



Manual

for written assignments in the study of religions

Institute for the Study of Religions, University of Tübingen

Version valid from summer semester 2024

© Katharina Wilkens

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| General information | 2 |
| Topic identification and initial literature research..... | 2 |
| Schedule and time management | 2 |
| Formal requirements..... | 3 |
| Basic data | 3 |
| Cover page..... | 3 |
| Format specifications: Typesetting and layout | 3 |
| Gender-sensitive writing | 4 |
| Linguistic style and value neutrality in the study of religions | 4 |
| Developing the topic | 4 |
| Structure of the written assignment | 4 |
| Permitted resources | 5 |
| Prohibited resources | 5 |
| Correct citation and bibliography..... | 5 |
| Quotes | 5 |
| Literature references..... | 6 |
| Examples of in-text references according to the author-year system | 6 |
| Bibliography..... | 8 |
| Don't forget to proofread! | 9 |
| Recommended literature | 9 |
| Appendix A Cover sheet | 10 |
| Appendix B Assessment of semester papers and short written assignments | 11 |
| Anti-plagiarism declaration | 12 |

This manual provides you with binding information on written assignments (semester paper / “Hausarbeit”) at the Institute for the Study of Religions at the University of Tübingen. It covers the process from finding a topic and registering the assignment for examination in Alma through structuring the content to formatting the paper and proofreading it at the end.

Important: If you need support with this form of examination due to an impairment, disability or chronic illness, please contact the relevant lecturer (at the end of a session or during a consultation hour). You can also contact the degree program coordinator at any time to find out about options for support or disadvantage compensation: katharina.wilkens@uni-tuebingen.de.

General information

The [BA major Study of Religions](#) includes three compulsory written assignments: one in each of the modules BASICS 3 (THEORIES OF RELIGION, 3rd semester), RELIGION PAST & PRESENT (ideally 4th semester) and RELIGION, RITUAL & COSMOVISION (ideally 5th semester). Semester papers may additionally be assigned in other modules (BASICS 2, METHODS, COMPARISON), depending on the lecturer's specifications.

The [BA minor Study of Religions](#): includes three compulsory written assignments: one in each of the modules BASICS 3 (THEORIES OF RELIGION, 3rd semester), RELIGION PAST & PRESENT (ideally 4th semester) and in the individual profile area. Semester papers may additionally be assigned in other modules (BASICS 2, COMPARISON), depending on the lecturer's specifications.

As early as possible, the topic of the written assignment must be discussed with the lecturer and agreed on by them. Additionally, it is necessary to register for the examination on Alma in accordance with the deadlines set by the central examination office. The submission date of the written assignment is set by the lecturer in the respective seminar.

General assessment criteria for a semester paper can be found in Appendix B and as a separate file on the homepage of the Institute for the Study of Religions. These assessment criteria are not an absolute standard for grading but may serve as a guideline during writing and as a basis for the lecturer's final assessment.

Students have the right of access to their corrected and graded assignments. The formal procedure for this inspection is arranged individually with the lecturers.

Topic identification and initial literature research

As a rule, the topic of the written assignment is developed independently by the student but always in consultation with the lecturer. The literature review is also carried out independently, but support from the lecturer may be requested. Useful resources for literature research are the catalogs and databases of the university library and, in particular, the [RelBib](#) database. You are also welcome to consult national and international catalogs and literature databases. Please also take advantage of the [training courses on literature research offered by the University Library](#) (some of which are also offered in English)!

The search for suitable primary sources is carried out in consultation with the lecturer and must be congruent with the approaches and methods taught in the seminar.

Schedule and time management

The identification of the topic should be completed before the end of the lecture period. The lecture-free period is used to develop the actual argumentation of the written assignment and to write down the text. Good time management is essential in this process: allocate time slots for

vacation/recreation/internships/paid work and secure time slots for writing written assignments. Then divide the writing process into several phases for a) research, b) planning of the argumentation, and c) writing (the three phases might overlap to a certain extent). Set yourself precise deadlines for starting and finishing each stage! Allow several days for proofreading at the end—especially if you want to ask fellow students to proofread the text. Also bear in mind that the text layout with headings, an automated table of contents and (automated) bibliography is technically demanding and requires a processing time that should not be underestimated, especially if you are writing your first semester paper and need to familiarize yourself with the word processor of your choice.

Formal requirements

Basic data

A written assignment begins with a cover page and a table of contents as well as a list of figures (“front-matter”). The text part includes an introduction (explaining the choice of topic, research question and line of argumentation in the paper), the main part (with sections on methodology and literature review as well as the actual argumentation) and conclusion (summary and/or outlook on future research perspectives). All citations must have references, either as in-text references or as references in footnotes but not in endnotes. The essay concludes with a complete bibliography of cited references and the anti-plagiarism declaration (“backmatter”).

