

Guidelines for academic papers in Literary or Cultural Studies

(VM1 paper – B.A. thesis – M.Ed. thesis)

1 Topic

Your topic has to be of literary or cultural relevance and is to be discussed with your first supervisor before you begin your research. Remember that you are writing a research paper and not an essay! You have to argue a thesis, not merely express your opinion. In order to do this, your research needs to be based on primary material and secondary literature, including appropriate theoretical texts.

2 Length

The required length is 4,000 words for a regular term paper, 8,000 words for a bachelor thesis, and 16,000 words for a master thesis (10% tolerance). These word counts exclude your title page, table of contents, bibliography, appendices, and declaration of authorship. Please indicate your final word count on the title page of your thesis and date of submission.

3 Format

The student's last name and the page number should appear in the upper right hand corner of every text page (minus the title page and the table of contents). Each page should have a margin for corrections and comments (2.5 cm on top and bottom, 3 cm on the sides). Except for the first paragraphs of each section, each following paragraph should be indented 1.25 cm from the left margin. The whole document should be justified ("Blocksatz") not left aligned ("linksbündig").

The text – including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited – should be in a regular 12-point font (Arial or Times New Roman) and 1.5-line spaced.

The title page should include the following items of information:

- name of university and chair, title of the seminar, name of lecturer, name of module (for seminar papers), names of both supervisors (for bachelor and master theses)
- title of term paper/thesis – correctly capitalised



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- student's name, address (incl. telephone and matriculation number), email address, course of studies (Studiengang), semester (Fachsemester), final word count of the paper and date of submission

4 Structure

Each term paper or thesis has to include a title page, table of contents, main text, a list of sources, and a declaration of authorship.

4.1 Table of contents

Your table of contents should show the structure of your paper, the individual sections and subsections, each with the respective page number. Think of informative and concise headings for your sections and make sure that the exact wording in your table of contents is repeated in the text.

A clear structure for a B.A. thesis could look similar to this:

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical part	
2.1	Definition of concept I	2
2.2	Definition of concept II	4
3	Analytical part	
3.1	Analysis of aspect I	6
3.2	Analysis of aspect II	10
3.3	Analysis of aspect III	13
4	Conclusion	16
5	Bibliography	17
6	Declaration of authorship	18

The number of subsections obviously depends on the length of your paper (very few sections for term papers, more or longer sections for master theses).



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4.2 Introduction

In your introduction you introduce the topic you have chosen for your term paper/thesis, the relevance of your topic and material, your thesis statement, the structure of your paper, and your theoretical approach to your topic. Remember that your thesis statement is the most important aspect of your introduction, as it guides your argumentation and analysis and determines the choice of theoretical tools.

4.3 Theoretical part

In your theoretical part, you outline your basic theoretical approach and appropriate methods for your analysis and define the main theoretical terms and relevant concepts (example: for the topic “Modernist Femininity in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*” define “modernism” and “femininity”). For this, you need to use secondary sources from literary and cultural studies. Remember: the theory is there to support your analysis, not the other way round. Only include theoretical points that you need in your analysis (example: do not discuss the difference between “modernism” and “postmodernism” if you are only analysing a modernist novel).

4.4 Analytical part

The main part of your paper is the analysis of the literary text(s), film(s), graphic novel, cultural or artistic product that you have chosen for your paper. The analytical part should be subdivided in accordance with the thematic aspects and theoretical concepts you select, for example: if your title is “Monstrous Femininity in Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*”, your analysis could consist of the sections “Monstrous Physicality”, “Sexuality and Maternity” and “Cruelty and Violence”.

While your introduction and theoretical part will already have generally stated what you intend to analyse and introduced the theoretical definitions and methods you need, your argumentation is conducted in the analytical section(s). Ensure you pay attention to detail: rather focus on a thorough analysis of key moments than discuss too many scenes in a superficial way. Include not merely *what* is told (e.g. narrative, characters,



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plot and stereotypes), but also consider *how* it is told (e.g. narrator or speaker, stylistic devices, point of view, asides, voice over, mis-en-scène). You should avoid very long quotations unless they serve a very clear purpose to your argument. Make sure your comment on a quote is at least as long as the quote you are using. Refer to the function of a particular character, scene or passage of a text.

