.2 Beginner's Guide to Research

As a student of English Literature, you are expected to develop your own position and to situate your paper within a larger body of research. Hence, researching what has already been published on a specific primary text or theoretical school is pertinent to the process

¹ The "Literary Paper" section of this Manual is in large parts an adapted, paraphrased as well as at times shortened or enlarged version of the *Literature Guide: Essay Writing, Research, Presentations* (English Department, University of Zurich, 2020), with the kind permission of Morgane Ghilardi, Alan Mattli, and Hannah Schoch.

of writing a literary paper. Be meticulous when taking notes, i.e., write down all bibliographical information, including page numbers. This will help you both to avoid plagiarism and to clearly distinguish between your own and somebody else's thoughts. The following section is designed to facilitate your research process. It deals with the following two questions: **how to find secondary literature** and **how to determine whether a specific text counts as a reliable source**.

Research

To find reliable and relevant secondary literature, it is quite helpful to use catalogues and databases such as

- Swisscovery,
- MLA International Bibliography with Full Text,
- Literature Online (<https://search.proquest.com/>),
- Project Muse (<https://muse.jhu.edu>),
- or JStor (<https://www.jstor.org>).

In order to make full use of what these resources have to offer, either research while on campus, using the university's internet access, or install the **VPN** client for remote access from home. Make sure to also go to the **departmental library**. The books are ordered thematically which allows you to check titles to the left and right of the book you want to borrow. Other online resources that are quite helpful include:

- Google Books: This website allows you to access a vast variety of different books. It contains a large number of rare old books that you can download in their entirety. However, more recent publications are often only partially accessible. This is a problem, as you might miss an important chapter or the introduction and thus part of the author's argument. Make sure to get hold of the entire book.
- Internet archive (<https://archive.org>): This is a digital library of free and downloadable books. It gives access to quite a few older titles that can no longer be found in print.
- Project Gutenberg: This is a digital library that contains free books.

Reliability

In times when every piece of information we could possibly require only seems a mouse click away, the question of whether a source is reliable is of considerable importance. By

far not every publication, in print or online, qualifies as a quotable and, thus, reliable source for academic papers. A reliable primary or secondary text is **accurate, well-researched, and well-referenced**.

There are a couple of points to take into account when assessing a secondary source's degree of reliability. Make sure to check a source's **date of publication**. Note that a (relatively) old text may still be relevant since it may be a foundational text of a certain theoretical school or concept. When it comes to **printed texts** or online versions thereof (e.g. monographs, articles, essays), consider whether they are **peer-reviewed** and published by a **well-known publisher** or **journal**. This information can be gathered by checking a publisher's or journal's website. In general, peer-reviewed sources are more reliable than ones that are not. As regards **online sources**, it is crucial that the following information is provided on the website: Who is the **author** and what are their **credentials**? Who is in charge of the website? Is the website **edited** and **peer-reviewed**? This is the reason why websites such as Shmoop, Gradesaver, SparkNotes, CliffsNote, and Wikipedia are never (!) acceptable as academic reference points.

Most **primary texts** that you will encounter during your studies will have been edited in some form or other and published by modern-day presses, especially if they were originally written in the distant past. Hence, it is crucial to use **reliable, scholarly acceptable editions** of these primary texts. Such an edition **comments on the editorial practice**, which establishes transparency, and often includes additional information that fosters a reader's understanding of the text (e.g. historical context, previous research on and analysis of the text).

4.3 How to Write a Literary Paper

4.3.1 Formal Requirements and Layout

Generally, a literary paper consists of a **title page, table of contents, the main text** divided into several chapters, **a Works Cited list**, and any **appendices** (if applicable). For the specific basic formal requirements that structure a literary paper at the Department of English, please refer to the "**Style Sheet for Literature**", which can be downloaded from the departmental website (Studies > Course Types and Modules > Writing Papers and Thesis Information). All seminar papers as well as BA/MA theses must follow those guidelines.

Note that while your literary paper should consist of separately headed sections and chapters, this does not mean that the structure of the essay is entirely external. On the contrary, for an essay to flow nicely and to ultimately convince your reader, it must be **structured internally**. There is an easy way to test whether your section and chapter transitions require more work. When proofreading before the submission of the paper, imagine reading the text without the headings. If it is still a coherent essay, you have done a good job and can move on to other revision and editing related tasks.

