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Writing Your Master's Thesis

This guide aims at telling you what you need to know if you decide to write your Master's Thesis with me as your supervisor. In a first step, I am going to walk you through the whole process. In a second step, I will provide you with information on what I expect of a thesis at this level, the specific requirements of the different Master's degree programs and on registering for the thesis.

1. The Process

Brainstorming

Sign up for one of my office hours to let me know that you want me to supervise your thesis. We can brainstorm together or discuss ideas that you already have in mind.



Coming up with the Thesis Paper Proposal

Next, you put your ideas into concrete terms and come up with a thesis paper proposal. You will have to look at at least some of your primary sources, research some secondary sources and read them. Your proposal should include a tentative title, a provisional (hypo)thesis, a preliminary structure, the primary sources you want to focus on and some secondary sources. Include two or three bullet points for each chapter you intend to write, telling me what you want to do in this chapter. The proposal will give us an idea if your topic is too narrow or too broad, what your primary sources are, and if your hypothesis is good and arguable.



Discussing your Thesis Paper Proposal

Come to my office hour again to discuss your proposal. Please email it to me a few days before our appointment. This makes it easier for me to give you helpful feedback. At the end of our meeting, we will decide if you should revise your proposal or move on to the next step.



Revising your Thesis Paper Proposal / Starting Research and Writing for Real

Depending on what we decided, your next step will either be a revision of the proposal, or to start researching and writing for real. Note that until you officially register for your thesis, nothing is set in stone. If you encounter problems during the initial writing phase, you can always alter or even change your topic.



Officially Registering for your Master's Thesis

When you've got a hang of your topic, meaning that you did the research, maybe already wrote a couple of pages, and most importantly feel comfortable with your topic, you should officially register for your Master's thesis (see below for the specific requirements of the registration process).



Writing your Master's Thesis

Once you have received a letter from the Prüfungsamt indicating when the thesis is due, your official writing phase begins. Note that you can always schedule more meetings with me if you encounter any problems. If you feel very uncertain, I can give you feedback on some pages that you already wrote. However, I will not be able to read and comment on a whole chapter or the finished draft. I do not have the time for this, and it would be unfair to other students.



Submitting your Master's Thesis

After you completed the writing process, edited it/gave the paper to other people to proofread it for you, and made sure that everything is finalized, you hand your Master's Thesis in as stipulated by the Prüfungsamt on its website. Whereas handing in your thesis too late is not acceptable, note that you can of course always submit your thesis earlier (N.B. even handing it in (a) month(s) earlier is perfectly fine).

2. What Do I Expect?

Most importantly, you do not have to come up with an original idea in your thesis. If you do, that's great but do not pressure yourself. Confirming what other scholars have already said is perfectly fine. It is important, however, that you do not merely sum up what others have already argued. Instead, you should work with your primary sources yourself and engage critically with your secondary sources. What is most important to me is that you have a clear thesis that you state explicitly in your introduction, argue in your main part and sum up in your conclusion. Finally, I also expect you to format your paper properly, to avoid typos and to quote and list all works that you cite in the correct way.

All of the above goes for Bachelor's Thesis as well. What sets an M.A. or M.Ed. Thesis apart is, on the one hand, that the topic you choose is bigger and often more complex. On the other hand, you should show that you have matured as a scholar. Your grasp of theories and methods should be better and more nuanced, your interpretations of the primary sources should be pushed further to bring to the fore dimensions that you would have missed when you were still in your Bachelor's degree program.

3. Facts: How Do I Register for the Master's Thesis and How Much Time Do I Have for Writing my Thesis?

a. M.A. American Studies Degree Program

→ M.A. American Studies (PO WS 2012/13, WS 2016/17, and WS 2021/22)

- 'Officially' (more on that below) you have **4 months** to complete your M.A. Thesis
- Your M.A. Thesis should approximately be **80 pages long** (i.e., text without bibliography)

b. M.Ed. Degree Programs

→ M.Ed. Englisch (PO SS 2018/19)

- 'Officially' (more on that below) you have **16 weeks** to complete your M.Ed. Thesis
- Your M.Ed. Thesis should approximately be **50 pages long** (i.e., text without bibliography)

I. Registering for the thesis

→ **Before you register**

- Depending on your degree program, you must have successfully completed the following modules:
 - **M.A. program:** PO WS 2012/13 and WS 2016/17: Your core curriculum as well as AMS-MA 06 (Research I: Methodology – in this colloquium, you have the chance to present parts of your Master's project), and AMS-MA 07 (Research II: Academic Writing); PO WS 2021/22: AMS-MA 01, 02, 03, 04, and 05.
 - **M.Ed. program:** Literary and Cultural Studies (ENG_ME_2)

- You must have **reached out** to me to inform me about your choice to write your thesis with me
- We must have discussed your **thesis paper proposal** in one of my office hours.
- M.A.: You should have **reached out** to a second examiner (when writing your thesis with me, the second examiners available are Prof. Franke and PD Dr. Schinko (M.A. American Studies) – you can either choose your second examiner by personal preference or we can choose one together according to your topic).

