Universität Salzburg PS: Understanding Fiction

Fachbereich Anglistik und Amerikanistik Instructor’s Name

WS 2023/24

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# Introduction

Writing papers is part of the requirements of many university courses because it helps us to develop skills that are relevant to many careers. Critical thinking, a coherent presentation of thoughts, a clear argumentation, as well as precise research and documentation are staple competences needed in a great variety of professions. This paper aims at outlining a few central formal requirements that need to be adhered to in papers in Literary and Cultural Studies. It can be read alongside, before or after consulting the "Style Sheet for Papers in Literary and Cultural Studies" and is intended to illustrate some of its rules for writing term papers.

Formally, this paper follows all the rules defined in the Style Sheet. Thus, it is advisable to use exactly this file for your own paper and erase the existing text and replace it with your own. This way, you do not have to worry about such matters as page numbering, margins, the format of the table of contents or the title page.[[1]](#footnote-1) Once your paper is finished, you can click on the table of contents and select ‘Inhaltsverzeichnis aktualisieren’, and all page numbers and chapter headlines will be adjusted automatically.

Starting out with general information about introductions, the subsequent chapters will outline basic considerations regarding paragraphs, how to integrate quotations into the running text, how to put titles of various types of publications into the text or the bibliography, the formality of language in term papers, and finally about bibliographies in general.

# How to Start: Titles and Introductions

The title of your paper needs to be informative and should clarify the subject. In order to achieve an eye-catching effect, you can also use a very short quotation. The title of your paper should be concise and mention the literary work(s) central to your analysis, e.g. (Black) American Identity in Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” and Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb”. You can also add a subtitle, for instance: Not Just Black and White: Racism in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929). Mind also that the title of the paper and, if you want to use chapter divisions, all chapter headlines are written in Title Case, which means that all words except articles, prepositions and conjunctions are capitalized. Please do not forget to mention the year of publication of the main text you are dealing with.

The aim of an introduction is definitely to arouse the attention of your readers and make them interested in reading on. The introduction is also an important means of letting your readers know what the paper will be about. Ideally, you start out with a general introduction to the topic that immediately catches your reader’s interest. You should then state clearly what the topic of your paper is and present the primary text(s) you are dealing with. Furthermore, it is crucial to say what you want to show in this paper and thereby formulate a central thesis of your paper. Announce the structure of your paper in order to give your readers an overview of what they can expect from reading your paper. You can, of course, also begin your paper with a quotation that refers to your topic or that you have selected from your primary text.

# The Next Step: Paragraphs and Chapters

Guide your reader through the main part or main body of your paper by elaborating on your ideas in coherent paragraphs, and by linking the paragraphs with connecting words and phrases. Notice that the first sentence of the paragraph often serves as a topic sentence, which all paragraphs need to have. With regard to the length of your paragraphs, the author of The New Oxford Guide to Writing, Thomas Kane, explains that it is determined by "subject, purpose […] and individual preference" (67), but he considers a length of 120 to 150 words ideal for a well-developed paragraph.

You may divide the main part of a lengthy paper into several chapters. All chapters should be logically arranged, and they should have roughly the same length. This paper, therefore, does not really conform to this rule, since the second and the third chapter vary considerably in length.

This dummy paragraph is designed to show you what your paragraph should look like on the page. As you can see, the first line of a new paragraph is indented 1.25 cm (i.e. it does not start on the very left but 1.25 cm to the right), but no indentation is used at the beginning of a paper or of a new chapter or section. Use block justification and 1.5 line-spacing throughout the document so that your instructor has enough space for his or her comments. Use 12pt Times New Roman font, set the margins of your document to 3 cm on all sides, and insert page numbers centred at the top of the page.

# Integrating Other Voices: Quotations and Paraphrases

Support your argument with quotations and paraphrases from the primary text and from secondary sources. It is important to always introduce, explain and discuss the quotations you give, as they do not speak for themselves. Make clear how a quotation from the primary text illustrates the point you want to make and how the argument made by a critic supports or challenges your own argumentation.

When integrating ideas from a primary or secondary source, you can either quote verbatim (the exact words) or paraphrase the ideas in your own words. In both cases you need to provide an exact reference in parentheses.

