

**Written Assignments (*Hausarbeiten*)
in Literary and Cultural Studies**

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1 Introduction

The purpose of a written assignment is to demonstrate your ability to grasp, present and discuss a specific academic question. Written assignments are not essays. If they are done in the Humanities at a German university, they constitute a distinct academic genre (the *Hausarbeit*). Like any other genre, they follow a specific set of conventions, and there are historical reasons for some of these. For example, written assignments were meant to prepare you, eventually, for the publication of a doctoral thesis; this is why they still follow the structure of a book (“Table of Contents”, “Introduction”, “Conclusion”, “Bibliography” or “Works Cited”). While the actual reader might be your lecturer, the *implied reader* is a well-informed academic peer group, and the writing style is not conversational but analytical, clear and concise. A *Hausarbeit* is not like an essay written at a British or American university (that is a different genre altogether), and a written assignment in Linguistics may follow slightly different conventions than an assignment in British Studies or in American Studies. This document only applies to Literary and Cultural Studies. For your *Hausarbeit* in Linguistics, consult the appropriate guidelines on our website.

The form of the written assignment often follows the recommendations of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, and while some variations are possible, it is vital that you are consistent. (In American Studies, no variations are allowed; you need to follow the *MLA Handbook*.)

For your main body of text, use justified type alignment (*Blocksatz*), a line spacing of 1.5 lines and either Times New Roman (font size 12 pt) or Arial (11 pt). Top and bottom margins should be 2 cm, left margins 2.5 cm and right margins 3.5 cm in order to leave space for corrections. (This document has been formatted accordingly, using Arial.)

2 The Structure of Assignments

Assignments consist of the following sections (in this order):

- a title page
- the table of contents (*Inhaltsverzeichnis*)
- an introduction, a main part and a conclusion (approx. 10–12 text pages for basic seminars [*Mittelseminare*], 15–20 pages for advanced seminars [*Hauptseminare*])
- a bibliography
- appendices (if required)
- an affidavit (*Wahrheitsgemäße Erklärung*). This must be signed and attached to the assignment. (Since the affidavit is not part of the assignment itself, it is not included in the table of contents.)

2.1 Title and Title Page

The function of the title is to state, as concisely as possible, the topic of the *Hausarbeit* and, where appropriate, to name the specific text(s) you analyse – e.g. “Mirror-Imagery in Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo+Juliet* (1996)” (on the title page, the title is not enclosed in quotation marks).

A title usually does not take the form of a full sentence or a question (use your introduction to pose the central questions of your paper). Choose the title carefully since it delimits exactly what you need to address in your *Hausarbeit* and what not. A title such as “Representations of Women in Shakespeare” is far too general and would present you with two impossible choices: it would either commit you to write about *all* female characters in *every* Shakespeare play, or to argue convincingly in your introduction why the few plays you do focus on are, in fact, representative examples of all the other plays.

The title page should follow the model on the next page (and the title page of this document has been formatted accordingly as well):

11/12 pt, single-spaced, aligned left

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
Department of English and American Studies
[Winter or summer semester and year]
[Lecturer's name]
[Course title]

14 pt, 1.5 line spacing, bold, centered

Clear and Concise:
The Title of a *Hausarbeit*

11/12 pt, single-spaced, aligned left

[First and last name]
[Address]
[E-mail address]
[Student registration number]
[Degree programme, subject
combination, semester]
[Submission date]

2.2 Table of Contents

The table of contents gives a full outline of the assignment. Headings are numbered 1, 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2, 2, etc. Page numbers and the wording of chapter titles (which again should be brief) must correspond to the text.

2.3 Introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to give a clear and concise statement of your topic. It establishes the academic context and the critical framework of your analysis, names and discusses the critical approach(es) and method(s) you will employ, and defines and discusses your critical concepts, categories and terms. (A useful way to start thinking about critical terms would be consulting as many up-to-date glossaries, such as Metzler's *Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, as possible.) Your introduction should not simply

restate the title of your paper (which can be found on your title page), nor should it simply repeat the general structure once more (cf. Table of Contents) but it should give a clear and concise thesis statement.

