



Guidelines

for the Module “Master Thesis and Oral Exam” (AMS-MA 09) in the MA American Studies (MHB 2021)

1. Formal Aspects of the Module “Master Thesis and Oral Exam” (AMS-MA 09):

- The module AMS-MA 09 comprises the MA thesis and the final oral exam.
- The MA thesis is worth 20 ECTS points, and the final oral exam earns you 10 ECTS points.
- Before starting this module, complete all Core Curriculum modules (AMS-MA 01 – 05).
- You have a total of six months to complete this module after registering for it with the “Prüfungsamt:” You have four months to complete the MA thesis and two months to prepare for and take the final oral exam. If you hand in your thesis early, you still have only two months for preparing the oral exam.
- Decide on the order in which you will complete the MA thesis and the oral exam. **Register the exam module with the Prüfungsamt** (<https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/128279>) and provide the names of your supervisor and the second reader.
- The supervisor of your M.A. thesis also conducts your oral exam.

2. The MA Thesis:

- The M.A. thesis is a research paper of a maximum of c. 30.000 words, including your text, quotations, and footnotes, but excluding the title page, table of contents, works-cited list, and anti-plagiarism statement. While this formal framework gives you some orientation, the length of your thesis should eventually be determined by your line of argument rather than the word limit.
- **Choose a topic** exceeding the scope of any term paper you wrote before.
- **Find a supervisor for your MA thesis.** Eligible supervisors for MA theses in American Studies are:
 - Prof. Dr. Butter
 - Prof. Dr. Franke
 - Dr. Gijswijt
 - Dr. Klaiber
 - PD Dr. Schinko

Their fields of expertise are listed on their respective websites. Approach them early. The full professors (Prof. Butter, Prof. Franke) have more capacities as supervisors.

- Do research on your topic and discuss your outline with your supervisor. Write a **proposal** and **present your MA thesis project in an MA workshop** to the America Studies faculty and staff members and your peers in MA American Studies. Usually, the MA workshop takes place twice a semester.

3. The Oral Exam:

3.1 Formalities

- The supervisor of your M.A. thesis will conduct your oral exam; see above for supervisors/examiners.
- The Prüfungsamt sets a deadline by which you must have completed the oral exam, which is two months after you submitted your thesis or you registered for the exam module (see above). You and your supervisor will agree on a date within these two months.
- The MA oral exam takes **60 minutes**.
- The exam will cover **three broad American literature and culture topics**. See below for further details.

3.2 Choosing the Topics for Your Oral Exam

- One topic must cover the period **before 1900**, and one the period **after 1900**. You can choose the third topic freely. Furthermore, one topic must focus on **Literary Studies** and one on **Cultural Studies**; the third is up to you.
- Each topic should be broad enough to be discussed for c. **20 minutes**.
- The MA Thesis cannot be a topic in your oral exam.
- Consult your examiner on your choice of exam topics.
- **Examples of exam topics:**

Literary Studies

- o **Historical Dimensions (pre-1900)**: Puritan Poetry; The Novel of the Early Republic; American Romanticism; Early American Drama; African American Slave Narratives/Abolitionist Literature; 19th-Century Women's Fiction; Hawthorne & Melville; American Realism; Women's Suffrage Writing; Emily Dickinson's Poetry; etc.
- o **After 1900**: Postmodern Short Fiction; 20th-Century American Drama; Neo-Slave Narratives; The Modernist Novel; The Family on the 20th-Century Stage; Contemporary Fiction; The Harlem Renaissance; The Beat Generation; etc.

Cultural Studies

- o **Historical Dimensions (Pre-1900)**: American Landscape Painting/The Hudson River School; The Salem Witchcraft Trials; Transcendentalism; Religion in Antebellum America; The Women's Suffrage Movement; The Gilded Age; etc.
- o **after 1900**: The African American Civil Rights Movement; Hollywood Cinema; Contemporary Indigenous Film; Contemporary Conspiracy Theories in the U.S.; etc.

Example:

Topic 1: Early American Puritan Poetry (Historical Dimensions, Literary Studies)

Topic 2: The African American Civil Rights Movement (Cultural Studies)

Topic 3: Postmodern Short Stories (Literary Studies)

3.3 Compiling the Reading List

- Compile a **reading list** for the three broad topics outlined above, including primary and secondary texts.
- Your oral exam will be based on your reading list. Be prepared to engage with all the texts and items you listed, including the secondary literature. Ask your examiner about their expectations.
- Choose several representative **primary sources** for each topic.
- Choose relevant **secondary sources** for each of your topics.