

UNIVERSITÄT GREIFSWALD
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Guidelines

for Term Papers in Literary & Cultural Studies

Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Lehrstuhl für Anglophone Literatur & Kultur
Professur für Gender Studies

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Topic

Finding an appropriate topic is an important skill in our field. When choosing a topic, please make sure it fulfils the following criteria:

- ❖ You are **interested** in the topic.
- ❖ The topic area in *general* has been discussed in a **course** you took with the instructor. The *specific* topic and your research question may, and perhaps even should, differ from the contents you have already discussed in the course.
- ❖ Topics need to be **specific enough** to allow you to go into detail when writing the term paper, e.g. you cannot write a term paper about a broad topic such as “Shakespeare”, but you could, for instance, analyse how Shakespeare uses language to create a particular emotion in a scene in one of his plays. Likewise, “industrialism” would be too broad, but the effects of industrialisation on one particular city or region at a specific time in history would be an option.
- ❖ As a rule, there needs to be enough **secondary literature** about the topic, i.e. books, journal articles, etc. that cover aspects of your topic. For some very new topics, secondary literature may not exist (yet)—in those cases applying existing theory to a new topic might be an option that you would need to discuss with your instructor in advance.
- ❖ The topic should be **easy to structure** in a meaningful way (see below under “Content”).
- ❖ It should inspire you to **think, reflect and evaluate** for yourself, i.e. you should not just summarise known facts.

Please discuss possible term paper topics and thesis statements early. The *Studien- und Prüfungsordnung* states that topics must be finalised together with the instructor no later than by the last week of the course. Make an appointment with your instructor and/or use the regular office hours and try to do the following things before discussing the topic:

- ❖ Think your topic through and consider alternative topics. Ask yourself: How can it be structured? What is my point? Is it specific enough for a term paper?
- ❖ Prepare 2-3 research questions or thesis statements that you could explore before you come to the meeting.
- ❖ Check the MLA International Bibliography and other databases for secondary literature. Bring a first, printed bibliography with secondary literature that deals with your topic.
- ❖ Prepare the *Antrag auf Zuteilung eines Themas zur Hausarbeit*.

Content

For all term papers, it is important to demonstrate that ...

- ❖ The topic has been understood and seen in the right **context**;
- ❖ An **appropriate amount of academic literature** has been consulted to support the thesis statement;
- ❖ The primary and secondary literature has been correctly **understood, and convincingly analysed and interpreted**;
- ❖ The argumentation is **clear and coherent**, the text makes sense and does not contradict itself;
- ❖ The term paper is **well-structured** (chapters, sub-chapters, paragraphs) in a way that allows the *reader* to follow the argumentation at all times, and it begins with an introduction, which is followed by the main part(s) and a conclusion;
- ❖ The **structuring principle** should be recognisable to the reader and make sense for the topic, e.g. chronological order (past—present—outlook), cause—effect, problem—solution, thesis—antithesis—synthesis to name a few;
- ❖ All **sources are properly identified** within the text and listed in the bibliography.

In general, students are expected to give a **critical assessment** of the topic, which means that they do not simply recite the ‘hard facts’, but engage in an **academic process of analysis, interpretation and evaluation** that is based on scientific literature and methods. Along with the facts and arguments that you cite in your term paper, it should become obvious to the reader what **your own contribution** to the topic is (e.g. comparison, interpretation, contextualisation, etc.).¹

A term paper is **NOT to be confused with a biography of an author, a plot summary or a general overview of a topic**. Certain aspects of an author’s biography, of the plot of a book, or of the general overview may be included, but only (!!) if they are directly relevant for your research question. Everything else is redundant and must be left out. You can assume that your instructor *knows* the biography of the author, the plot, and general events in an historic era and is much more interested in what you would like to say specifically about your thesis statement.

¹ A helpful introduction (including examples and exercises) can be found in Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein’s *They Say / I Say. The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. Norton, 2024.