2.4 The Main Part

The function of the main part is to support your proposition and to illustrate your findings. As space is limited, only include arguments that are directly relevant to your specific topic. A written assignment on Language Acquisition with an emphasis on phonology will, for instance, omit the syntactic aspects of the subject. Your paper is not meant to reflect your learning process (do not include everything that you have read), nor is it meant to 'educate' anybody (your readership is an academic peer group). Rather think of it as a well-reasoned statement – your contribution to an ongoing academic discussion about a very specific topic (the one in your title). Do not include historical or biographical 'background information' just because it seems interesting in itself – only include material that is relevant within the narrow confines of your topic. Avoid extremely long quotes or simply stringing together a sequence of quotes – your readers are interested in how you assess the ideas of others, and in your own arguments. You should also avoid excessive use of meta-text to structure your paper ("First, I will...", "I will now discuss...").

The main part has its own heading and subheadings and needs to be clearly structured. It should focus on primary material (primary texts, corpus data, etc.) which you analyse in detail, and it must incorporate seminal and up-to-date secondary literature as well. The text is split into *paragraphs* – each paragraph presents one line of thought or one carefully developed argument. Paragraphs consisting of only one sentence are almost always inadequate (they rarely comprise carefully developed arguments), as are overly long paragraphs that stretch across a page or more (they usually consist of more than one main argument). In order to mark the beginning of a new paragraph, slightly larger line spacing (around 3 pt) can be used. Alternatively, the first line of paragraphs *that are preceded by another paragraph* can be indented (i.e. the first paragraph after a heading is not indented). This is the method used in this document.

Use a clear and concise academic style throughout (including the introduction) and try to be as precise and consistent as possible in your use of terminology. Focus on facts and arguments only. Avoid platitudes (e.g. "The question of identity is more important today than ever before") and purely subjective opinions ("Personally I find the text rather uninteresting"). Also avoid all historical or cultural generalisations, e.g.

- "Americans have rigid sexual morals." Speaking of 'all Americans' at all times is an invalid generalisation since sexual morals have historically been specific to one's class, sex, age, region, religion and other factors.

- “In former times,...” – are you referring to 1968 or the 4th century BC? Be as precise as possible, otherwise you are implying that the past is homogenous and things have always been the same.
- “We”, “us” – do not presume to speak for people who may not share your values and norms. Always specify the specific social/cultural group for which you make a statement.
- Terms like ‘positive’, ‘negative’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ always imply a norm against which things are measured. You need to supply that norm and specify *for whom* exactly you think it is valid.

Finally, clearly distinguish between...

- (a) the terms, concepts (and with them, values and norms) used in the texts you analyse;
- (b) the critical concepts and terms which you are applying yourself.

For example, the implicit understanding of ‘race’ in a text by Kipling is *what* you analyse

(a). The concepts *with which* you analyse this text, however, might be ‘alterity’ or ‘othering’ (b) – they allow you to understand how a specific concept of ‘race’ was used in the 19th century. If you simply adopt the terminology of texts you analyse, you run the risk of adopting the values and norms implicit in them. This is a very common and basic mistake that you need to avoid.

2.5 Conclusion

You could sum up your main points again (if necessary) and/or indicate further areas of research that you were not able to touch upon.

2.6 Bibliography

The “Bibliography” (or “Works Cited”) needs to include full bibliographical references for *all* sources cited in the text. Research literature must be relevant and (preferably) up-to-date. No matter what your specific topic is, and even if nobody has written on it before, there will always be plenty of research literature: The critical approach you have chosen, the concepts with which you operate – all these have been explored by other academics. If you fail to acknowledge them, your paper will not meet academic standards and you will automatically receive a poor grade.

Bibliographical references are sorted alphabetically according to the authors’ surnames. The bibliography should be single-spaced and formatted with hanging indentation so that the second and all following lines of a source are automatically indented for improved legibility.

2.6.1 Titles of Publications: Italics or Quotation Marks

When it comes to titles, please distinguish between...

