TERM PAPERS: REQUIREMENTS & ASSESSMENT

This info sheet was designed to provide students with a brief overview of the requirements for and the assessment of term papers written in English and American Studies at UPB. Please note that these are only guiding principles – if your lecturer provides you with different guidelines, *those* are always binding.

What is a term paper?

Every genre of writing has its own rules and specifics. Unlike creative or journalistic writing, academic writing is mainly about an intellectual debate. A term paper, other than an essay, is not supposed to express your personal opinion but to follow a line of argumentation supported by evidence from your primary text(s) and from secondary sources. It is essential to engage with the existing scholarship on your topic.

FAQs

Topic? Choose a topic that is related to the field of the class you are attending. The perfect term paper topic is one that will interest you, one for which you will have enough secondary material, and the necessary time and space.

Primary texts? Use primary sources from the English-speaking world.

Scope? Look it up in your "Prüfungsordnung" (usually: 6,000 words ~ 15 pages, ± 10%).

Your paper includes

- ✓ a **title page** providing all key data (your name, student ID, title, …)
- ✓ a **table of contents** that lists the different parts of your paper with page numbers
- ✓ the **text proper** , which should consist of
    - introduction
    - background / theory chapter (optional)
    - main part / analysis
    - conclusion

    only this part is included in your word count!
- ✓ a **bibliography** listing all primary & secondary sources you used
- ✓ a signed **declaration of originality**
  https://kw.uni-paderborn.de/fileadmin/fakultaet/Institute/anglistikamerikanistik/Studium/AnglAm_Plagiatserklaerung-1.pdf

Submit your final paper

… in both print (pigeon holes on J4) and electronic form (via e-mail, as <u>one</u> PDF file)

… on time! The deadline ends on the day given by your teacher at midnight (e.g. September 30 = by September 30, 11 h 59 p.m.)

How do we assess your term paper?

When grading your papers, we take into account three major elements:

- content
- language & style
- formal requirements

I – Content

- formulate a **research question** and **thesis statement**; they become the main focus of your paper
- write a short **introduction** that "hooks" the reader, contextualizes your topic within a larger field, states the focus of your paper (research question and thesis statement), as well as provides a brief outline of how you proceed
- in your main part, **interpret and analyze** your primary sources, do not only summarize and describe them
- use **secondary sources** to strengthen your argument → engage in a written discussion with it
- remember that your paper needs to have a **line of argumentation**
- make sure you include only **relevant** material: ask yourself with every paragraph, quotation, or information: is this relevant to support my thesis? If the answer is "No," leave it out!

II – Language & Style

- all term papers must be written **in English**, you may use British or American spelling but stick to one throughout your paper
- make sure you use **correct** spelling, grammar, and syntax
- appropriate **academic English** is never (!) colloquial, offensive, biased, or vague
- use **technical vocabulary** whenever possible
- the best way to get a feeling for **'the academic style'** is by reading other academic texts from your field

☞ **TIP** Have someone who is knowledgeable in the English language proofread your paper!

III – Formal Requirements

A consistent style of formatting and citing is important because it helps your reader to read the paper as easily as possible and concentrate on what you are saying. The following part introduces you to the MLA style (guidelines of the *MLA Handbook* https://style.mla.org/) but you may also use other styles such as Chicago.

- consistently follow **typographical conventions** (cf. 2.1 of *MLA Handbook)*
- make sure your **in-text citations** follow a consistent pattern (cf. 2.3 of *MLA Handbook*)
- make sure the entries of your **bibliography** follow a consistent pattern (cf. 2.2 of *MLA Handbook*)
- use the following **general formatting** consistently: 2.5 cm margins left and right, 1.5 line spacing, first line of a paragraph is indented (except for the first one of each chapter), justified alignment (Blocksatz), font size 11/12 pt, common font type (Times New Roman, Arial, etc.), page numbers top right-hand side preceded by your last name (page count starts with the first page of the introduction; no page numbers on the cover page, the table of contents or the declaration of originality)
- remember that **paragraphs** are sense units and typically consist of more than one sentence: start a new paragraph to introduce a new aspect, idea, or perspective

And finally….

Always remember that writing a term paper is a **skill** that needs to be learned. Term papers are your chance to practice writing before you write your final thesis – and practice makes perfect! So make use of the various kinds of support offered for writing term papers:

https://www.ub.uni-paderborn.de/unterstuetzung/schulungen/schulungskalender/

https://www.uni-paderborn.de/universitaet/kompetenzzentrum-schreiben/

https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/academicenglishskills/writing/paragraphing/