A semester paper comprises 15 pages including frontmatter and text but excluding the bibliography/backmatter. This corresponds to about 4800 words for a German-language text (about 6000 words for an English-language text).

Cover page

The cover sheet contains all required formal information about the author and the essay: last name, first name, address, matriculation number, degree program (with indication of major and minor subject), semester of the student, e-mail address; title of the paper, subtitle; name of the course, name of the lecturer, semester of the course, information on university, institute. An example of a cover sheet is given in Appendix A.

Format specifications: Typesetting and layout

Familiarize yourself with the functions of your writing program! The technical production of texts is a skill that requires time and practice in order to be mastered fully. We recommend attending relevant courses at the university's [Writing Center](#) (including many useful resources available for download on the homepage!). However, you are also welcome to contact your lecturers or the subject-specific advisory services (Fachstudienberatung) with any technical questions. You should also gradually familiarize yourself with technical terms relating to style, typesetting, printing and publishing. This guide will give you a first impression of how publishers present format templates that academic authors must follow when submitting essay manuscripts.

Practice creating a table of contents and, if relevant, a list of figures by using the corresponding functions in your writing program.

If images, tables, graphs, etc. are used, they must have a caption with numbering. The caption contains information about the image, its source, and credits (to the copyright owner). The list of figures follows the table of contents and contains the number of the image and a short title.

Typesetting: Times New Roman in 12 point or Calibri/Cambria in 11 point; either justified or unjustified/ragged alignment – but uniform; normal margins at 2.5 cm; line spacing 1.5; use (automatic) hyphenation (correct manually if necessary); footnotes in 10 point and single-spaced.

Direct quotations of more than 50 words are indented.

Layout: Insert page numbers – starting with the first page of the actual text; insert headers; use paragraph protection (i.e. do not leave individual lines at the beginning or end of a page); never separate headings and text blocks with a page break.

Gender-sensitive writing

Use [gender-sensitive language](#). This includes reflections on the use of gendered nouns and pronouns. The use of “they” in situations where the gendered pronoun is either unknown or irrelevant is encouraged, as is the use of “person” instead of “man” (i.e., chairperson instead of chairman).

Furthermore, gender-sensitive writing also includes fundamental reflection on the terms used: Where is definitely only one gender being referenced (e.g., only male priests or only female priests or only transgender/crossgender priests*)? When should a category that is linguistically male-dominated be replaced by a differentiating view? (Are medieval authors really only ever men? Can you characterize your source material more precisely? Can you emphasize the expertise instead of the gendered experts?) There are no hard and fast rules here, just a general invitation to think about the power of terms and the consequences of their use.

Linguistic style and value neutrality in the study of religions

A written assignment follows a scientific style. Formulations must be precise and technical terms used correctly. The argumentation must be factual, i.e., emotional or affective adjectives and adverbs should be largely avoided. The sentence structure is simple but not at the expense of the logic of the argument. Always use appropriate conjunctions.

In the study of religions, value neutrality towards the subject of religion is of particular importance. Avoid both positive and negative portrayals of individual religious communities or of certain aspects of religion.

Now it gets complicated: An argument, as developed in a semester paper, requires a final judgment. Which argument is reliable and which is not? Arguments in the study of religions refer to historical facts, to interpretations of religious statements by academic colleagues or to the methodological correctness of evaluating data. In a semester paper and as a scholar of religion, you can and must make a final judgment on all of these topics. However, scholars in the study of religions must never directly judge religious statements or actions (the following sentence would **not** be a valid conclusion in the study of religions: “This religion solves the problem under discussion more skillfully/better/more efficiently than that religion.”). At best, and only very cautiously, such a judgment makes sense in the field of religious-political activism).

In general, the principles of (religion-sensitive) ethics of science must be applied, especially when collecting and processing social empirical data (data protection rules must also be observed here). Please consult with your lecturer if necessary.

Developing the topic

Structure of the written assignment

A semester paper consists of an introduction, main body and conclusion. The introduction guides the reader towards the topic, states the research question and gives a brief overview of the subsequent argumentation. It has a length of 1-1.5 pages.

The main section has various components. The introductory sub-chapters provide information on historical/contemporary aspects of the religion under investigation and/or systematically introduce

existing research on the topic in question (“literature review” and “current state of research”). In the case of an empirical approach, a sub-chapter also explains the method used. The rest of the main section develops the actual argumentation or the results of the study. The subheadings should be informative and directly state the main results of the study. In total, the main part has usually about 3-5 sub-chapters and is about 10 pages long.

