

JFK-I Dpt. of Literature | Prof. Dr. Stefanie Mueller
Thesis guidelines for BA and MA students

For all questions related to the administrative process of completing your seminar work and your thesis, you must consult the Department of Examinations and Auditing!

The practical process of beginning your thesis

- **Find a topic and do some initial research** on the available scholarship: what approaches have been taken, what arguments have been made – and what could you contribute that hasn't been written so far.
- **Prepare one page to discuss with me:** Your topic(s) in one or two sentences + 5-6 titles of scholarship that are relevant.
- **Schedule an appointment for my office hours** (see my website for details).
 - *If you have never attended any of my seminars*, also bring an old research paper so I can get a better idea of your work. You can send it by e-mail.
- **First office hour meeting:** Bring your single page (see above) so we can discuss your topic, whether it is a viable option for a MA-/BA- thesis project, and whether I can supervise you.
- If I agree to supervise your thesis, your **next step** is to hone down your topic to a thesis, to decide on your selection of primary materials (which texts, how many, etc.), decide on your approach, and to draw up a preliminary outline.
 - Put all of this into a **research proposal**, including an abstract (max. 2-3 pages).
- **Second office hour meeting:** Bring your **research proposal**, so we can discuss it. I will either send you home to do more preparation or agree to supervise your thesis.
- **By the time you have started writing**, it makes sense to touch base and tell me how your work is going. Bring a sample page from your thesis, ideally an analytical passage.

What supervision means

- I will advise you on your research topic, its scope, and how to structure your thesis.
- I can also offer advice when you get stuck: in case the topic no longer seems feasible, if you feel you have taken on too much, or when you have trouble finding relevant scholarship.
- I can give short feedback on abstracts, outlines, and samples of your writing at the beginning.
- **I will not** read your thesis before submission (or read and assess entire chapters beforehand), nor will I give regular feedback in any form through the writing process.

Remember: A BA or MA thesis should be an independent piece of research.

How I grade your thesis

Your paper will be graded based on three criteria: Structure (focus and relevance of question), Content (quality of research and analysis), Form (language and bibliographical conventions).