

Style Sheet: How to Write a Term Paper or Academic Essay in Literary Studies

All term papers are written in English. Deadline for seminar papers is 12 months after the end of the course (end of July for summer term; end of February for winter term courses), unless specified otherwise by your teacher. Please note that it usually takes **4-6 weeks** until the papers are marked – bear this in mind for your timing of exam applications etc. Please send a rough draft of your topic per mail and wait until you get the go-ahead. Hand in a **printed version and a digital** one of your term paper, please. Do not forget to add the signed, German-language ‘eidesstattliche Erklärung’, in which you declare the work to have been written by yourself (example available on our homepage).

Cover page:

Universität zu Köln

Englisches Seminar II

Title of paper

Your name

Title of seminar it refers to

Name of teacher

Semester

Date of submission

Your email address

Form:

TN essay for Teilnahmenachweis: 3 pages (c. 800-1000 words)

LSP or CSP I: 10-12 pages

LSP or CSP II: 15-18 pages

Hauptseminar: 18-20 pages

Bachelor thesis: 35-40 pages (max 100.000 keys)

Font: 12 point, 1.5 line spacing (1 line for indented quotations), margin approx. 3 cm left and right.

Pagination: start counting pages from introduction (excluding contents and cover).

Minimum number of **secondary sources**: 3-5 for **CSP / LSP I** paper; 6-10 for **CSP / LSP II** papers; 15 minimum for **Bachelor thesis** – there is no maximum. Short **TN essays** are a chance for you to elaborate on ideas or issues that were discussed in the class sessions. This can have a theoretical or more practical, or even a creative starting point – please double-check with your teacher. If not indicated otherwise, at least one secondary source should be included in your TN elaboration. We expect that you have actually read the works you indicate in that list, and that you discuss or at least mention them in your paper.

Finding a topic:

Your paper can be basically expository or persuasive. In other words, it either aims to explain or describe phenomena fairly neutrally (expository), or your goal is to present a certain idea or understanding of an issue and thus you try to convince the reader by showing facts and information that support this idea of yours (persuasive). Think of a key motif / idea / approach to focus on in any of the works that were covered in class. Specific examples to work with are easier than general ideas; you can return to those in your assessment or conclusion. Topics can be derived directly from our work in class, but you are also welcome to bring in new media if they fit into the overall concept – other books by the same author, other works with a similar theme or style, film or graphic or music adaptations, political / social / legal texts that refer to the context etc.

You could focus on:

- overall content, set against / compared to other works written at the time or by the same author or with a similar topic
- the method and stylistic features of a given work
- the reception of the work or its historical context
- intertextual references
- key motifs / imagery / recurring details
- representation of / criticism concerning gender / politics / historical or social background / genre / frame; settings or characters
- a comparison with film / theatre / graphic adaptations

Whatever you choose, you need to work with secondary sources and these are usually influenced by a specific critical theory, so make sure you know the basics of

this, f. ex. narratology, reader response, new historicism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, postcolonial or gender studies etc. Browsing the MLA or JSTOR or other databanks to see what others have written on the same topic or another work by the same author / of the same genre can be inspiring and a good idea to find more secondary sources (for step-by-step help into online databanks see below). Remember you have to indicate all sources that inspired you, whether you quote them directly or not. It can also be useful to mention another scholar even if you do not agree with their viewpoint. N.B.: A simple Google search might give you some results, but very often these are not the academic standard you need and will give mere superficial info. Searching KUG only tells you what books there are in Cologne but ignores the many perfect scholarly articles available online, via above mentioned databanks.

Once you have a general notion of what interests you, jot down your ideas (mind map or list) and any associations that you can connect them with. Then consider how you can generate support from your primary source (the book / film you're studying) – specific scenes, words, character constellations. It is important to prioritize your ideas and set them in a certain order, always with respect to your overall topic / thesis / claim. Once you have this outline, contact your teacher to get the green light and begin the actual writing process. Who are you writing for? Someone interested in literary studies who knows all the basic terminology (from metaphor to homodiegetic narrator), but might not have read the text you are analysing.

Choosing a **title**: keep it short and sweet. Longer specifications, explanations and definitions can follow in the introduction. **Capitalization**: capitalize all words except articles, prepositions and conjunctions (*Trauma in Children's Literature Past and Present*).