Format

- ❖ **Headings:** Headings should be bold and larger in size than regular text. Consider using a sans-serif font such as **Arial**, **Verdana** or **Gill Sans** for headings to highlight them in contrast to (serif) regular text.
- ❖ **Text:** For regular text, please use a serif typeface such as Garamond or Times New Roman, font size 12, line spacing 1.5, justified or left-aligned.
- ❖ **Footnotes:** May be used for additional information that deepens or explains arguments in the main text, but that is not 100% relevant to your line of argumentation. They should not be used excessively, but only when they add something valuable that could not be placed in the main text. Footnotes should be numbered, single-spaced and in font size 10.
- ❖ **Page margins:** 2.5 cm on the left, right, and top and 2 cm at the bottom
- ❖ **Bold**, *italic*, and underline should not be used for emphasis unless it is absolutely necessary; try to keep it plain and simple as much as possible. If emphasis is needed, then use italics, but use it sparingly.
- ❖ **Do not use fancy colours**—black and white are just fine; if necessary, use one other colour.
- ❖ **Examples, tables, maps and images must be numbered:** (1), (2), Map 1, Map 2, Image 1, Image 2, etc.
- ❖ **Quotation marks** in English are always at the top (English “XYZ” vs. German „XYZ“). If your word processor uses the German version, change the language of the document to English. This will automatically change the formatting style to English as well.
- ❖ A **hyphen** (-) is used to link words (e.g. “self-interest”). A **dash** (—) is used to separate additional information—insertions like this one, for instance—from the main sentence.
- ❖ **Titles** of books and plays are usually given in italics (= *kursiv*), those of essays, articles, short stories, and poems in ‘simple’ (not “double”) quotation marks in British usage. In American usage, all of the latter are put in “double” quotation marks.
- ❖ **Thousands and decimals:** The number *one hundred thousand* is written “100,000” in English but “100.000” in German whereas one and a half is written “1.5” in English and “1,5” in German. A rule of thumb: it is always the opposite from what you would use in German.
- ❖ **Longer citations** (> three lines) are to be indented (= *engerückt*; for instance: 1.25 cm margin to the left and right) and visually separated from your own text by using single-spacing and by reducing the font size to 10 instead of the usual 12.

Length and page numbering

The length requirement is stipulated in your *Studien- und Prüfungsordnung* (exam regulations). Be sure to check how many pages you need to write already when considering an appropriate topic. Giving you a minimum and a maximum of pages you are allowed to write is an essential part of the assignment, which means that not fulfilling the length requirements may result in not meeting overall standards for passing or receiving a lower grade. Here are some more guidelines for you:

- ❖ Every page must be numbered in the bottom right corner. The title page and the Table of Contents (ToC) should not be numbered.
- ❖ Page numbering begins with “1” on the page of your ‘Introduction’ and continues until the very end of the paper. Choose the option *not* to display the page number on the first page (=ToC). Do your title page in a separate .doc file that you add to the printed / PDF version.
- ❖ The title page, table of contents, bibliography, appendix, photos, maps, and everything else that is not text written by you does not count towards the length requirement.
- ❖ Stick to the formatting (see above) and do not change margins, headings, font sizes or spacing, except in such cases where these guidelines recommend alterations.
- ❖ If you need to include many and/or large images or tables, then please place them in an appendix at the end of the term paper rather than directly in the main text.

Structure

- ❖ **Title page:** See chapter “Title page” below for more information.
- ❖ **Table of Contents:** The ToC contains headings and page numbers of chapters and subchapters down to the third level. It immediately precedes the main text and provides an overview of your term paper. Use the automatic function in your word processing program in order to make headings and page numbers congruent across the document.
- ❖ **Introduction:** Informs the reader about your topic and thesis statement or research question and stresses its relevance, states the main (!) secondary literature on the topic and the method/approach you use, and defines relevant concepts and terms with the help of academic literature. Be sure to write a short, relevant and interesting introduction because this is the *first* thing a reader sees, and as a reader of an academic paper, you need to know **what** you are reading, **why** it’s relevant, and **how** the topic is going to be dealt with (thesis and methods, not a list of sub-chapters). The introduction’s length should be about 10-15 % of the total text’s length.
- ❖ **Main part**, divided into several sub-chapters: The analysis, interpretation and evaluation takes place here. This is where you demonstrate that you have understood the topic, read relevant secondary literature and weighed the arguments. The main part should not simply be a summary of known facts, i.e. you need to do your own thinking here (see “Content”).
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Presents the main results of your term paper, states the answer to your research question, and establishes a link to the original thesis statement or research question in the introduction. The conclusion’s length should be about 10-15 % of the total text length.
- ❖ **List of sources** (aka “Bibliography” or “References”): Lists all the sources you used in the term paper in alphabetical order with full title information (author, title of text, place of publication, year of publication, etc.) in the MLA citation format.
- ❖ **Appendix** (optional): Used for images, tables, graphics or primary sources (e.g. a historical document, map, law code) if essential to the understanding of the term paper.
- ❖ **Erklärung über das selbstständige Abfassen der Qualifikationsarbeit** (obligatory): States that you have cited all the ideas and words (direct, indirect or in translation) of others

that you used when writing this term paper and that you have written the term paper yourself.