4.3.2 Relevance of Secondary Sources

Consulting secondary sources is an essential part of writing a literary paper. These scholarly texts help you at once to gain knowledge in a specific field of literary studies and to flesh out your own argument. Additionally, as a scholar, you do not work in an isolated bubble but rather **contribute to** on-going academic debates. In order to be able to **situate** your literary paper **within a scholarly discourse**, you need to be familiar with the claims and concepts proposed by other scholars. Ultimately, in the literary paper itself, you engage with these ideas by quoting and paraphrasing.

The function of **quotations**, be they from your primary or secondary sources, is to **illustrate, support** or **contrast** the claims brought forward in the literary paper. As such, they are rarely self-explanatory and require proper **embedding in the essay** in the form of contextualising sentences and comments before as well as after the quote. Note that in terms of using secondary material, yours still remains the leading voice because quotations help you sharpen rather than stand in for your own position.

4.4 Structure and Components

In its most basic form, a literary paper consists of an **introduction**, a **main part** consisting of several chapters and a **conclusion**. Each of these, in turn, is made up of different components, which will be explained in detail below. What holds for the entire essay is that your job as a writer is to **guide your reader** smoothly through the paper. This means that at no point should your reader have to guess what exactly it is that you are arguing. Instead, take your reader by the hand and lead them constantly and consistently through your thought process. Your text will thus become more convincing. Hence, at every stage, ask yourself what information you need to provide your reader with, and in what form, in order to present a coherent as well as persuasive literary paper.

4.4.1 Introduction

The introduction of a literary paper serves multiple functions. It should capture the **reader's interest**, **introduce** the reader to the most important aspects of your **topic**, provide **definitions** of key terms and concepts that are relevant to your argument, state the **methodology**, and culminate in the **thesis statement**. The total **length** of the introductory paragraph(s) should make up around **10%** of the entire essay.

Opening Sentence

A good **opening sentence** results in your reader being intrigued by your topic and wanting to continue reading the essay. Hence, it should consist of a **meaningful statement**. There are different options available that vary depending on the specific paper you are writing. For instance, you could start with a quote from your primary text, an example that illustrates the central problem you address in the paper or you could announce the core research interest of the paper. You should, in any case, avoid starting the essay with a planning sentence, a general statement, or a generalisation. Planning sentences (e.g. 'This essay is structured into three parts. '), general statements (e.g. 'Queen Victoria reigned from 1837-1901. ') as well as generalisations (e.g. 'In the Victorian period, women occupied the private while men were part of the public sphere. ') fail to attract the reader's interest. The latter also has the disadvantage of often being imprecise and factually wrong. General statements may be used if they are immediately followed by a sentence that is more precise and specifically tied to the topic of your literary paper.

Contextualising Information

Your introduction should also provide the reader with **information** that **contextualises** your topic/argument (historically) as well as **definitions** of **key (theoretical) terms** and **concepts** that are not part of general knowledge. Only include information that is **absolutely necessary** for your reader to accept the premise of your literary paper. Hence, do not provide a plot summary or a biographical overview of the author's life unless extremely relevant to your thesis.

Thesis Statement

The overall structure of an introduction often consists of more general statements towards the beginning and more specific ones towards the end, which culminate in the **thesis statement**. Conventionally, the thesis statement is located either at the end of the

introduction or the beginning of the first paragraph of the main part. It is worth spending a considerable amount of time coming up with a good thesis statement. The quality of which already determines whether you will be able to write an argumentative essay or not. The thesis statement is the literary paper's **core claim**: It is a **concise, specific, and arguable statement**. It contains the controlling idea of the entire essay and can usually be expressed in one or two declarative sentences comprising the following elements:

- an observation,
- 1 single claim (!) and
- the consequences of the two for our understanding of the text(s).