The **table of contents** should reflect your train of thoughts; don't subdivide it into too many points. This page is not part of your written work, so don't include it in your pagination.

Introduction:

Present your overall topic / argument / field of interest. Show how / why this might be important / add a new dimension to the work you're studying. Your intro could also include references to the problems or limitations of your research within this essay ("Stand der Forschung", "Rezeptionsgeschichte"). If need be, define specific

terminology. Don't bother to point out that your conclusion will sum up your findings or similar obvious statements that can be taken for granted.

Consider knowledge of the primary source as given. If you wish, you can give a short summary of the plot (max. 3–5 sentences to one paragraph) at the beginning of your paper, after the general introduction.

The Main Section:

General gist: You want to convince your reader of a certain feature / typical or atypical element of the work(s) / era / genre you are analysing. Show what a text / film is about, **how** it brings its subject to life, what it all amounts to. Re-read your primary source(s); for a paper 15 pages and longer, choose up to **five key scenes** / passages that you can refer to during your analysis. Work with details, examples, facts to get an understanding of the larger issue (shift of perspective from general to specific and vice versa, inductive or deductive). Don't just retell the story / plot in your own words. Remember that stylistic devices and techniques are meant to help create the meaning and significance of a passage / work — they can be the key to your unwrapping the text and seeing it as an artificial and artful construct => don't treat form and content separately.

Keep in mind that you are presenting your understanding / interpretation of the work => there might not be easy 'messages' or intentions, rather, you can state your assumptions and illustrate these from the text passages you analyse. Very often, in literature (or in art in general) we can boil things down to certain existential issues, which are often presented in the form of explicit or implicit juxtapositions. Check if any of the following appear in your text: individual vs. community; adaptation vs. alienation; change vs. status quo; dream vs. reality; free will vs. fate or laws or oppression; good vs. evil; hope vs. despair; independence vs. dependence; love vs. hate; order vs. chaos; power vs. powerlessness; success vs. failure; youth vs. maturity; birth vs. death; inside vs. outside.¹

Note the difference between opinion and personal statement (founded on proof from the text). Do not write a biographical account of the author. If it helps your interpretation, you can give facts about some of his personal experiences / biographical data in the course of your text, but bear in mind that the narrator is never to be equated with the author.

¹ Some of these opposite pairs are taken from La Croix, L. *Inspired English*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2005, 54.

Paragraphs are thought units presenting one concept or one aspect of a concept; they should be structured in a logical, coherent order. Start with your topic sentence, then bring supporting sentences with evidence, i.e. details or quotations and their evaluation, and then lead on to the next paragraph by way of a short transition. Roughly, the build-up of a paragraph is to: **condense** (summarise contents / formal aspects) – **delineate** (show and describe typical aspects) – **interpret** (draw conclusion from text to overall meaning) – **explain** your thesis / draw a hypothesis. So you can't really have a paragraph consisting of less than 3–4 sentences. Please do not start every sentence with a new line: no returns within a paragraph! Also, you do not need an empty line in between paragraphs. Instead, as exemplified in this hand-out, place a tab at the beginning of each new paragraph (unless it's the first one of a chapter). Save blank lines for those situations where you are shifting your focus / taking a large step in a different direction.

With every paragraph / chapter, consider how this adds to your overall thesis / the key issue. **Relevance** is the key to any convincing text – no matter how interesting the facts or ideas you bring, they need to be closely connected to your topic. So with every quotation you use, make sure you point out how it helps add to our understanding of your argumentation.

Precision in writing means you don't ramble but try to express your ideas with clarity – sometimes this includes defining certain terms, esp. fuzzy ones like 'culture'. However, you don't need to explain set terminology in your field of research – in other words, in literary analysis, you can expect your reader to know what a metaphor or what focalisation is. But if you are not entirely sure about what exactly a certain term means or implies (f. ex. 'reader response'), make sure you familiarise yourself with these expressions first.

Conclusion:

Depending on the length of your text, you do not need to repeat everything again. Instead, try to briefly recapitulate but use different words – synonyms or antonyms – to paraphrase your key points. You can create a nice sense of closure if you come to a full circle concerning your intro. So, if you started with a quotation or 'anecdote', tie back to this again, mention again in what way your paper or academic essay has opened up a new way of understanding the issue at hand. Try to inspire your reader to consider your arguments and maybe continue the thought process. Sometimes,

questions or ideas popped up in your discussion that you had to suppress because they did not quite fit – these can now be mentioned in the conclusion, as a door-opener to another scholarly paper, for example.