If allowed by the examiner: Documents in great detail your use of AI-supported software

❖ Title page

The first page (title page) must contain the following information:

- ❖ **course information** (top left corner): type of course (*Proseminar* or *Hauptseminar*), name of module, name of professor/lecturer, semester and year
- ❖ **title of your term paper** (centre of page)
- ❖ **your personal data** (bottom right corner): your name, address, e-mail address, matriculation number, study programme (*B.A.*, *LA Gym*, *LA RegS*, *M.A.*), your subjects (e.g. *Anglistik/Amerikanistik*, *Geschichte*), your current semester (e.g. *6. Fachsemester*)

Universität Greifswald Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik	
Module	<i>Module name</i>
PS/HS/Sem	<i>Title of the course</i>
Instructor	<i>Professor Dr. First Name Surname</i>
Student	<i>First Name Surname</i>
Semester	<i>WS 2024/25</i>
<h2 style="margin: 0;">Topic of the term paper</h2>	
Date of submission: YYYY-MM-DD John Sample 123 Sample Street 12345 Sampleville john.sample@stud.uni-greifswald.de B.A. / LA Gym / LA RegS / M.A. First subject, second subject Xth semester Mat.-Nr. 123456	

Above: Sample of a title page

Language use

As a student of English, you are expected to hand in term papers that demonstrate a superior command of English grammar, spelling, punctuation, style and vocabulary. Please make sure to **proof-read** your text before handing it in to make sure there are no errors. Perhaps even consider having someone *else* proof-read your term paper. Poor language use reflects negatively on your effort and abilities and results in a lower mark.

The paper should be written in **clear and logical English, avoiding redundancy and unnecessary repetition**. Anything that does not lead to the point or that has already been said should be omitted.

The **vocabulary and register** of a term paper must be appropriate to the university context in which it is written—in other words: C1+. You want to avoid using only very simple words or phrases and instead write on a level of vocabulary and style that reflects academic standards.

Try to express yourself well by using **formal language** rather than spoken/colloquial language. On the other hand, do not overdo it, i.e. using “formal language” is not to be confused with overly dry and lengthy writing full of empty “fancy” words that have no actual meaning. The secondary sources on which you draw for your argument can be a useful example for language use as well!

In addition, it is essential that you use the appropriate **terminology** within the field correctly: make sure that you have fully understood all the literary, cultural or linguistic terms you use.

There should be **no contractions** (“I’m”, “isn’t”) in the text.

The text as a whole should be written in English. If you quote from sources in languages other than English, please confer with your supervisor whether you need to provide translations in a footnote.

When working on your paper, you should consult:

- ❖ the ***Oxford English Dictionary***
 - you enjoy free access from within the university network via www.oed.com
 - particularly as a passive dictionary, i.e. to help you understand primary and secondary texts, the usage and etymology of terms, etc.
 - do not use the OED to define concepts or ideas in your paper (use a textbook instead)
- ❖ a **thesaurus**
 - provides more precise/suitable alternatives for too commonly used or colloquial words and for words that might not be quite appropriate
 - e.g. Webster’s Thesaurus at www.merriam-webster.com
- ❖ a university-level **grammar book**
 - you can consult it whenever you encounter a grammatical dilemma
 - e.g. *My Grammar Lab, Cambridge (Advanced) Grammar in Use*
- ❖ a **writing handbook**
 - contains useful background information on specific aspects of academic writing
 - e.g. the classic *Harbrace Essentials*, *The Little Seagull Handbook*, or *They Say / I Say*

Finding literature

Finding relevant and appropriate literature is a large part of the job of writing a term paper and is a basic academic skill. One of the main aspects of what you are expected to do is to position your own ideas within the context of the existing scholarly work. Therefore, **the efficient use of secondary literature is of vital importance to any term paper** and failing to find (and use) enough² relevant texts in the field of your term paper will impact your grade.

To find relevant and appropriate literature go to databases (via UB: https://dbis.ur.de/dbinfo/fachliste.php?bib_id=ub_grw) such as

- *MLA International Bibliography*
- *Online Contents Anglistik*
- *Online Contents Geschichte*
- *ProQuest*
- *JSTOR*.

Library catalogues (Discovery, OPAC: <https://opac.lbs-greifswald.gbv.de/>, GBV) are useful but limited as aids to finding literature, since they do not contain the titles of essays in academic journals or edited collections. Some journals and books are not available in Greifswald, but only via **inter-library loan** (*Fernleihe*) which can take two to three weeks, so be sure to search for literature early.

Primary sources are texts (e.g. manuscripts, novels, poems, plays), films, fine art, photographs, pictures, historical documents, maps, law codes and similar items as *objects* of your analysis.