- titles of longer publications that can stand by themselves (*selbständige Publikationen*). These include the titles of books, films, albums, TV shows, etc., and are usually printed in *italics*:

Wordsworth, William, and S. T. Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems*. London: Printed for J. & A. Arch, 1798.

- titles of shorter publications that are part of other publications (*nicht-selbständige Publikationen*): a single poem in an anthology, an essay in an essay collection, the title of a song, an episode in a TV series, etc. – these are not italicized but put in quotation marks, as with a single poem from *Lyrical Ballads*, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

The *medium* of each source has to be apparent from the entry in the bibliography. For this reason, the MLA recommends including the medium after each entry (i.e. 'print', 'film', 'web', 'television', etc.; this does not apply to citations in the main body of the text). Consider carefully which medium you will have to list: If you analyse a TV series or a film that was available to you on DVD or Blu-Ray, you will have to cite the specific DVD edition – and in a written assignment in Cultural Studies, you might reflect on the fact that you did not, in fact, analyse a film but a different *text* altogether. (A DVD is an interactive medium that allows for non-sequential access and gives viewers sound and commentary options; some DVD editions even offer different versions of films, such as the 'theatrical release version' or the 'director's cut').

2.6.2 Bibliographical References

Book publication

Alexander, Flora. *Contemporary Women Novelists*. London: Arnold, 1989.

Article in a journal

Wolf, Werner. "Literaturtheorie in der Literatur: David Lodges *Small World* als kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Dekonstruktivismus." *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 14 (1989): 19–37.

Article in an edited volume

Fraile Murlanch, Isabel. "The Silent Woman: Silence as Subversion in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*." *Gender, I-Deology. Essays on Theory, Fiction and Film*. Ed. Chantal Cornut Gentille D'Arcy and Landa Jose Angel Garcia. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996. 239–52.

The name of the publisher should be shortened as much as possible (i.e. without 'Inc.', etc.).

Pay attention to capitalisation conventions in all titles (see also 3.3). You should also make sure that you correctly list the edition of publications:

Eagleton, Mary, ed. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

The editor should be named for older primary texts:

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Ed. Roger Ingpen and W. E. Peck. 2 vols. London: Ernest Benn, 1965.

Internet sources must be listed together with the date on which the site was first accessed and the URL:

Breebaart, Leo, ed. "The Colour of Magic: Annotations." *The Annotated Pratchett File*, v. 7a.0. Web. 18 Dec. 2000. <http://www.lspace.org/books/apf/the_colour_of_magic.html>.

"Cover-Wahl im Internet: Die deutschen 'Harry Potter'-Leser können im Internet über das neue Cover für den vierten Band der Bestseller-Serie entscheiden." *Spiegel Online*. 14. Nov. 2000. <<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,97952,00.html>>.

The MLA has specified the following abbreviations for internet sources:

- n.p. (no publisher given)
- n.d. (no date of publication given)
- n. pag. (no pagination, e.g. in journals that are exclusively published online)

Consult the 7th ed. of the *MLA Handbook* for additional cases not covered here. Always be consistent in formatting your bibliographical references.

2.7 Affidavit (Eigenständigkeitserklärung)

By signing the affidavit and attaching it to your paper, you declare that you made a clear distinction between your own ideas and those of others throughout your paper. If you violate this code of practice, you are guilty of plagiarism and your paper will automatically receive a fail grade ("nicht bestanden"). A single passage in your text is enough to constitute such an offence. It is also considered plagiarism to translate text passages and present them as your own (i.e. without a reference).

You will need to sign the following declaration and attach it to your paper:

Affidavit

I hereby truthfully declare that

- 1) I wrote the submitted paper independently and without illicit assistance;
- 2) I did not use any materials other than those listed in the bibliography and that all passages taken from these sources in full or in part have been marked as such and their origin has been cited individually in the text stating the version (edition and year of publication), the volume and page of the cited work, and in the case of Internet sources stating the complete URL and the date of access;
- 3) all use of Artificial Intelligence tools was carried out within the boundaries of the regulations set by the department (or, for assessments that specifically ask you to use AI tools, within the boundaries set up by the assessment brief). All such AI use is documented in the submitted paper;
- 4) I have listed all institutions and persons that supported me in the preparation and production of the paper;
- 5) I have not submitted the paper to any other institution and that it has never been used for other purposes, neither in full nor in part.