While the thesis statement only addresses what your literary paper will cover, it also reflects the **scope of the paper**. Hence, a shorter essay will develop a narrower claim, while a longer thesis will develop a broader one. The thesis statement is essentially the claim that is elaborated on in the main body paragraphs which follow, whereby its arguments generate development over the course of the essay. Given its importance, there are ways to determine whether you have managed to come up with a pretty strong or a rather weak thesis statement. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can you imagine having a debate with a knowledgeable person in the field solely on the basis of your thesis statement? If not, your statement is not arguable and needs some more work.
- Why should your reader care about your thesis? If you cannot say what is at stake, you should refine your thesis statement to include the relevance of your literary paper.
- Can my thesis statement be described as one of the following? If so, you should start anew.
 - An obvious statement, a speculative or a grand general claim, a summary, or a judgmental statement.
 - A sentence that announces the subject matter (e.g. 'In my thesis, I will discuss Mandeville's *Travels*), states facts (e.g. 'Chaucer wrote "The Prioress' Tale"'), or is unspecific (e.g. Chaucer wrote many stories).

The following is an **example of a good thesis statement**, which can convincingly be discussed in the scope of a shorter literary paper:

- On both the formal and the content level, Tracy K. Smith’s found poem “Declaration” highlights the hypocrisy at the heart of the foundational document of the United States.

4.4.2 Main Part

The main part of the literary paper **develops the thesis statement** as specified in the introduction. In order to arrive at a coherent essay, the overall claim is divided into **different chapters and sections**. These, in turn, consist of even smaller units, i.e. **paragraphs**. Each paragraph must consist of

- (a) a topic sentence (see below),
- (b) elaborations, examples or supporting points, and
- (c) a concluding sentence.

You can, hence, think of a paragraph as a separate unit of thought. Each paragraph contains its **own argument** while also propelling forward the overall claim of the essay. In terms of organising your paragraphs, there must be a **clear progression and development** over the course of the main part. There is an easy way to test this: Imagine changing the order of your main body paragraphs, e.g. changing your first with your fifth main body paragraph. If this makes a difference to the overall argumentation of the literary paper, e.g. your otherwise comprehensible argument becomes incomprehensible, you are likely doing a good job. Conventionally, the main body paragraphs of a literary paper proceed in a **cumulative** manner. This means that the least important point is dealt with first, while the most important point is saved for last.

Since **one paragraph** corresponds to **one step/point in the argumentation**, the total number of paragraphs necessary to fully discuss your thesis statement varies. You may devote more than one paragraph to each step of the argument but be aware that each paragraph still requires a separate topic sentence (see below). The length of a paragraph is usually **around half a page**, but certainly shorter than a full page. Make sure to have a **clear thread** running through the entire main body of your literary paper. Thus, preparing an **outline** before embarking on the journey of writing your paper can come in quite handy as it helps you organise your thoughts into a clear and logical structure. An outline is

never set in stone but rather provides a good point of orientation and departure so that you know in which direction your argument is headed prior to writing the essay.

Topic Sentence

Each paragraph must have a **topic sentence**. Its function is to introduce the **focus** and **direction** of the paragraph in question. In other words, it identifies the topic/theme of the paragraph and indicates how the argument will be developed. As such, it ensures the overall flow of the literary paper but, more importantly, the guidance of your reader. The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph, although it may be the second one in case the first is used as a paragraph transition. Make sure that what you discuss in the rest of the paragraph is consistent with the topic sentence.

The Paragraph

The topic sentence is followed by **elaborations, examples, and supporting points**, which all develop the argument put forward in the paragraph. All aspects of the topic sentence should be discussed fully and linked logically. This part of the paragraph is essentially where you **provide evidence** for the thesis statement made in the introduction. In literary studies, this is achieved by a **detailed analysis** of your **primary text(s)**, which is, in turn, enriched by a careful consideration and combination of different **secondary material**, i.e. texts that, directly or indirectly, relate to the primary text(s) under discussion, the (historical) context, or the theoretical perspective(s) adopted. The paragraph is rounded off with a **concluding sentence** that is consistent with the topic sentence and the arguments elaborated on in the analysis. In general, it is important that you ensure **your position remains clear** throughout, i.e. that you stay focused on the line of argument at hand, and that you establish your **own voice** instead of simply repeating other critics' readings.

Paragraph Transition

Solid paragraph transitions are important features of the internal structure of the literary paper. The paragraph transition links one step of the argument with the next. Hence, it is either located in the last sentence (or a clause thereof) of the paragraph or in the first sentence (or a clause thereof) of the following paragraph. The latter option is more conventional and easier to achieve. A transition formulated at the end of a paragraph

would not only need to introduce a new point but also remain consistent with the topic sentence of the paragraph to which it belongs.