Remember that each genre and medium comes with its own terminology: for the analysis of a novel you need a specific terminology which is different from the terms used for the analysis of a poem, a film or play, etc. Do not include any summaries of your primary text or elaborate character descriptions as they are not necessary. However, you should refer to the fictitious world of your primary source(s) in order to contextualize your argument. But short biographies of authors are also superfluous unless they are directly relevant to your inquiry. If in doubt, ask your lecturer, because you definitely cannot use everything you read and researched for your paper.

4.5 Conclusion

The way you finish your paper will inevitably have a lasting impact on the reader. It is therefore important to refocus your writing efforts in the final paragraphs. First impressions may count but the way you exit your paper will leave an abiding impression. The conclusion should bring together your most important findings and refer back to your thesis statement. Be careful not to repeat elaborate points or arguments you have already explained and do not start introducing new arguments – rather synthesise your main observations to establish the significance and relevance of your chosen area of research. Nevertheless, be brief and to the point. It is customary to finish your paper with something of a writerly flourish. This may include a clever or sombre reflection on the consequences of your overall argument, a reworking or playful use of a significant quotation or a suggestion for further areas of enquiry linked to your main thesis.



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4.6 Declaration of authorship

The declaration concludes your thesis. By signing it, you confirm to have written the term paper independently and to have acknowledged all primary and secondary sources cited directly or indirectly in the paper. Please include and sign the following paragraph at the end of your thesis:

I hereby declare that this term paper/bachelor thesis/master thesis (choose accordingly) is the result of my own independent scholarly work and that in all cases the use of material from the work of others is acknowledged. Quotations and paraphrases are clearly indicated and no material other than listed has been used. This written work has not been submitted at any university or department before.

Ort, Datum (Place, Date) Unterschrift (Signature)

5 Titles, style and language

Clarity of language is the prerequisite for the precise expression of your thoughts. As the Spanish playwright Enrique Jardiel Poncela remarks, “When something can be read without effort, great effort has gone into its writing” (qtd. Bradfield 47). This is as true for the title you choose for your term paper or thesis as it is for the content and form of your writing.

Select a title that clearly defines the academic objectives of your paper. You should be able to identify keywords in your title that are broad enough to encapsulate your chosen topic without being vague or too wide-ranging. Avoid long wordy titles and remove any redundant description. As Shakespeare’s Polonius in *Hamlet* remarks, “Brevity’s the soul of wit” (1.2 46).

Here are three **unsuccessful** attempts:

- A Close Examination of Some of the Interesting Passages in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*



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- Reflections and Thoughts of Where Examples of Trauma Happen in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud Incredibly Close*
- All the Good Bits of Postmodern Writing in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

Here are the **improved** versions:

- Imperialism and Cultural Appropriations in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*
- Representations of Trauma Narratives in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud Incredibly Close*
- Clowning Around: Performing Postmodern Narratives in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

Pay very close attention to correctly capitalising your chosen title. Capitalise lexical words and leave grammar words (articles and prepositions) in lowercase. Do not forget to check that all film and book titles are in italics.

It is important to note that you cannot divide your language skills from the content level of your paper. Do not use any typographical effects. If you wish to emphasize a point or contrast opinions, do so with the help of linguistic means only (e.g. "In this context, it is significant that ..." or "In contrast to Miller's reading of this passage, I would argue ..."). Please also take on board all the helpful pieces of advice you were given in your courses on academic writing or textual composition, for instance on paragraphing and paraphrasing.

Here are some important pointers on language usage:

- Remember that you have to use the simple past tense for historical facts (e.g. "*The Moonstone* was published in 1868.") and the simple present tense for fiction (e.g. "*The Moonstone* is partly set in London."). Do not use unusual abbreviations (such as "incog." for "incognito") or short forms (such as "hasn't" or "won't").



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- Make sure all your sentences contain a complete main clause [Subject and Verb – and also an object (SVO), especially if the verb is transitive (vt)]. Better repeat nouns or names to clarify subjects or objects of sentences (he, she, they). Avoid the use of “it” or “this” when it is not clear what “it” or “this” refers to.
- Remember that commas can easily change the meaning of a sentence (see Lynne Truss’s bestseller *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, 2003), since a comma cuts off the main clause from a subordinate clause (in the sentence “He did not kill his wife, because he loved her”, the comma saved the wife’s life).
- Beginning sentences with the present participle (–ing-form) is unwise unless you are confident using it correctly. Here are some humorous examples of how it can go wrong, resulting in a dangling modifier:
 - “Reading the hotel’s pet policy, our dog stayed at a local kennels during its vacation.”
 - “Having finished my dinner, the waitress offered to bring out the dessert.”
 - “Walking down the street, the house was on fire.”
 - “Reading his play, Shakespeare constructs Juliet as a young innocent woman.”