Secondary sources are (a) interpretations and critical evaluations of those primary sources and (b) texts providing historical/cultural (e.g. literary history) or theoretical (e.g. literary theory, stylistics) background information. Consider the following types of secondary literature:

- ❖ **Introductions and companions** present basic knowledge and overviews of an academic discipline. These can be books or edited books and they form a good starting point to get an overview and to find suitable literature in their bibliography.
- ❖ **Monographs** are written by one author on a particular subject and will give you detailed information about various aspects of the topic.
- ❖ **Edited collections** are edited by one or more person but contain chapters or essays from multiple authors, i.e. they draw on the expertise of various specialists to shed light on a topic from various angles.
- ❖ **Journal articles** are essays on specific topics that are published in scientific journals. They discuss particular aspects in a shorter format of usually between 5 to 30 pages.
- ❖ **Handbooks** are really helpful when you try to define basic concepts (e.g. *Handbook of Narratology*)

When selecting sources be sure to consider the following aspects:

- ❖ **MLA International Bibliography:** If the text has been admitted to the MLA Bibliography then it usually meets a certain level of quality.
- ❖ **Relevance:** Does the source contain relevant information for my thesis statement or research question?
- ❖ **Date of publication:** If the source is older than 20 years, check if the facts and conclusions in it are still up-to-date in academic discourse

² A rule of thumb: the number of pages you are supposed to write should be approximately equal to the number of different secondary sources that you use.

Internet sources (websites, Wikipedia, blogs, etc.) *may* be useful in order to get a general overview of the topic. However, they must not be used in/for the term paper, because (a) they usually do not have an identifiable author and (b) they have not undergone the reviewing and editing processes that most books and journals require and are thus not necessarily reliable. There are exceptions such as websites of organisations (UNESCO, EU, statistics offices), online versions of print publications, or websites curated by reputable academics or societies. Of course internet sources such as blogs and websites may be used as primary sources, i.e. when you analyse them linguistically or as a literary medium with the help of secondary sources.

Bibliography

The bibliography is a complete and formally consistent list of all **sources** used during the writing process. Reference managers will create a bibliography automatically for you. In the liberal arts and humanities, the **MLA citation style** is most commonly used and therefore it is also the international standard that we use in Greifswald.

Some guidelines for the bibliography:

- ❖ Every source you cite in the text must appear in the **bibliography**, so please double-check whether your bibliography is complete.
- ❖ The MLA citation style must be **consistently used**, i.e. do not alternate between two different styles.
- ❖ The bibliography is listed **alphabetically** by last name of the author. If an author is represented with multiple publications then these are listed alphabetically by title. If there are three or more authors/editors you may state the first of them and then add “et al.” which is Latin (et alii) for “and others.” Works with no identifiable author may be listed under the title or in some cases under “Anon.”, which stands for “anonymous author.”
- ❖ The **titles** of novels, monographs, anthologies, compilations, newspapers or journals should be in *italics*. Titles of journal articles, essays, short stories and poems should be in “quotation marks,” not italics.

In the following table, you find links to **guides with detailed information and examples** of citations compiled Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab:

TYPE OF SOURCE	LINK TO SPECIFIC EXAMPLES
Book	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_for_matting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_page_books.html
Periodicals, e.g. research articles	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_for_matting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_periodicals.html
Electronic sources	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_for_matting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_electronic_sources.html
Other common sources	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_for_matting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_other_common_sources.html

In-text citations

IMPORTANT

All passages (e.g. ideas, concepts, facts, numbers, direct or indirect quotes) **that you copy or paraphrase from another source** (monograph, journal article, blog, encyclopaedia, interview, documentary, etc.) **must be identified meticulously. To use material from somebody else** (even when paraphrasing it in your own words!) **without acknowledging its source is plagiarism and can lead to serious consequences and ruin your academic career.** It is a severe academic offence to use ideas without identifying their source.

Use the **Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style** for in-text citations and bibliographies. Use an electronic reference manager to be sure to use the correct citation format (see below).



For specific examples, please refer to this guide:

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

Electronic reference managers

Use an electronic reference manager when writing a term paper. Basically, reference managers will help you find, organise, store and use literature. They can be used to **insert citations** into MS Word (or other word processors) while you are writing, and they automatically **create a bibliography** at the end of your term paper. Reference managers let you use different citation styles, among them MLA (literary studies & cultural studies) and Harvard or Chicago (linguistics).

The earlier you get used to working with an electronic reference manager, the better. Especially when you are writing your bachelor or *Staatsexamen* thesis, it will make working with literature much easier and faster.