Even though a literary paper consists of individually headed sections and chapters, these still need to be linked with paragraph transitions. This also holds for the transition from the main body paragraphs to the conclusion. However, a paragraph transition is not required from the introduction to the first main body paragraph since the argument officially starts with the latter.

Chapters and Sections

Your paper should be organised in sections and chapters, including a separate introduction and conclusion. These are organisational units that help structure your text. They consist of paragraphs that are held together by topic sentences and paragraph transitions to ensure a good flow of the argument. The headings should be thematic rather than functional (e.g. 'The Role of the Unnamed Woman', not 'Main Part'). The number of sections and chapters varies depending on the argument you are putting forward in your paper. Note, however, that unlike papers in English language and linguistics, the literary paper does not have a separate 'previous work' chapter. Instead, your instructor may ask you to write a theory chapter or to continuously weave theoretical and secondary literature into the different sections and chapters of your paper.

Footnotes

The footnote is usually located at the end of a sentence. In the MLA style, footnotes include information that are relevant, but of secondary nature, to your argument. If included in the main text, this sort of information would otherwise disrupt the flow of the argument. In the MLA style, sources are not acknowledged in the footnotes but in the Works Cited list (see below).

4.4.3 Conclusion

The main purpose of the conclusion is to round off the essay. You may start by briefly **restating** your thesis and **summarising/comparing** the most important insights gained by **pulling together and evaluating the various strands** developed in the main part of the paper. However, do not stop there. While no arguments should be added that have not been previously discussed, a conclusion also needs to be more than the sum of its parts. Crucially, it should **elevate your paper** to the next level. There are different ways to

achieve this goal. For instance, you can reflect on your own contribution (**metatextual level**) or you can put your paper into a **wider** (societal) **context**. In any case, do not end your final line with a citation since they are rarely self-explanatory and require proper introduction and elaboration. Furthermore, do not insert a paragraph on ‘what you could have done but did not do’ as such sentences not only disrupt the flow of your essay but also undermine your paper. The total **length** of the concluding paragraph(s) should make up around **10%** of the essay.

4.4.4 Acknowledging Sources

In-Text Citations

For how to provide correct **in-text citations**, please refer to the “**Style Sheet for Literature**”, which can be downloaded from the departmental website (Studies > Course Types and Modules > Writing Papers and Thesis Information). All seminar papers as well as BA/MA thesis **must follow those guidelines**.

Works Cited

Plagiarism constitutes a serious offence, make sure to list all the primary and secondary texts used. For how to compile and format the **Works Cited list**, please refer to the “**Style Sheet for Literature**”, which can be downloaded from the departmental website (Studies > Course Types and Modules > Writing Papers and Thesis Information). All seminar papers as well as BA/MA thesis **must follow those guidelines**. The list may be divided into ‘Primary Sources’ and ‘Secondary Sources’.

5 Style Sheet for Literature

For additional style guidelines please refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (8th ed.) or check the MLA guidelines at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#). In all cases of discrepancy, this style sheet applies. If you make your own decision on how to cite something that is neither covered by the style sheet nor the MLA, the main rule is: BE CONSISTENT. This goes for both punctuation and spelling (be mindful of British English vs American English).

5.1 Title page

Include the following information: your name and contact details, matriculation number, instructor's name, type of assessment (BA/MA seminar paper, independent study, BA/MA thesis), title, date of submission.

5.2 General

- Text: 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman 12pt.
- Page: 2.5 cm margins on all sides. Please note that your supervisor might ask you to leave a wider margin.
- The first line of each paragraph is indented by 1.25 cm. Do not indent paragraphs after titles, subtitles or block quotations. Do not leave empty lines after each paragraph.
- Include page numbers.
- Use footnotes, not endnotes. Add footnotes after the punctuation mark of the sentence they refer to.
- Seminar papers and assignments must be handed in with the submission sheet.
- Printing: talk to your supervisor about the format (paper/digital, etc.) in which to hand in your paper. For instance, check with your supervisor whether printing on both sides is an option or preference.
- For BA and MA theses, include a signed plagiarism declaration. A model plagiarism declaration can be found in the document "What is Plagiarism" in the [Writing Academic Papers](#) section of our website.