Additionally, be aware of possible misplaced modifiers:

- “One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I’ll never know.” Groucho Marx
- The use of the “I” (e.g. in “I would argue”, “I will illustrate”, “I aim to show”, “in my view”) will help you to avoid ungainly and imprecise passive constructions (such as “It will be argued” or “It was mentioned”).
- Use a variety of verbs, adjectives, connectors and conjunctions (not only “but”) to achieve precision and a pleasant style. Avoid colloquial, simplistic or naïve expressions (like, kind of, big, nice, just, naturally, of course) or verbs (to do, to get, to put, to want), and also avoid “to seem” or “to try” when they will weaken the impact of your argument. Use your dictionary to check whether you have



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used the correct preposition with a noun or a verb. Usually, the meaning of a verb relies strongly on the preposition that follows it (for instance “to come by”, “to come down”, “to come from”, “to come to”, “to come up”, “to come with”, etc.).

When you believe you have finished writing your paper, give it a thorough proof-read. Ideally, after finishing several proof-reads put the paper aside for two days and then proof-read it once more. It may turn out to be a different paper entirely.

6 Citation and bibliography

Much of the information in these guidelines is taken from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, which lists the formal conventions for writing research papers and gives examples for quotations and source documentation. Please follow the MLA instructions for citing sources (both in-text and concerning your list of works cited). For more information, consult your additional handout or the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (available at the library or the Media Centre of the Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur).

6.1 Why document sources?

Academic writing is a conversation among scholars. It is a way of communicating your research results to other scholars, which is a process that needs comprehensible and verifiably means of referring to other authors' works. Documenting sources properly is necessary to avoid charges of plagiarism and also shows competence in your field.

6.2 Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

Plagiarism is presenting another person's thoughts, ideas, information, expressions or entire work as your own. Plagiarists are not only seen as dishonest, their capability of doing their own research and expressing their own thoughts and analysis are questioned as well. In professional writing, schools and universities, plagiarism is considered a serious offence. If one piece of work contains plagiarism, how can the reader trust any



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other work by the writer? There are various forms of plagiarism, including copying text from a published source, using another student's work and presenting it as your own or buying papers online. All of these forms present another writer's work as your own and must be avoided.

6.3 How to avoid plagiarism

The most important part of avoiding plagiarism is to be scrupulous with your own research. Always include the sources in your notes, distinguish between your own thoughts and phrases that you have copied or summarized from another source. In the process of writing, be careful to identify all phrases, ideas, and thoughts you have taken on board, even if it is merely a short sentence or a paraphrased idea. If you want to quote a passage of a text that contains a quote, differentiate the quote within the quote with single quotation marks ('...'). Write "cited in" in your parenthetical citation, if you only quote the already cited part. When in doubt consult your supervisor.

6.4 Suitable sources and sources in other languages

In order to enhance the quality of your work, you should carefully consider which sources are appropriate for an academic paper. To ensure the general quality of academic work, suitable publications undergo an often year-long process of peer-reviewing, revision and editorial approval before they are published. These are the sources you can rely on to support your own arguments. Suitable sources for your own writing therefore include: academic journals (e.g. those you find in the MLA and JSTOR databases), monographs and anthologies/collections of articles, encyclopaedias and reference books.

Hence, you should **not** use sources which have not undergone this process of review and revision, no matter how well-written they are. These include, but are not limited to: Wikipedia, online blogs, YouTube videos, and especially other students' work (term papers as well as bachelor or master theses).



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If you want to use a source which was originally published in another language, first check if there are any English translations available. If there are no translations, you cannot provide one yourself. In order to use the work in question for your writing, you have to paraphrase the original argument.