I am aware that any violation of this declaration constitutes an act of willful deception and will result in a fail grade (*nicht bestanden*) and potential sanctions under §17 ABMStPO/Phil.

Erlangen,

(Date)

(Signature)

3 Academic Conventions

3.1 Quoting and Paraphrasing

With your written assignment, you are meant to enter into a critical dialogue with other researchers who have worked on the same academic topic. For this reason, you have to present their arguments and views in an accurate and adequate manner. This is done with the help of *quotations* (verbatim quotes from other texts) and *paraphrases* (summaries of the ideas or texts of others in your own words). In both cases, it is imperative that

- you *introduce* and *contextualise* all quotations and paraphrases. The quotations or ideas you incorporate into your text originate in different times and contexts, they may follow different critical approaches, etc. Therefore, it must be immediately apparent who said what, when, and in what academic context, and why and how this is relevant for your argument. Such contextualisations do not have to be detailed; in the case of well-known texts they can be brief (such as providing a date). Avoid simply stringing together quotations.
- all quotations be reproduced to the letter. The original punctuation or the use of italics and bold type must also be repeated. Quotations have to correspond exactly to the original text (except for omissions, which are marked by the use of “[...]”). The wording or spelling of a citation may not be changed in any way. Even typographical errors are not corrected (they are followed by “[sic]” to indicate that the error occurred in the original text).
- you clearly indicate where your reference begins and where it ends – regardless of whether you quote from, summarize or paraphrase another text. You need to add notes/references after each sentence or even clause that quotes, summarizes or paraphrases another text. If a *whole paragraph* is an extended paraphrase, it is not sufficient to simply add a note at the end (this would only identify the last sentence as a paraphrase). In cases where you summarize somebody else’s ideas in more than one sentence, you should clearly indicate this at the beginning of the paraphrase: A clause like “According to Dave Alvin,” may introduce a paraphrase, the reference will then terminate it.

All quotations must be directly relevant to your argument. All titles (as well as all authors) mentioned in the main body of the text and in the footnotes must be listed in the bibliography; this also applies to indirectly quoted authors (see below). When formatting quotations, we usually distinguish between longer and shorter quotes:

- *Short quotations in quotation marks*: shorter quotations (fewer than three lines of printed text) are incorporated into the running text and enclosed in double quotation marks. Quotations within a shorter quotation are put in single quotation

marks ('xyz'). With verse, strokes ("/") indicate line breaks: "Because I could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for me; / The carriage held but just ourselves" (Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for death", ll. 1–3).

- *Long quotations are indented:* Quotations that are longer than three lines are set apart from the rest of the text; *no* additional quotation marks are used in this case. They form a new paragraph which is slightly indented on both sides and single-spaced; the first line of the first paragraph is not indented further. The font size is reduced by 1 pt. Verse is quoted as follows:

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality. (ll. 1–4)

Here are some more guidelines to consider:

- *Pay close attention* to the academic credibility of sources, especially online sources. Online sources often do not adhere to basic academic quality standards; therefore, you should take great care in deciding whether to use them or not:
 - *Do not* quote online sources if you cannot guarantee that academic standards have been met. Unfortunately, this excludes almost all of them. Consider whether the institution hosting the text seems trustworthy (an official university server, a respected academic online journal, etc.).
 - *Do not* use Wikipedia entries or similar sources. This is not necessarily a question of quality; the reason is rather that entries are the product of collaborative work and do not specify their author(s). According to the (pre-digital) conventions of the genre *Hausarbeit*, however, the author has an important function: he/she takes responsibility for maintaining proper academic standards and guarantees that the factual content meets these standards completely. If you cannot name an author, this responsibility shifts to you.
- *Only quote* research literature – not student guides, lecture notes or handouts you obtained in class. Handbooks and glossaries of critical terms often are very good and reliable sources of information and while it is also acceptable to cite introductory textbooks, these sources must only be used in addition to original research literature discussed in them.
- *Avoid* indirect quotations: Only quote texts that you have read yourself. Indirect quotations (i.e. quoting somebody else's quotation of a text) should be avoided as far as possible. They are only admissible if a primary source is permanently unavailable – for example, because it is out of print (the mere fact that it is not available in your department's library simply means that you have to put in the

effort of obtaining it elsewhere). Quoting indirectly is indicated by the use of “qtd. in”.