5.3 Quotation / in-text citations

- Block quotations: any direct quotation of over four lines (three lines in case of poetry) has to be indented by 2.5 cm from the left margin. Do not add quotation marks. Use 12pt font size and leave one empty line each before and after the quotation.
 - Titles of independent publications (monographs, novels, dramatic texts, collections...) are always put in italics, e.g. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*.
 - Titles of texts published within larger works (poems, short stories, articles, book chapters...) are indicated by double quotation marks, e.g. "The Idiot Boy."
 - The sources of **any** material you have cited directly, paraphrased, or summarized must be acknowledged by in-text references. Examples for the most common cases are listed below.
-
- One author
 - Surname of author page number; no comma in between
(Taylor 388)
-
- Two or three authors
 - Surname and Surname page number
(Taylor and Sullivan 34)
 - Surname, Surname and Surname page number
(Taylor, Sullivan and Eggins 96)
-
- Four or more authors
 - Surname et al. page number
(Taylor et al. 388)

- More than one work by the same author
 - Add a short version of the title (one or two words) to the reference in italics (for monographs) or double quotation marks (for articles) preceded by a comma.
 - (Taylor, *Nature* 388)
 - (Taylor, “Animal” 127)

- Alterations to direct quotations
 - Altered words: put changes within square brackets
 - Taylor claims “[t]hat such issues are of importance” (388)
 - Errors in the original text: indicate by adding [sic]
 - Taylor claims that “such issue [sic] are of importance” (388)
 - Ellipses: indicate by adding [...]
 - Taylor claims that “such issues as race, class [...] are of importance” (388)
 - Original emphasis: add “emphasis in the original”
 - (Taylor 388; emphasis in the original)
 - Added emphasis: add “emphasis added”
 - (Taylor 388; emphasis added)

- Online sources
 - The in-text citation is based on your entry in the Works Cited section, more specifically, what appears first in the entry, e.g. author name, article name, website name, etc. There is no need to provide URLs, but give partial names for websites that correspond to the entry in the Works Cited section, e.g. CNN.com instead of <http://www.cnn.com>. There is no need to give page numbers or paragraph numbers if there are none available.
 - E.g. in-text citation: “I wish Treehugger could focus more on the sanitary solutions in tiny houses” (Nilsen). (Nilsen) to correspond to Works Cited entry:
 - Nilsen, Rolf. Re: “Retro-modern Scottish tiny house is all about simple comforts.” *Treehugger*. [blog comment]. 23 June 2014. Accessed: 30 June 2014. www.treehugger.com.

- (Kosaka) to correspond to entry:
Kosaka, Kazuhito [Daimaou Kosaka/Pikotaro]. *Pen Pineapple Apple Pen*.
Chee Yee Teoh. [video file]. 24 Sep 2016. Accessed: 4 Oct 2016.
www.YouTube.com.

- Quotation marks & punctuation in in-text citations
 - In-text citations follow directly after closing quotation marks and before the next punctuation mark, e.g.:
Taylor claims that “such issues are of importance” (388).
Note that in this case, the citation does not include the critic’s name because it is already given in the sentence.
 - In block quotations, the in-text citation follows the punctuation mark at the end, e.g.:
It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters.
(Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 3)
 - Quotations within in-text quotations: quotes within quotes are put in single quotation marks.
 - Quotes within block quotes are put in double quotation marks.

- In-text citation of plays
 - Plays: Use block quotes for longer quotations (e.g. dialogues or soliloquies). If available, indicate act, scene and line in Roman numerals (act number.scene number.line numbers). Provide page numbers only if strictly necessary to identify the passage you are citing, e.g.:
Richard exults: “And thus I clothe my naked villainy / With odd old ends, stol’n forth of Holy Writ, / And seem a saint when most I play the devil”
(Shakespeare, *Richard III* 1.3.335-337).