- Original quote:

“Foucault wählt im Unterschied zu Max Weber, der neben dem juristischen Verständnis auch andere Formen von Macht kennt, nicht primär den Aspekt der Herrschaft und deren Legitimation, sondern versteht Macht im Sinne von historischen Machtpraktiken, vielfältigen Kräfteverhältnissen und strategischen Situationen. Macht ist als Funktion der Welt- und Subjektkonstitution, der Begründung von Individualität und Identität anzusehen und formt Wissen, Diskurse, Körper und Lust. Macht verfährt produzierend, es gibt in diesen Prozessen kein Außen von Macht.” (Rainsborough 170-171)

- Paraphrase in English:

Foucault does not primarily connect power to ruling and its legitimation, but rather understands it as actions, diverse balances of power and strategy. It forms the world and the subject living in it, influences identity and plays an important role in constituting knowledge and different discourses. Power has a producing nature and always comes from within (Rainsborough 170-171).

However, since you are writing your term paper/thesis in English, you should make sure that the majority of the sources you use are, in fact, English sources.

6.5 Formatting quotations

- Shorter quotations (four typed lines or fewer of prose or three lines of verse) need to be integrated into the running text and indicated by double quotation marks. Make sure you use the English (“...”) and not the German („...“) way of typing them. Name the author and the specific page in the text and include the complete reference in your bibliography.



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Oscar Wilde claims that “the morality of art consist in the perfect use of an imperfect medium” (3).

The morality of art is a relevant question in *fin-de-siècle* literature and one argument is that “the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium” (Oscar Wilde 3).

- Direct speech within the quotation is to be distinguished by single quotation marks:

In *Going After Cacciato*, Paul Berlin’s torment is intimated through the brief exchange between himself and Doc: “‘You got an excess of fear biles,’ Doc had said one afternoon beneath the tower. ‘We’ve all got these biles—Stink, Oscar, everybody—but you’ve got yourself a whole bellyful of the stuff’” (O’Brien 28).

- Longer quotations should be placed in a free-standing block of text. Start the quotation on a new line and indent it 1 cm from the left margin. Since this already signals quotation, double quotation marks are not necessary. In this case your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark:

When Dorian Gray first thinks of the prospect of growing old, he is struck by fear:

The scarlet would pass away from his lips, and the gold steal from his hair. The life that was to make his soul would mar his body. He would become dreadful, hideous and uncouth. As he thought of it, a sharp pang of pain struck through him like a knife and made each delicate fibre of his nature quiver. His eyes deepened into amethyst, and across them came a mist of tears. He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart. (Wilde 26)

- Mark breaks in short quotations of verse with a slash (/) at the end of each verse. Use a double slash (//), if a stanza break occurs during your quotation.



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Thinking about his possible future as king, Macbeth states “Come what may, / Time and the hour runs through the roughest day” (Shakespeare 1.3.147-148).

- Quotations of long sections of poetry should be formatted as closely to the original as possible.

Macbeth desires to learn more of his future and begs the Weird Sisters to stay:

Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.
 By Sinel’s death I know I am Thane of Glamis;
 But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives,
 A prosperous gentleman; and to be King
 Stands not within the prospect of belief,
 No more than to be Cawdor. (Shakespeare 1.3.70-75)

- To add words in quotations put square brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text:

“Archer reddened, and his heart gave a leap of surprise [when Madame Olenska asked him about the roses]. He had called only twice on Madame Olenska, and each time he had sent her a box of yellow roses, and each time without a card” (Wharton 116).

- To omit words in quotations put square brackets around three dots to indicate that the omission is not part of the original text:

“Now her sudden recognition of the gift [...] filled him with an agitated pleasure” (Wharton 116).

6.6 Bibliography

The bibliography has to provide full bibliographical details of all works that have been cited or consulted in writing the paper. Start your bibliography on a separate page at the end of your paper and label the page Bibliography or Works Cited. Make sure that the



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bibliographical details are equally thorough for all forms of sources, including articles, dictionaries, reviews, videos, etc. Entries must be listed alphabetically by the authors' surnames, do not list academic or other titles or degrees (PhD, MA, etc.). Capitalize each word in the title of books, articles, etc., but do not capitalize articles (a, the), prepositions or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title. Use italics for titles of all works published on their own (books, journals, magazines, films) and quotation marks for titles of shorter works that appear in collections (poems, articles, essays). If you want to include several works by the same author, order the entries alphabetically and use three hyphens instead of the author's name for every entry after the first one.

- The basic format for book citations:

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. City of Publication, Publisher, Publication Date. The city of publication should only be included if the book was published before 1900 or if the publisher has offices in more than one country.

- A book with one author:

Schäbler, Daniel. *Framing Strategies in English Fiction from Romanticism to the Present*. Winter, 2014.