- *If you edit out* parts of a quotation, use an ellipsis (three dots enclosed in square brackets: [...]). An ellipsis is not normally used at the beginning or the end of a quotation – your reader will assume that your quote was part of a longer text.
- *Only quote* longer passages if you analyse or discuss them in detail, and do not paraphrase a passage that you just quoted.
- Foreign language quotations must be reproduced in the original language; if necessary, they can be followed by a translation.
- *Italics* carry meaning (they denote emphasis, indicate stage directions in play texts, etc.). Therefore, the use of italics throughout, simply to mark a passage as a quotation, is not established practice in English and American Studies. If there are italics in a text you quote, you must also include them in your quotation. If you yourself want to emphasise a word or phrase within a quote, you can also use italics, but you need to indicate that the emphasis is yours. This is done by adding “italics mine” or “emphasis added” in square brackets after the quotation (or, if applicable, in a footnote).

3.2 References

References are not only required when using quotations but whenever you paraphrase the ideas or arguments of others. This does not apply to facts that are considered common knowledge within an academic field – you do not need to provide a reference to argue that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* or to define the term *phoneme*. (However, if you define phonemes in a particular way in a phonological paper, or if you argue that the Earl of Oxford, posing as Shakespeare, wrote *Hamlet*, references are needed after all.)

There are several referencing conventions. The two most commonly used methods are (1) parentheses within the text and (2) footnotes at the bottom of the page. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages: References in parentheses save space but they may result in a text that is cumbersome to read, and in cases where many references are given, it may be difficult to attribute individual quotations. The use of footnotes allows for an uninterrupted flow of your argument but can make the paper rather lengthy. Please note that in American Studies, the former of the two methods must be used.

3.2.1 Parentheses

The underlying principle here is economy, i.e. the greatest possible brevity:

- Author named in reference: “In his latest statements, he regretted ‘the never-ending Festschrift craze’ (Killjoy 120).”
- Author named in text: “In his latest statements, J. R. Killjoy regretted ‘the never-ending Festschrift craze’ (120).”
- Author cited indirectly through another source: “(Killjoy in Smartalleck 25).” Quoting from indirect sources is only admissible if the primary source is no longer available (see above).
- Two or more texts by the same author: The author’s name is either followed by a comma and a short form of the title (Killjoy, “Manual” 13) or by the year of publication plus comma (Killjoy 1995, 13) – if an author published two works in one year, simply add lower-case letters (Iser 1988a, 123).
- Texts by two authors: Name both authors, e.g. “Harriet and Millar (*Appreciations* 47) have examined this issue in detail...”
- Texts by three or more authors: Give the first author’s name and use the abbreviation *et al.*
- Indented quotation with author named in text:

Kingsley Amis takes a slightly different stance:

The point of Felix Leiter, such a nonentity as a piece of characterization, is that he, the American, takes orders from Bond, the Britisher, and that Bond is constantly doing better than he, showing himself, not braver or more devoted, but smarter, wittier, tougher, more resourceful, the incarnation of little old England with her quiet ways and shoestring budget wiping the eye of great big global-tentacled multibillion-dollar-appropriating America. (70)

- Indented quotation without author named in text

Other scholars have taken a slightly different stance:

The point of Felix Leiter, such a nonentity as a piece of characterization, is that he, the American, takes orders from Bond, the Britisher, and that Bond is constantly doing better than he, showing himself, not braver or more devoted, but smarter, wittier, tougher, more resourceful, the incarnation of little old England with her quiet ways and shoestring budget wiping the eye of great big global-tentacled multibillion-dollar-appropriating America. (Amis 70)

3.2.2 Footnotes

While the MLA recommends parentheses, footnotes are also frequently used, especially in British academic publications. With footnotes, it is customary to give a full bibliographical reference the first time a work is mentioned, and a shorter one with subsequent references.