In the final section, the most important results of the study are summarized and the research question from the introduction is answered. Finally, an outlook can broaden the horizon of the research question and identify possible topics for further research. The conclusion is 1-2 pages long.

Permitted resources

When doing research for a written assignment, you should use the research tools and databases of the university library. You are also welcome to use other relevant information portals and informative databases. Reference management programs such as Zotero or EndNote are permitted tools for creating references and the bibliography. Finally, it should not be underestimated how important it is to talk to friends and fellow students to discuss your topic and to enlist their help with proofreading your essay.

Prohibited resources

Any form of plagiarism and any aid that replaces the independent argumentation in the student's written assignment is prohibited. This includes, in particular, the copying of written assignments from semester paper databases, the copying of text passages from published and unpublished literature and the generation of an argument using generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT). Every semester paper must be accompanied by an anti-plagiarism declaration in lieu of an oath. It is available for download on our homepage ([“Anti-plagiarism declaration”](#)) and in Appendix C.

Correct citation and bibliography

The correct and consistent use of citations must be practiced relentlessly. Training courses in addition to our tutorials on citation methods, avoiding plagiarism and using reference management programs are offered by the [Writing Center](#) and the [University Library](#) (including workshops in English).

Quotes

A good argument is based on detailed analyses of primary or source materials and on making links to arguments made by other academic authors (secondary literature). In both cases, the connection is established by quotations. *Direct* quotations are marked with quotation marks (“...”). *Indirect* quotations are marked with linguistic formulations such as “Author xy argues that ...” and common rules of indirect speech. In every case, the exact source of the quotation must be stated. If this information is missing, the work has been plagiarized. Plagiarism is assessed with a grade of 5 (fail). In principle, quotations are highly desirable: your own argumentation must always be related to existing research. This kind of networked knowledge is a hallmark of academic work.

In direct quotations, the original text must not be changed. If you wish to omit text, it is marked with an ellipsis (...), or [...]). If you want to adapt a quotation to the introductory sentence or if you want to invert the word order, then not only “[must] you do it”, but the inversion must be marked with square brackets (original sentence: “You must do it.”). Pronouns may be replaced by the original nouns but must again be marked with square brackets (“[The priestess] prays” instead of “She prays”). Errors in the original are copied exactly as written in the quoted original but are marked with [sic] to signal that it is not an error in the transcription made by you but a mistake in the original. If you wish to add explanations to the quotation, you should also do so in square brackets and add “Author's note” or your initials.

Literature references

Direct and indirect quotations are followed immediately by a reference. The exact page number must always be given. If a citation extends over a page break, this is marked with “p. 25–26” or “p. 25f.”

The bibliography contains all references cited in the written assignment. References and bibliographic entries must be congruent. When preparing for a topic, you usually read many books and articles, but not all of them are cited directly in the text. If you want to make general reference to a series of titles from which, for example, introductory historical information on a religion has been summarized, then the corresponding bibliographic reference can be placed at the beginning or end of a paragraph. It then contains all the titles that were consulted and in which approximately the same historical information can be found. It is not usually necessary to give page numbers in this case.

There can only be one footnote following a word or a sentence. All information, including supplementary discussions to the main text and/or several references, must be summarized in a single footnote.

There are many different standardized styles that specify the exact typographical design of references and bibliographies. What all styles have in common is the requirement to provide the most complete information possible on the text to which reference is made, so that readers can check the correctness of the citation and the argumentation derived from it. In addition, the exact information also provides a legal framework for the protection of copyright and intellectual property.

Bibliographic styles are divided into two groups, the “in-text” or “author-year” styles and the “footnote” styles. (The numbered style commonly used in the natural sciences is not discussed here). References according to the in-text system consist of a bracket with the author's surname, the year of publication and, if applicable, the relevant page number(s). In the footnote style, the name of the author, the title of the work and, if applicable, the page number(s) are given. See below for examples.

At the Institute for the Study of Religions, we recommend the [in-text system according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*](#), currently in its 17th edition. (For detailed questions, please refer to the reference book: *The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.7208/cmoss17>.) If you have familiarized yourself with a particular citation style in your other subject at university, you are welcome to also use it in written assignments for courses at the Institute for the Study of Religions. Please make sure to use this citation style correctly and consistently.