Your main option is (there are more):

❖ **Zotero**: available as a plugin for any browser

The university library provides information and tutorials:

<https://ub.uni-greifswald.de/serviceangebote/weitere-dienste/literaturverwaltung/zotero/>

Handing in term papers

What to hand in:

- ❖ Send a **searchable PDF** by e-mail to your instructor. Make sure you send it to the correct e-mail address (see website).
- ❖ In case your instructor asks you to, hand in a **printed copy** either in person or via mailbox on the day of the deadline or earlier.
- ❖ Attach the signed **plagiarism declaration** (obligatory).
- ❖ Add a copy of a **feedback sheet** if your instructor uses it (ask your instructor).

Some notes on deadlines:

- ❖ Term papers must be handed in on the day of the deadline or earlier. Failure to hand in the term paper on time may result in an automatic “fail”.
- ❖ The deadline can be extended only by the exam office (*Zentrales Prüfungsamt*), not by your examiners! There is a form you have to fill: https://ifaa.uni-greifswald.de/storages/uni-greifswald/2_Studium/2.4_Rund_um_die_Pruefungen/2.4.6_Formulare/Verlaengerung_Hausarbeit.pdf
- ❖ Send the paper as an e-mail or upload it on Moodle to make sure you keep the deadline. A printed version can be put into our postboxes or sent via “snail-mail”. As a last resort, there is a *Fristenbriefkasten* at the exam office which is emptied at midnight.

Assessment and feedback

Your instructor will mark your term paper and will give you feedback on it either in person or in writing. Term papers may be collected during weekly office hours of teaching staff; some instructors choose to deposit the paper at the secretary’s office for collection.

Your mark will be entered into the student portal (*Selbstbedienungsportal*).

Support and information

WHO	WHAT	LINK
Instructor	<i>Support on topic, thesis statement or research question, structure, assessment & feedback</i>	http://ifaa.uni-greifswald.de
<i>Zentrales Prüfungsamt</i>	<i>Exams, extension of deadlines, marks</i>	https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/ansprechpartner/zentrales-pruefungsamt/
<i>Studien- und Prüfungsordnung</i>	<i>Goals of a module, length of term paper</i>	https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/waehrend-des-studiums/rund-um-die-pruefungen/pruefungs-und-studienordnungen/
Student portal	<i>Exam registration, marks, courses</i>	http://his.uni-greifswald.de

Checklist

To make it easier to remember all necessary steps and important details about term papers, we recommend you check off the boxes below during the respective stages of preparing / writing / submitting your term paper, once you have fulfilled a task.

A) Before you start writing your term paper

- ✓ I have registered for the module exam at the *Prüfungsamt* in time.
- ✓ I have fully understood the topic.
- ✓ I have searched the *MLA International Bibliography* (or comparable databases) to make sure that enough literature is available to write the term paper.
- ✓ I have discussed the topic and thesis statement or research question with my instructor.
- ✓ I have filled in the *Prüfungsamt* form that states my term paper topic together with my instructor.
- ✓ I know the deadline for my term paper.
- ✓ I know how many pages my module requires.
- ✓ I know how to use an electronic reference manager such as Zotero and/or I have familiarized myself with MLA formatting and citation guidelines.

B) While writing

- ✓ I am structuring my text clearly, so that
 - each paragraph contains several sentences, but only one topic
 - (sub)chapters build on each other and are connected by transitions that highlight their relationship
 - no unnecessary or redundant information is included
- ✓ I support all my claims and arguments by textual evidence from my primary source(s) or through references to relevant secondary sources.
- ✓ I avoid generalizations or unsubstantiated statements
- ✓ I am weighing different scholarly perspectives on my object of study and critically engage with their arguments

C) Before handing in your term paper

- ✓ I have checked grammar, spelling, and punctuation. *Twice*.
- ✓ I have numbered examples, images, maps, etc. consistently.
- ✓ I have identified all sources used in the writing process in the respective text passages and have listed them in the bibliography.
- ✓ I have used the MLA citation style and double-checked the bibliographic data in the term paper (and in the reference manager) to ensure my bibliography is complete and consistent.
- ✓ I have numbered all pages in the bottom right corner (except the title page and ToC).
- ✓ I have ensured that my Table of Contents reflects the chapter names and page numbers correctly.

C) When handing in your term paper

- ✓ I have sent the term paper as a searchable PDF version to my instructor by e-mail.
- ✓ I have printed a paper copy to leave with the instructor or secretariat on the day of the deadline (if the instructors asked for it).
- ✓ I have attached and signed the plagiarism declaration.