

## **Essay Guidelines**

**for all essays to be written within the BA German programme**

The following guidelines will help you to write essays successfully and to present your ideas clearly and persuasively.

*All the essays which you have to write within the BA German programme must adhere to the referencing system laid out below.*

This system is based on principles widely used in the humanities and, in particular, in German Studies. These guidelines will allow you to reference the vast majority of your sources appropriately, but if cases arise where you are unsure how to reference a source correctly, please consult your lecturer.

### **Language**

Essays can usually be written in German or in English, unless you are instructed otherwise.

### **Format**

Essay to be 4000 words in length

Essays have to be printed on A4 paper, on one side only.

Font: Times New Roman, Font size: 12, 1,5 spacing Do not forget page numbers!

### **Structure**

The essay needs a clear structure, a coherent argument and an appropriate register (not colloquial). It should consist of the following parts:

- **Cover page:** your name, title of your essay, course details, name of supervisor, contact details
- **Introduction:**  
The introduction is your first contact with the reader – make him/her curious, briefly introduce your topic and provide a short overview of the structure of your essay. The introduction should address the following questions:
  1. What is the topic of the essay?
  2. What specific question does it raise?
  3. What material is analysed?
- **Main part:**  
Your line of argument should move from the general to the specific. Your essay is not about “opinions” but rather about a *hypothesis* or *assumption* that you argue is right or wrong.
- **Conclusion:**  
The conclusion summarises the main points of your essay. It can refer back to the introduction. It should demonstrate that you have done what you set out to do at the start of your essay.
- **References:**

All quotations, whether direct or paraphrased, and all special terminology must be referenced in footnotes.

- **Bibliography:**

The essay must include a list of works cited at the end, naming all works cited or consulted.

Distinguish between primary and secondary sources.

Entries should be listed alphabetically according to surname.

Do not present lengthy bibliographies of titles which you have not consulted.

## Quotations

- When quoting from a source for the first time, detailed bibliographical information should be provided in a footnote.

Example: ...as Michael Niehaus notes: “Blablabla..”<sup>1</sup>

- Subsequent quotes from the same source can be footnoted in a much shorter fashion:

Example: Niehaus: Das Buch der wandernden Dinge, p. 25.

Do not use “ibid.” or “op. cit.”

- Should your quote be shorter than three lines, you “quote by using inverted commas”;<sup>2</sup> should it be longer than three lines, this quote should be indented. You can use a slightly smaller type size for your quotes (12 for main text, 10 for footnotes and quotes). Please note that you do not need inverted commas for indented quotes. This way you ensure that your quotes do not take up too much space on your page.<sup>3</sup>
- Omissions within quotes must be indicated by [...].
- Please do not use italics for quotes because there may be words in some of your quotes already that are emphasized through italics.
- If the original passage was in German, do not quote an English translation!
- Avoid “second hand” quotes, i.e. quotes from other authors you found in secondary literature. If you cannot access the original source, it is imperative to provide a footnote giving the name of the quote’s author and the title of the publication from where the quote originates. Then you have to reference the text where you found the quote.

Example: Friedrich Nietzsche: Also sprach Zarathustra. Cited in: Ursula Wittmann: Der Butt und andere Fische. Eine literarische Zoologie. Marburg 2004, p. 88.

- Quotations do not speak for themselves. They should be embedded in your own analysis in order to strengthen your argument.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Niehaus: Das Buch der wandernden Dinge. Vom Ring des Polykrates bis zum entwendeten Brief. München 2009, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Put in your reference here.

<sup>3</sup> Put in your reference here.

## References

**All sources must be acknowledged in footnotes! Please note: it is plagiarism if you do not acknowledge the sources you have used.**

You must provide references for all direct quotes, but also when you paraphrase ideas that are not your own. Footnotes referencing paraphrased or summarised ideas begin with the word “See”.<sup>1</sup> References **in the footnotes** must have the following form (please note: in the **bibliography** publications have to be listed in the same form. The only difference is that surnames come first):

### *Books*

Michael Niehaus: Das Buch der wandernden Dinge. Vom Ring des Polykrates bis zum entwendeten Brief. München 2009, p. 67.

Kurt Rothmann: Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werther: Erläuterungen und Dokumente. Stuttgart 2000, p. 765-67.

### *Book chapter*

Peter Pütz: Werthers Leiden an der Literatur. In: Goethe’s Narrative Fiction. Ed. by William J. Lillyman. Berlin, New York 1983, p. 55-68, here p. 57.

### *Article in a Periodical/ Journal*

Thomas P. Saine: Passion and Aggression. The Meaning of Werthers Last Letter. In: Orbis Litterarum 35 (1980), p. 327-356, here p. 344.

### *Internet sources*

If possible, the name of the author and the title of the text should be provided, followed by the URL address of the website. The date when it was accessed must also be provided.

Example: Gerd Wunderlich: Im Schlaf sprechende Papageien. Studien zur neueren brasilianischen Literatur. <[http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez\\_id=7670](http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=7670)> [accessed 15 September 2008].

### *Illustrations*

If you include visual material in your essay, remember to reference it also!

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<sup>1</sup> See Helmut Weizenkeim: Das Komma in Goethes *Faust*. Berlin 2015, p. 334-335.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism disqualifies! All quotations, whether verbatim or paraphrased, must be acknowledged, with appropriate references in footnotes.

In conversation you should be able to support what you have written about in the essay. Therefore, do not refer to literary texts which you have not read, do not drop names or use terminology that you do not really understand.

Be sure to read the university guidelines concerning plagiarism:

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/plagiarism/>

## **Common Pitfalls**

Experience shows that the most common weaknesses in essays are:

- unclear structure
- the argumentation remains at a superficial level – a detailed engagement with the text is lacking
- a lack of acquaintance with the primary German texts being discussed
- over dependence on secondary sources. Originality is encouraged! Have confidence in your own analysis
- dishonest use (plagiarism) of sources – this will result in a total fail
- lack of attention to spelling and punctuation – in English and in German (please use *Umlaute!*)
- shoddy presentation.

Avoid use of the personal pronoun “I” and phrases such as “in my opinion”; aim for an objective tone.

The final manuscript should have no spelling or typing errors. Have your manuscript proof-read by someone else before submitting the final version, but remember it is your responsibility to proofread it as well.

Pay particular attention to German quotations. Avoid German quotations that clash syntactically with the English context.