- A book with more than one author. Order the authors in the same way they are presented in the book. The first given name appears in "last name, first name" format. If there are three or more authors, list only the first author's name and give the phrase et al. (Latin for "and others") in place of the other authors' names:

Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

- Two or more books by the same author:

Palmer, William J. *Dickens and New Historicism*. St. Martin's, 1997.

---. *The Films of the Eighties: A Social History*. Southern Illinois UP, 1993.

- A book by a corporate author or organization:

American Allergy Association. *Allergies in Children*. Random House, 1998.



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- A book with no author:

Encyclopedia of Indiana. Somerset, 1993.

- A translated book:

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, Vintage-Random House, 1988.

- A republished book. Republished due to popularity, without becoming a new edition:

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. 1990. Routledge, 1999.

- A collection of articles or essays:

Böhnke, Dietmar, Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier and Peter Drexler, eds. *Victorian Highways, Victorian Byways: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*. Trafo, 2010.

- An edition of a book. There are two types of editions: a book that simply has been published in more than one edition and a book that is prepared by someone other than the author (an editor).
- A subsequent edition:

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 3rd ed., Pearson, 2004.

- A work prepared by an editor:

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Edited by Margaret Smith, Oxford UP, 1998.

- A book published before 1900. Books published before 1900 are usually defined by their place of publication rather than the publisher:

Thoreau, Henry David. *Excursion*. Boston, 1863.

- A literary work in an anthology, reference or collection. This may include an essay in an edited collection or anthology, or a chapter of a book. The basic form is: Last Name, First Name. "Title Essay." *Title of Collection*, edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, Year, Page range of entry:



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Brusberg-Kiermeier, Stefani. "Cruelty, Violence and Rituals in Sarah Kane's Plays." *Sarah Kane in Context*, edited by Laurens De Vos and Graham Saunders, Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 80-87.

- An article in a reference book (e.g. Encyclopedias, Dictionaries):

Brusberg-Kiermeier, Stefani. "Sarah Kane." *Kindlers Literatur-Lexikon*, 3rd ed., 2010.

- An introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword:

Brusberg-Kiermeier, Stefani and Jörg Helbig. "Introduction." *Shakespeare in the Media: From the Globe Theatre to the World Wide Web*, ed. by Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier and Jörg Helbig, 2nd ed., Frankfurt/M.; Berlin; Bern; Bruxelles; New York; Oxford; Wien: Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 7-10.

- An Article in a scholarly journal. Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, Volume, Issue, Year, pages:

Brusberg-Kiermeier, Stefani and James McKenzie. "Desire and Anxiety: Cold War Voyeurism in Contemporary TV Spy Series." *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2017, pp. 73-88.

- An article in a magazine. Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Periodical*, Day Month Year, pages:

Poniewozik, James. "TV Makes a Too-Close Call." *Time*, 20 Nov. 2000, pp. 70-71.

- A review:

Brusberg-Kiermeier, Stefani. "Love's Labours Lost 'So won, so lost'." Review of *Love's Labours Lost*, directed by Kenneth Branagh. *Hard Times* 70, no. 1, 2000, pp. 57-59.

- Citing an entire website. Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). *Name of Site*. Version number, name of institution/organisation affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available), URL, DOI or permalink. Date of access:

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl. Accessed 23 Apr. 2008.



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- A page on a website:

Davies, Alistair Hugh. "T.S. Eliot, American-English poet, playwright, and literary critic." <https://www.britannica.com/biography/T-S-Eliot>. Accessed 6 June 2015.

- An article in a scholarly online journal. If the journal also appears in print, cite the article as you would a scholarly journal in print and include the URL and date of access. If the journal only appears exclusively in an online format and does not indicate a page range, indicate the URL or other location information:

Dolby, Nadine. "Research in Youth Culture and Policy: Current Conditions and Future Directions." *Social Work and Society: The International Online-Only Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2008, www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362. Accessed 20 May 2009.

- Films. List films by their title and include the director's name, the film studio or distributor, and the release year. You may also include performers' names after the director's name, if necessary:

Speed Racer. Directed by Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, performances by Emile Hirsch, Nicholas Elia, Susan Sarandon, Ariel Winter, and John Goodman, Warner Brothers, 2008.

6.7 Further citation examples

The Modern Language Association (MLA) provides the method of source documentation you should use for a paper in Literary or Cultural Studies. The most recent MLA guidelines can be found in the eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook* or at the Online Writing Lab of Purdue University:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html