Examples of in-text references according to the author-year system

Monographs

“Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.* Since the relation may be either moral, physical, or ritual, it is evident that out of religion in the sense in which we take it, theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow.” (James 1902, 31, emphasis in the original)

The corresponding entry in the bibliography follows the structure:

[Author's last name], [First names]. [Year of publication]. [*Title*]: [*Subtitle*]. [Place of publication]: [Name of publisher].

James, William. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

If you quote from a later edition, it looks like this:

James, William. [1902] 2002. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature. Centenary Edition*. With a foreword by Micky James and introductions by Eugene Taylor and Jeremy Carrette. London and New York: Routledge.

If it is a translated work, the person who translated it is also named after the title: translated by [first and last name]. Further information may be added.

“The reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience, as little as possible qualified by other forms of consciousness. Whoever cannot do this, whoever knows no such moments in his experience, is requested to read no further.” (Otto 1924, 8)

Otto, Rudolf. 1924. *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey. German original 1917. London: Oxford University Press.

Chapters in anthologies

“Three general and fundamental ethical principles guide how research in the study of religion/s ought to be done: respecting the dignity and integrity of others; communicating honestly and objectively with research participants and audiences; and responsibly exercising judgement. [...] The ethical goals and values of research are integrated with the efforts undertaken out of respect, interest and appreciation of the diverse others who are our research participants and audiences.” (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2022, 90)

The corresponding entry in the bibliography follows the structure (in this case with the full list of authors' names which were abbreviated to et al. in the in-text citation):

[Author's last name], [First names], [Second author's first names] [Second author's last name], and [Third author's first name] [Third author's last name]. [Year of publication]. “[Title]: [subtitle].” In *[Title of Edited Volume]: [Subtitle]*, edited by [first names] [last name] and [first names] [last name], [page numbers of chapter]. [Place of publication]: [Name of publisher].

Gilliat-Ray, Stephen Jacobs, Stephen E. Gregg, Frederick Bird, Laurie Lamoureux Scholes, and Steven Engler. 2022. “Research Ethics.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 88-109. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Another example:

“In scholarly and non-scholarly discourses, however, beyond the numerical facts, the very establishment of which often serves specific interests, speaking of minorities is entangled with notions of power.” (Stausberg 2012, 172)

Stausberg, Michael. 2012. “From Power to Powerlessness: Zoroastrianism in Iranian History.” In *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, edited by Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva, 171-193. Leiden: Brill.

Articles in journals

“What we do find, nonetheless, are some fundamental differences to offline dialogue: The online contact leaves space for religious ambiguity, since online users are in no way forced or expected to reveal their religious belief or belonging. Also, there are no religious or public representatives who may exploit interreligious dialogue for their interests. Finally, the huge gap

between Christians and other participants which shapes the landscape of local interreligious dialogue events at least in the German context is solved at least to a great deal. We can only assume that all of this can result in a greater leeway for negotiating topics, modes of communication, and nuanced religious identities.” (Neumaier 2020, 410)

The corresponding entry in the bibliography follows the structure:

[Author's last name], [First names]. [Year of publication]. “[Title]: [Subtitle].” [*Title of journal*] [Volume number], no. [Issue number]: [Page numbers of the article]. [<https://doi.org/...>].

Neumaier, Anna. 2020. “The big friendly counter-space? Interreligious encounter within social media.” *Religion* 50, no. 3: 392-413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2020.1754605>.

Texts from the Internet

“When religions are going digital, forcing us to rewind or to rethink the ‘embodiment paradigm’ (Csordas 1990) and the whole sensory and material shift in the study of religious phenomena, we should not overlook the simultaneous instances of re-embodiment, of re-discovery of techniques to connect with one’s body and self, which can be traced through the incredible success of meditation apps during a global health crisis [Corona crisis, K.W.]”

In this case, no page number is given because there is none. If there are paragraph numbers, these are used instead. Blogposts and social media formats include the exact date of uploading. The corresponding entry in the bibliography follows the structure:

[Author's last name], [First names]. [Year of publication/upload]. “[Title]: [Subtitle].” [Website information such as title or host]. [Exact date of upload]. [Full link of the website] (Accessed on [exact date of last access]).

Lorea, Carola. 2020. “Spiritualizing Confinement and the Rise of Meditation Apps.” *CoronAsur: Religion and Covid 19. A Research Blog*. June 19th, 2020. <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/20331-20/> (accessed July 2nd, 2024).

Bibliography

The bibliography is sorted alphabetically by last names. If there are several people with the same surname, the entries are sorted following the alphabetical sequence of the first names. Works by the same author should be sorted numerically in descending order by year of publication (that means, the newest publication first, the oldest latest). If the same author has published several works in one year, a letter is added at the end of the year of publication (as in 2000a/ 2000b/ 2000c). This addition must then also be included in the in-text references (an example is provided in the German version of this manual). The bibliography contains all references cited in the essay. References and bibliographic entries must be congruent.