There are two main types of direct quotations: short quotations and long quotations. Short quotations are integrated into the running text like this: "This is a quotation of not more than three lines and is thus inserted into the main text" (Chopin 44). The author’s name and the page reference are given in parentheses right after the quotation, paraphrase, or summary. By contrast, all long quotations are marked by indentation. The following quotation, for instance, shows how to format a quotation of more than three lines of prose, i.e. passages taken from novels, short stories, critical texts or any other type of text written in full sentences and coherent paragraphs:

This is a quotation which exceeds three lines and is therefore indented 0.5 cm at both margins. You do not need to put quotation marks here, since the block format already indicates that this is a quotation. Please use single-spaced lines. Put the name of the author and the page reference in parentheses at the end of the quotation. (Poe 186)

Note that the quotation is separated from the main text by blank lines and that the line following your quotation is not indented (except if it indeed should mark a new paragraph).

Secondly, when quoting up to two lines of poetry, you should insert the lines into the main text and divide these lines with a slash, adding line numbers in parentheses: "I love thee to the level of every day’s / Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light" (Barrett Browning 5-6). For more than two lines of poetry, indent the quotation and keep the formatting as close to the original as possible.

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,

Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-ey’d Love, observing me grow slack

From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning

If I lack’d anything. (Herbert 1-6)

Thirdly, when quoting dialogue from a play, set aside and indent the quotation, and put the name of the character at the beginning of the line. Add line or page numbers in brackets. William Shakespeare’s plays present a special case, since usually the indication of Act, Scene and line numbers suffices and no page reference is necessary. Needless to say, the edition you have used will have to be listed in the bibliography. The following quotation is taken from William Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598/99):

LEONATO. I know not. If they speak but truth of her,

These hands shall tear her; if they wrong her honour,

The proudest of them shall well hear of it.

Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,

Nor age so eat up my invention,

Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,

Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,

But they shall find, awaked in such a kind,

Both strength of limb and policy of mind,

Ability in means and choice of friends,

To quit me of them throughly. (4.1.189-199)

If you quote dialogue from a film or TV-show, add time indications for all references to the film or TV-show.

[THANOS](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000982/?ref_=tt_ch):  With all the six stones, I could simply snap my fingers, and they would all cease to exist. I call that... mercy.

[DR.](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1212722/?ref_=tt_ch) STRANGE: And then what?

[THANOS](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000982/?ref_=tt_ch):  I finally rest, and watch the sun rise on a grateful universe. The hardest choices require the strongest wills.

[DR.](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1212722/?ref_=tt_ch) STRANGE: I think you'll find our will equal to yours.

[THANOS](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000982/?ref_=tt_ch):  Our?

[the Avengers appear]

(*Avengers: Infinity War* 01:47:36 - 01:48:07)

If you want to insert a screen-shot into your paper to illustrate visual characteristics of a certain shot or scene, you can easily do so using the “Ausschneiden und Skizzieren” function (Windows-Logo-Taste + Umschalttaste + S), which is included as part of the operating system Windows, running on most personal computers. The snapshot function in the vlc-player works fine as well. Each image needs to be accompanied by the exact timestamp. The following stills are taken from the film *Life of Pi*, directed by Ang Lee and released in 2012. By numbering your stills, you can also easily refer to them within your running text (see Fig. 1).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fig. 1 - 00:55:08 | Fig. 2 - 01:19:58 |

# Titles in the Text

If you include titles of primary and secondary sources in your paper, italicize the titles and subtitles of publications that have been published separately (i.e., independently, in their own binding) such as monographs, journals, newspapers, novels, plays, operas, films, and TV-series (e.g. *The Awakening*; *Stranger Things*). Use quotation marks for works not published separately, namely parts of publications such as scholarly articles in journals or anthologies, newspaper articles, poems, short stories within a collection, or single episodes of TV-series (e.g., Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"; Season 1 Episode 2: "The Big Bran Hypothesis" of *The Big Bang Theory*).

Thus, you would write in your running text: "The Dead" was written in 1906, considerably later than most of the other short stories of James Joyce’s short story collection *Dubliners*. However, it gets a bit more complicated if the title appears within another title that needs quotation marks, or is mentioned within a quotation. In this case you need to change double to single quotation marks: In his article, "James Joyce's 'The Dead': A Psychological Interpretation," John Smith points out...