Before you hand in your paper, lay it to the side for a day or two. Run a spell-check on your computer, then revise it with a special focus on the overall logical and argumentative structure. Does everything you say really contribute to your central thesis? Sometimes we can add relevance to passages by showing how they connect to the overall issue; we tend to assume that our reader can read not only the text, but our thoughts, too. It's better to be explicit a bit too often than to imply too much. Finally, read your text out loud. This is the final step to notice a possible glitch both in style and content.

Working with Sources:

We want to see that you can handle both primary and secondary sources: don't repeat what others say. Rather, give the essence of a passage in your own words or quote directly, marking quotations carefully. But don't let the **quotations** do the talking; only use very strong ones as extra proofs to support your arguments. Do not add one quotation after another; focus on the ones that are most convincing. Embed all quotations into your analysis, i.e., explain / evaluate them. ('This passage shows how the author uses negatively connoted words like "sharp" and "cold" to visualise the protagonist's feelings towards his mother...').

When quoting from your primary source in literary analysis, watch out for keywords, unusual metaphors etc. Very often, wonderful text passages are not given the detailed attention they deserve. We usually indicate page numbers of prose texts in parentheses in the running text and only add footnotes for first full references or when we would like to add extra information that is not absolutely vital (more details below). Remember that pagination changes from one edition to the next but the words are still the same – so it doesn't really make sense to state that some narrator describes something on page 23, as it might be page 48 in an edition with smaller pages or larger print. So these indications are added in parenthesis: 'Lizzie Bennett warns her father again and again (see pp. 57, 123, 187).' We do not count lines; pages suffice. When we analyse poetry or drama, however, we do have to indicate the exact line (act / scene), whether in the running text or in parentheses is your choice.

As for secondary sources, consider whether you couldn't say the same in your own words and merely indicate the author (f. ex. cf. Gilbert 2014, 3) rather than quoting them directly. Keep in mind that, especially in literary criticism, scholarly works are also 'products' determined by the time they were written in, by personal liking or an underlying critical theory – this will help you detect some weak points in their argumentation, and to elicit own ideas.

Any quotation that is three lines or longer is **indented**; then line spacing is reduced to 1. Do not italicise them; *italics* are reserved for the titles of books or artworks, or for foreign words. You also do not need quotations marks for indented matter.

Finding and Using Secondary Sources:

The sooner you learn how to research databanks, the easier academic life will be for you. MLA and JSTOR are the most encompassing databanks for English studies – you can browse them on campus or need to register first to access them from home. The sources you will find there are reliable academic studies, often the articles are available as pdf files. This is how to find them: go onto the UB koeln homepage, then, on the left, to => E-Medien => Datenbanken => Anglistik => Top-Datenbanken => Datenbankrecherche starten.

Note: there are different systems concerning where the year of publication is indicated; linguists bring it directly after the name of the author, literary studies tend to indicate it at the end. Also, some systems use full stops, others use commas to divide author / title / publication details. In all of these cases, the choice is yours as long as you **stay consistent** within your system. The most important feature is that you get the italics right.

Monograph (book written by one author): Last name, first name. *title in italics*.

place of publication: publisher, year.

Byrnes, Christina. *Sex and Sexuality in Ian McEwan's Work*. Nottingham: Paupers' Press, 1995. If the person did not write the entire book all by him/herself but is responsible for the contributions, we call him / her the editor. In this case, we add an (ed.) or (eds.) for several after their initials to indicate this.

Childs, Peter (ed.). *The Fiction of Ian McEwan: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.

Two authors: Last name, first name; (semicolon) first name last name. Then as above. More than two: Last name, first name **et al.**

Journal article: Last name, first name. ‘article title in quotation marks.’ *journal name in italics* volume no. (year): pp.

Finney, Brian. ‘Briony’s Stand against Oblivion: The Making of Fiction in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*.’ *Journal of Modern Literature* 27,3 (2004): 68–82.

Book article: Last name, first name. ‘article title in quotation marks.’ IN (capitalised) last name, first name of editor (ed. or, if several, eds.). *title in italics*. place: publisher, year. pp.

Bauder-Begerow, Irina; Lusin, Carolin. ‘Der englische Roman zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts: Ian McEwan.’ IN Nünning, Vera (ed.), *Der zeitgenössische englische Roman*, Tübingen: Wissenschaftlicher Buchverlag, 2007. 243–58.