- In-text citation of poetry
 - Poetry: Indicate line numbers (“1.” for a quotation of one line, “ll.” For two lines ore more). Line breaks are indicated with a slash (/), whereby a space is inserted before and after. Indicate the book or canto (if applicable) by a Roman numeral in capitals and the verse numbers in Arabic numerals. E.g.:
 I travel’d through a Land of Men, A
 Land of Men and Women too,
 And heard and saw such dreadful things
 As cold Earth wanderers never knew. (Blake, “The Mental Traveller”, ll. 1-4)

5.4 Works Cited

- General
 - List all texts you refer to in alphabetical order, according to the formal guidelines below. For several works by the same author, list them in alphabetical order of the first word of the title. If an author appears as the author of a monograph and as the first author of a work by several authors/editors, the single-author entry should come first.
 - All lines after the first line of each entry are indented (“hanging indentation”) by 1.25 cm.
- Monograph (single/multiple author/s)
 - Single author:
 Surname, First Name. *Title: Subtitle*. Place: Publisher, Year.
 Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
 - Two authors:
 Surname, First Name, and First Name Surname. *Title: Subtitle*. Place: Publisher, Year.
 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

- Three authors:
Surname, First Name, First Name Surname and First Name Surname. *Title: Subtitle*. Place: Publisher, Year.
- Four and more authors:
Surname, First Name, et al. *Title: Subtitle*. Place: Publisher, Year.
- Edited work (single/multiple editor/s)
 - Single editor:
Surname, First Name, ed. *Title: Subtitle*. Place: Publisher, Year.
Salzman, Jack, ed. *American Studies: An Annotated Bibliography*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
 - Two editors:
Surname, First Name, and First Name Surname, eds. *Title: Subtitle*. Place:
Publisher, Year.
Toth, Josh, and Neil Brooks, eds. *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake
of Postmodernism*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
 - Three or more editors:
Same as with authors above.
- Book chapter
 - Surname, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Book: Subtitle*. Ed. First
Name Surname. Place: Publisher, Year. Page range.
Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *The Anti-
Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press,
1989. 111-125.
- Journal article
 - Surname, First Name. "Title of Article." *Journal Title* Volume.Issue (Year):
Page range.
Eskin, Michael. "Literature and Ethics." *Poetics Today* 25.4 (2004): 557-
752.

- Film
 - *Title*. Dir. First Name Surname (of director/s). Distributor, Year of release.
Cloud Atlas. Dir. Tom Tykwer, Andi Wachowski and Lana Wachowski.
Warner Bros., 2012.

- If appropriate, you should add the following publication information:
 - Translation: after the title add Trans. First Name Surname (of translator).
Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. London:
Routledge, 2006.

 - Later edition: add the number of the edition before the place of publication.
Abrams, Meyer Howard, and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of
Literary Terms*. 9th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.

 - The date of original publication: add the date after the title.
Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. 1854. Ed. Paul Schlicke. Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2008.

 - Use the following abbreviations for any missing publication details: n.p. (no
place), n. pag. (no pagination), n.d. (no date).

5.5 Online Sources

The citation of online sources DOES NOT follow the MLA 8th edition. If anything is unclear, make sure the information you provide in the Works Cited section makes it possible to find the source you are referring to (and that the in-text citation clearly refers to the entry itself). If you make your own decision on how to cite something that is not covered by the style sheet or the MLA, the main rule is: BE CONSISTENT.

- General remarks
 - The author's name can be a screen name or group of people. If no author is available, substitute the title of the source for the author.
 - If no date is available, use (n.d.).

- The titles of documents and of websites are not capitalized, but rendered in their original spelling.
 - Add the format of the source in brackets, e.g. [digital image] or [video file].
 - Add a short URL, DOI or permalink at the end; for the short URL, the main part of the URL is enough, e.g. not <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=d9TpRfDdyU0>, but www.YouTube.com.
- Websites
 - Surname, First Name. “Title of document.” *Title of Website*. [format description]. Posting date. Page numbers (if available). Accessed: Date. Short URL, DOI or permalink.

Halpern, Sue. “Our Driverless Future.” *The New York Review of Books*. [online journal] 24 Nov 2016. Accessed: 7 Dec 2016. www.nybooks.com.

Diaz, Bruno. “How to win arguments in the post-truth era.” *3am Magazine*. [blog post] n.d. Accessed: 3 Sep 2016. www.3ammagazine.com.
 - YouTube videos
 - Surname, First Name [real or screen name of creator]. *Title of video*. Real or screen name of poster, if different from creator. [video file]. Date of posting. Accessed: Date. Short URL.

Kosaka, Kazuhito [Daimaou Kosaka/Pikotaro]. *Pen Pineapple Apple Pen*. Chee Yee Teoh. [video file]. 24 Sep 2016. Accessed: 4 Oct 2016. www.YouTube.com.