- You should **'officially' register** for your thesis, once you are familiar with and convinced by your topic, wrote a considerable number of pages, and are certain that you will be able to meet the deadline (N.B. since this is unofficial information, you will **not** find this in your POs).

→ **Registering for your Master's Thesis**

You then **officially register** for the Master's Thesis **via the Prüfungsamt**:

- Once you are happy with your topic and how your writing is coming along, you register for your thesis **via the PA**.
- In order to register for your thesis, you first have to **fill out the official registration form** (you can download the form and all other relevant documents for the registration here: <https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/140962>)

(M.Ed.: please **specify** on the form whether you are writing your thesis in Literary or Cultural Studies, N.B. this is a purely bureaucratic act. Since it is not always clear, whether your topic belongs to Literary or Cultural Studies, ask me if you are unsure. I can help you to decide this.)

- After having filled out the official admittance form, you submit it at the Servicebüro at the Prüfungsamt (Keplerstraße 2, Room 207). You will get notified via e-mail as soon as the form has been signed and is ready to be picked up at the Servicebüro.
- Lastly, I have to sign the authorized registration form. The registration process is complete as soon as you submit the final registration with my signature at the Prüfungsamt. From that moment onwards, the **4-month (M.A.)/16-week (M.Ed.) writing period** begins.
- The Prüfungsamt will inform you about your deadline via e-mail.
- Note that the title on the registration form and the title of the final Master's Thesis are to be **identical**, meaning that the title cannot be changed again after the registration has been completed.
- Note that once you officially registered, you **cannot** postpone the deadline (meaning that you must submit after 4 months/16 weeks), unless you have a strong reason (e.g., you are sick and have a doctor's note)

I. Submitting the thesis

- On the day your thesis is due (or earlier) submit the copy/copies as indicated by the Prüfungsamt. Whether the copy is to be sent as a PDF file or a hard copy, to me or someone else, all that information is provided to you by the Prüfungsamt after you register your thesis.
→ The PDF version of your final thesis has to be identical with your hard copy.
Your thesis has to contain the following:
- Front matter with complete header (name of supervisor, name of second examiner (M.A.), title, name, student ID (Matrikelnummer), semester, degree program, address, date of submission, e-mail address (N.B. please make sure to provide both your student and a private e-mail address, since your student e-mail address will be deleted shortly after your exmatriculation.))
- → Table of Contents
 - Chapters
 - Works Cited
 - Antiplagiarism declaration (*you can find the text published by the exam office on their webpage here: <https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/140962>*)

4. General Formatting Tips

- 1.5 spacing
- 12 pt font size for Times New Roman
- 11 pt font size for Arial
- Justify your text.

5. Proposal Sample

Although this is the sample for a term paper proposal, your thesis paper proposal should generally look as follows:

Sabrina Spellman (1234567)
B.A. Interdisciplinary American Studies
Advanced Module Research in Literary and Cultural Studies
S: Witches in American Literature and Culture
Annika Thiem, M.A.
Winter Term 2020/21

Term Paper Proposal: Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Tentative Title: Demanding Women and Hostile Men: Gender and Marriage in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Hypothesis: *Rear Window* reflects many 1950s concerns about changing gender roles and marriage. It echoes common fears about emasculated men and overbearing women and depicts marriage in a fairly ambiguous manner.

Preliminary Structure

1. Introduction
2. The Crisis of Masculinity
In this chapter I want to focus on: Jeff's desire for freedom, Jeff's immaturity and cruelty, and allusions to homosexuality
(Note: these are not subchapters but merely give me an idea of what you would like to do in this chapter; you have to include a few bullet points on what you would like to do in each chapter in order for me to provide helpful feedback).
3. Femininity under Construction
In this chapter I want to focus on: Lisa and the male gaze, Lisa and Stella as examples of female competence and activity, the reaffirmation of traditional female gender roles
4. Marriage: Hopes and Anxieties
In this chapter I want to focus on: Marriage as a trap, Marriage as a sign of maturity, Gender and marriage, the ideal of "togetherness"
5. Conclusion

Works Cited

- Belton, John, editor. *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*. Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Fawell, John. *Hitchcock's Rear Window: The Well-Made Film*. Southern Illinois UP, 2001.
- . "Torturing Women and Mocking Men: Hitchcock's *Rear Window*." *Midwest Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2002, pp. 88–104.
- Rear Window*. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures, 1954.