If you work with two or more articles from one volume, add this (filed under the editor’s name) to the list of references, too.

Film: *Title in italics*. Dir. Name of director. Date.

Poem / Short Story: Last name, first name. ‘name of poem / story.’ [first date of publication] IN (capitalised) last, first name of author or editor (ed. or, if several, eds.). *title of publication in italics*. place: publisher, year, pp.

Internet: do not rely on Wiki sources; give the full link (URL) and name the title of the article / document and author / organisation, state the date when you retrieved the article (accessed 10.10.2015). The abbreviation n.a. (no author) and n.d. (no date) can be used when indications are missing.

When you first reference your quoted material, give name, year and page (if you refer to a specific passage) in parentheses in the running text or in a footnote – choose one of the two systems and stay consistent. When you have to indicate that source again and no other was mentioned in between, use (ibid.). Full indications are given in the **list of references** at the end of your paper. If you want to refer to a source that you are not actually quoting by word, use cf. (confer; German vgl. or siehe auch). If you quote someone but you did not read the original, rather, you found the quotation in another scholar’s publication, both need to be mentioned, for example:

As Marcus points out, ‘Head states that “McEwan employs the post-Einsteinian conception of the plasticity of time” (Head 2002, 235, quoted from Marcus 2013, 86).

If you find a mistake or weird expression in the quoted material, use [sic.] directly following the mistake:

According to Davies, ‘Joe does not realise [sic.] that Clarissa fears he is going mad.’ (Davies 2009, 54)

Information that is considered ‘common knowledge’ need not be credited: something that you find repeated in five different sources, or that you could have taken from any kind of dictionary (f. ex. the German background of Queen Victoria’s husband).

Introduce your sources with phrases such as ‘According to xy,’ ‘In the opinion of xy,’ ‘xy points out / states / suggests / claims that’ and similar reporting verbs.

Quotation within a quotation: British English tends to use single (‘), American double (“) inverted commas – the choice is yours, just stay consistent. When direct speech occurs within the quotation, use double for BE, single for AE – in other words, always the other kind.

As Marcus points out, ‘Head states that “McEwan employs the post-Einsteinian conception of the plasticity of time” (Head 2002, 235, quoted from Marcus 2013, 86).

A word on **plagiarism**: this is a serious crime. When you begin to read secondary sources, immediately note down the main ideas of each article – to avoid unconscious plagiarism, take notes in German if the original is in English; try to paraphrase or just note the key words – do not copy out long passages unless you intend to quote them, in which case you need to add all necessary indications (name, page number, year etc.). Whenever you’re in doubt as to who the originator of an idea was (you think it’s yours but it already exists in print by someone else) refer to this source (cf. / see also Bradbury 2008, 23f. et passim). f. means following page; use ff. if two follow; more than that use ciphers (23–26). *Et passim* means here and other parts of the source. This can help keep you out of trouble. We regularly check both online and print sources, so do not copy and paste!

DONTS: A final word on what to avoid

empty phrases (‘basically’, ‘it can be said’)

fuzzy, imprecise, or ambiguous expressions (‘kind of’, ‘anyway’)

generalisations (‘everybody knows that...’)

exaggerations (use exclamation marks sparingly)

subjective, judgmental or conversational adverbs ('totally', 'horrible')
too many methodological comments, especially if they refer to things that ought to be
self-explanatory or obvious ('The essay will end with a conclusion')
repetitions where not necessary

Style:

Remember that your task is to convince your reader of your thesis. The more personal and individual your approach ('I think...') the less the reader will feel appealed to. The more neutral and high-register your expressions, the more of an authority you will seem to be. The more precise your expressions, the more convincing you are. The more you manage to mention / allude to other scholars in a meaningful way – to support or contrast your own thesis – the more easily your reader will feel convinced. Raise the register to formal style by using Latin- and Greek-based words (f. ex. 'When Tess *returns* to her family...' instead of 'When Tess *gets back*'). Before you hand in, proofread your text carefully: use your computer's spell-check programme, try to substitute phrasal verbs by a more formal synonym, avoid contractions (use cannot rather than can't).

It is a privilege to be able to generate and express own ideas on works of literature and see these grow into a large coherent text – so ENJOY your work!!!