Gilliat-Ray, Stephen Jacobs, Stephen E. Gregg, Frederick Bird, Laurie Lamoureux Scholes, and Steven Engler. 2022. “Research Ethics.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 88-109. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

James, William. [1902] 2002. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature. Centenary Edition*. With a foreword by Micky James and introductions by Eugene Taylor and Jeremy Carrette. London and New York: Routledge.

James, William. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

Lorea, Carola. 2020. "Spiritualizing Confinement and the Rise of Meditation Apps." *CoronAsur: Religion and Covid 19. A Research Blog*. June 19th, 2020. <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/20331-20/> (accessed July 2nd, 2024).

Neumaier, Anna. 2020. "The big friendly counter-space? Interreligious encounter within social media." *Religion* 50, no. 3: 392-413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2020.1754605>.

Otto, Rudolf. 1924. *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey. German original 1917. London: Oxford University Press.

Stausberg, Michael. 2012. "From Power to Powerlessness: Zoroastrianism in Iranian History." In *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, edited by Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva, 171-193. Leiden: Brill.

Don't forget to proofread!

Here is a checklist of aspects you need to pay attention to when proofreading (this is also what examiners notice when reading):

- Is the information on the cover sheet complete and correct?
- Are your spelling, grammar and punctuation correct – including in quotations, footnotes, headers and the bibliography? Use the spellcheck option provided by your word processor!
- Are all layout and format specifications implemented correctly? Typesetting (paragraph control, no separation of headings and text block, font size, line spacing, etc.), position of footnotes and, if applicable, headers, page numbers, hyphenation
- Do the cited works and the bibliography match 100%? Title for title? Is the style 100% consistent? Are ALL commas etc. and italics in the bibliography REALLY correct, depending on the style chosen?

Recommended literature

- Williams, Joseph M. 1990. *Style: Towards Clarity and Grace*. With 2 chapters coauthored by Gregory G. Colomb. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldberg, Natalie. [1986] 2016. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boulder, Co.: Shambhala.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1999. *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Appendix A Cover sheet

Semira Student

ABC Street 9

00000 Town

Matriculation number: 9999999999

B.A. Study of Religions (major subject), minor subject xyz. [or whatever your subjects are]

3rd semester

semira.student@student.uni-tuebingen.de

Ramadan in Germany

Biographical Interviews and Analysis of Ritual Dynamics

Or

The Depiction of Southeast Asian Religions in Persian Travelogues Using the Example of the *Ship of Sulaiman* (1685)

Or or or ...

University of Tübingen

Institute for the Study of Religions

Seminar "The study of religions is exciting"

Winter semester 20xx/xx

Lecturer: NN

Submission date: ...

Appendix B Assessment of semester papers and short written assignments

| |
|--|
| Problem statement or research question <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reference to the study of religions- Independent development of topic- Suitable thematic specification- Suitable fit of data, methods, theories and research question (depending on the specific assignment in class) |
| Topic and disciplinary background <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Literature review or basic knowledge of the research field or the topics of the seminar/lecture- Interdisciplinary connectivity (if relevant)- Correct use of relevant methods (if applicable) |
| Structure and argument <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Structure and argument follow from the problem statement- Chapter design and argumentation reinforce each other- Research question, data, results and theoretical reflections are presented convincingly |
| Language and style <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Correct written language- Academic style, use of technical terms- Neutral style with reference to study object- Gender sensitive style (decisions do not influence the grade) |
| Quotes and references <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Correct indication of quotes- Bibliographical references are complete- Bibliographical references are consistent |
| Format <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Layout, incl. correct use of footnotes- Spelling, proof reading- Consistent formatting throughout |
| Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Independent work, originality of the perspective- Transfer of ideas from one seminar to another- Confident application of theories and analytical methods- Specific characteristic or distinction of the paper (if applicable) |



Institute for the Study of Religions

Anti-plagiarism declaration

Last name, first name: _____

Matriculation number: _____

Exam type: _____

Name of the course: _____

Title of the semester paper: _____

I hereby declare in lieu of an oath:

1. I have written this essay/thesis independently and without the unauthorized assistance of third parties.
2. I have only used the sources I have indicated. Any direct or indirect reference to third-party works is therefore indicated.
3. Furthermore, this work has not yet been published either in part or in full.
4. I am aware of the significance and the criminal consequences of a false affidavit in accordance with § 156 StGB.

Place, date, signature