# The Language of Papers: Questions of Register and Gender

Papers are text types that need to be written in a formal style. Hence, no informal language or colloquialisms should be used. Words like 'kid', 'guy', or 'okay' are not suitable for an academic paper. Similarly, contractions such as 'doesn't', 'won't', 'haven't' should be avoided. Instead, we use the full forms 'does not', 'will not' and 'have not'.

Furthermore, there are cases where the language in a term paper needs to be gender-neutral. For instance, if you analyse a poem and find that the gender of the speaker or the addressee is not disclosed, you can either use the 'singular they' or you can use the combinations "she or he" or "he or she". Note that the 'singular they' is more inclusive, as it conceives of gender more broadly, transcending a binary conception.

Here is some information taken from the APA Publication Manual, 7th edition (Section 4.18):

The singular “they” is a generic third-person singular pronoun in English. Use of the singular “they” is endorsed as part of APA Style because it is inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender. […]

* Always use a person’s self-identified pronoun, including when a person uses the singular “they” as their pronoun.
* Also use “they” as a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context of the usage.
* Do not use “he” or “she” alone as generic third-person singular pronouns. Use combination forms such as “he or she” and “she or he” only if you know that these pronouns match the people being described.
* Do not use combination forms such as “(s)he” and “s/he.”
* If you do not know the pronouns of the person being described, reword the sentence to avoid a pronoun or use the pronoun “they.”

**Forms of the singular “they”**

Use following forms of the singular “they”:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Form** | **Example** |
| they | Casey is a gender-fluid person. They are from Texas and enjoy tacos. |
| them | Every client got a care package delivered to them. |
| their | Each child played with their parent. |
| theirs | The cup of coffee is theirs. |
| themselves (or themself) | A private person usually keeps to themselves [or themself]. |

Here are some tips to help you use the proper forms:

* Use a plural verb form with the singular pronoun “they” (i.e., write “they are” not “they is”).
* Use a singular verb form with a singular noun (i.e., write “Casey is” or “a person is,” not “Casey are” or “a person are”).
* Both “themselves” and “themself” are acceptable as reflexive singular pronouns; however, “themselves” is currently the more common usage.

**Alternatives to the generic singular “they”**

If using the singular “they” as a generic third-person pronoun seems awkward, try rewording the sentence or using the plural.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Example** |
| Rewording the sentence | I delivered a care package to the client. |
| Using the plural | Private people usually keep to themselves. |

However, do not use alternatives when people use “they” as their pronoun—always use the pronouns that people use to refer to themselves. (APA Style)

# Citing Your Sources: The Bibliography

All papers, even those that explore only the primary text under discussion, are required to have a bibliography (also called Works Cited). The bibliography should always start on a separate sheet and include all the works that have contributed ideas or information to your essay. The list should be in alphabetical order of authors’ surnames and single spaced. It is recommended to indent the second and following lines of each item by 0.7 cm.

The format used for papers in Literary and Cultural Studies corresponds with the one suggested by the MLA (Modern Language Association). Each entry normally consists of three main parts: author, title, and details of publication. Each part is followed by a full stop. For every entry, you must determine the medium of publication: most entries will likely be listed as Print or Web sources, but other possibilities may include ebook or streaming platforms such as Netflix. If you do not spot an entry for the type of publication you need to document in the Style Sheet, consult http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ or a recent edition of the MLA Handbook.

# Conclusion

In the conclusion you sum up the main argumentative points you have made in your paper. In shorter papers, it is a good idea to go through your text and sum up each paragraph in one or two sentences, which will enable you to see whether your paper follows a clear and logical structure. Restate your thesis statement and make a concluding statement but no new argument. In this section there is also room to formulate questions that might extend the initial scope of your paper and/or place your claims in a larger context.

On the next page you will find a sample bibliography focussing on teaching LGBTQ literature in the EFL classroom. Note that such ready-made bibliographies, which are included in all scholarly publications, can also be helpful during your own research in order to find relevant sources regarding your own paper.

# Bibliography

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1. One piece of advice at this point: do not delete the whole text at once but only section by section. This allows you to keep the page numbering as well as the format of the chapter headlines. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)