

JFK-I Dpt. of Literature | Prof. Dr. Stefanie Mueller

Research paper guidelines for BA and MA students

The practical process

- Check your *Studienordnung* to see how many words or pages your research paper should have. You find it on the JFK-I's website under "Academics." (Note: "20 pages" roughly translate into 6.000 words +/- 10%.)
- Find a *topic* based on at least one of the texts that we discussed in this seminar.
- Do a first round of research on that topic by using the library's online catalogue, Primo. What scholarship is available on it? Can you add a new insight to the topic?
- ***Run the topic by me before you start in earnest. Otherwise, I will not accept your research paper.***
 - Either make an appointment for my office hours and bring your topic and list of primary and scholarly titles,
 - Or send me one page with a short abstract, preliminary outline, and 4 to 6 scholarly titles that you will use. I will give you *brief* feedback.
- Write your research paper.
 - Format your paper using Times New Roman 12, 1.5 line space, maximum of 3.5 cm margin to the right.
 - Make sure your citations and bibliography are complete and follow MLA style.
- Submit your research paper (including your declaration of authorship and on the use of AI) *electronically*. Check my syllabus for details.

If you get sick or have some sort of emergency that prevents you from submitting in time, get in touch with me via e-mail. (I will request some form of medical certificate in cases of sickness.)

How to do research & how to write your paper

The topic and the thesis

- The topic and the primary material need to be based on what we did in class.
- The thesis should be a short and concise statement. It can also be a question.

The paper's structure

- Typically, the paper should have an Introduction, Main part, and Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography. The Main Part is where you present most of your analysis, and it should not have more than three or four subsections. Coherence between these subsections is essential.

On method

- Close reading of primary texts is essential in most studies of literature.
- Familiarize yourself with narratological concepts (narrative voice, focalization, temporal order etc.) and with poetic and rhetorical figures (anaphora, metonymy, enjambment, etc.).
- Always provide textual evidence for your arguments.

How your paper is graded (See syllabus for more details.)

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).