- First reference:

¹ “Some of Dickinson’s most powerful poems express her firmly held conviction that life cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of death”. Wendy Martin, *Emily Dickinson’s Literary Heritage* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988), 109–26. 123.

(Unlike entries in a bibliography, references in footnotes form a syntactic unit; the author’s first name precedes the last name; individual items are separated by commas, place and year of publication and publisher are placed in brackets. “University Press” is usually abbreviated as “UP”.)

- Subsequent references: Simply give the author’s surname, a short title of work, the page number:

² Martin, *Emily Dickinson*, 625.

If it is clear which text you refer to (e.g. with a text that you have already analysed at some length) and if the exact reference was already given at a previous point, simple page numbers, enclosed in brackets, can also be used in the main text.

Footnotes are further used for explanatory notes – for example thoughts and observations that support the line of argument of the main text. All footnotes are single-spaced and should be in the same font but with a smaller font size (minus 1 pt).

3.3 Capitalisation in Titles and Subtitles

There are exact capitalisation rules for titles and subtitles in English. They apply to the title of your paper and to the titles of works you quote in your bibliography. The first word, the last word and all ‘important terms’ (including the second part of a hyphenated compound term) are capitalised. ‘Important terms’ usually include:

- nouns (*The Birth of Tragedy*, not *The birth of tragedy*)
- pronouns (e.g. ‘our’ in *One of Our Thursdays is Missing* and ‘that’ in *The Myths That Made America*)
- verbs
- adjectives
- adverbs

Lower case is used for:

- articles (*Under the Bamboo Tree*)
- prepositions (*The Merchant of Venice*)
- coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*)
- *to* in the infinitive (*How to Write a Research Paper*)
- subordinating conjunctions (*after, although, as if, as soon as, because, before, if, that, unless, until, when, where, while*; e.g. *The Critic as Artist*)

Also pay attention to these capitalisation conventions for your own headings and subheadings (“Table of Contents” instead of “Table of contents”)

3.4 Proofreading

Do not forget to thoroughly proofread your paper after finalising it. Pay attention to correct spelling; noticeable deficiencies in this area will influence the assessment of your work and, in extreme cases, can lead to it being rejected. Before you submit your written assignment, you should also ensure that you have observed the following formal conventions throughout your work:

- Correct punctuation and spacing: A single period or a comma are usually followed by a space. For instance, “p.5” is wrong; “p. 5” would be correct. Brackets and quotation marks, however, directly precede or follow their content:
 - *wrong*:
so that they “become conscious of fundamental conflicts on the level of ideology”(Gramsci , *Prison Notebooks* 164)⁷.
 - *correct*:
so that they “become conscious of fundamental conflicts on the level of ideology” (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* 164).⁷
- Double quotation marks indicate a quotation, single ones indicate a change in language or register, a definition of the meaning of a word (as in: “the lexeme *pupil* has the meanings ‘student’ and ‘part of the eye’”), or a quotation within a quotation (see above).
- Be consistent in your formatting of quotations marks. Both single and double quotation marks come in many shapes and forms; in addition to "straight ones" and "typographic ones," there is also an "English" convention (with marks looking like a 66 followed by a 99), a „German one“ (99 [bottom] followed by 66 [top]), and a «French» one. Be consistent and use the same type of quotation marks throughout your paper – even if you quote from a text that adheres to a different convention.
- *Dashes are not hyphens*: Differentiate between dashes – they separate parts of a sentence and are preceded and followed by a space – and hyphens, which separate parts of compounds and are not preceded or followed by a space (as in *nineteenth-century literature*).
- *Accents are not apostrophes*: The French *accent grave* (`) and *accent aigu* (') are located next to the backspace key. This is not the same as the key you will frequently have to use – the apostrophe key (as in *Eve's*).