

Guidelines for Term Papers in Literature Classes

Objectives

The term paper in literature classes serves to evaluate, in written form, your skills in analyzing and interpreting literary texts: your ability to develop your own interpretation on the basis of a specific question while working closely with relevant primary and secondary texts. The term paper also shows your language skills and general academic skills, such as using appropriate methods and concepts and building a coherent, convincing argumentation.

Finding a Topic

You need to agree on a topic with your instructor in their office hours. (Discussing topics via e-mail may be possible in advanced seminars; follow your instructor's guidelines.) Term papers about topics not previously agreed upon will not be accepted and you will fail the class.

Finding a topic is part of your task, i.e. you will not be provided with a topic. Your topic needs to meet the following criteria: it relates to the topic of the seminar, it focuses on relevant primary texts, it pursues literary and/or cultural studies (rather than history, psychology, or the like), and it explores a specific question.

Research Question and Thesis

You need to be able to phrase your topic as a question, your research question. The answer that you work out in the paper is your overall thesis. The thesis must be stated explicitly, as a declarative sentence, in the introduction. In the rest of the paper, you substantiate this thesis by presenting clear arguments and supporting these arguments with references to primary and secondary texts; you want to convince the reader why you interpret a text in just that way. Both a clearly formulated research question and a thesis in which you offer a possible answer are essential to your paper.

Structure

A term paper is divided into an introduction, several analytic chapters, and a conclusion.

The introduction briefly introduces the subject to the reader, explains its relevance, and states the research question that the paper will pursue. It also explains how the paper will do so: which approaches or methods it will use and in what steps it will proceed. The introduction ends with a declarative sentence that states the paper's thesis. In advanced seminars, the introduction also positions the argumentation of the paper in current research debates (see Using Research Literature).

The main part of the paper consists of analytic chapters that define the central analytic concepts and examine primary texts to answer the research question and substantiate the thesis. This can either be done by going through several texts one after the other (devoting one chapter to each text) or by identifying important aspects of the topic and examining how these aspects are negotiated in one or several texts (devoting one chapter to each aspect). Papers structured by aspects are often more successful. Each chapter should be several pages long. Short papers do not usually need separate chapters.

The conclusion summarizes the most important results and may point to further lines of inquiry. Taken together, the introduction and conclusion make up around 10-15% of the paper's total length.

Using Research Literature

Writing a literature paper involves researching secondary literature and developing your own argumentation in conversation with this scholarly debate. Papers that do not cite any secondary literature will not be accepted. The scope of secondary material varies greatly, but as a rule of thumb a paper in literary studies should reference at least five secondary texts (usually more). The secondary texts should be as specific and relevant to your central question as possible. Thorough research in relevant databases (especially the MLA Bibliography and JSTOR) is therefore vital. Quotations and arguments from secondary texts should be used to support your own argumentation, not to replace it.

In advanced seminars, you will need to position your topic in scholarly debate. Include a paragraph or two that summarize the key arguments on your topic in secondary literature. Then explain how your own paper relates to these arguments and what it adds to them.

All sources you use—no matter if you quote from them, summarize them, or just adopt arguments or ideas from them—must be cited in the text and listed in the bibliography. If you fail to cite even one of your sources, or if you pass off someone else's words as your own, you will fail the course for plagiarism. Repeated cases of plagiarism can result in exclusion from your course of study. Together with your paper, you must submit a completed and signed copy of the "Obligatory Declaration of Academic Integrity."

Length and Form

- Length: 3500-4000 words in introductory seminars, 6000-7000 words in advanced seminars
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Page margins: 2.5 cm on each side
- Font: Times New Roman
- The paper needs a cover page as well as a table of contents that lists the chapter titles with their respective page numbers (see examples below). Page count starts at page 1 with the introduction. (Short papers usually do not need a cover page or table of contents; please follow your instructor's guidelines.)
- Citation and bibliography need to follow the standards of the Modern Language Association (MLA), 9th edition. You can find the guidelines here (see also examples below):

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

Language

The paper is to be written in English and the language level is one of the evaluation criteria. Carefully proofread the paper and use the spellchecker of your computer to ensure correct grammar and spelling. Aim for an academic register and style. Avoid slang and employ appropriate terminology. Your diction should be analytical and objective while being clear and comprehensible.

A Few Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid plot summaries. They have no analytical merit whatsoever and will therefore lower your grade. Reference to the plot should only be made in support of analytic argumentation.
- Biographical facts about the author are usually irrelevant to literary analysis. Under no circumstances should you include a chapter detailing the author's biography.
- Do not try to include everything you know about the topic into the paper. Build a deliberate line of argumentation and make sure everything you mention relates directly to your research question and thesis.
- Explain at the beginning and end of each chapter what the chapter argues and how that relates to the overall topic and thesis.
- Each paragraph in the chapters should discuss a particular aspect of your argumentation. Beware of paragraphs that are only a few lines long. This means either that you are making too many paragraph breaks or (more often) that your argumentation on this point lacks detail or depth.
- Try to avoid generalizations. Argue as specifically as possible and base your arguments on existing research. Very few statements are wholly self-explanatory.
- Avoid morally judgmental or overly personal statements. Your paper is an academic study. Academic studies need to keep analytical distance to their subject.

Universität Konstanz
Fachbereich Literatur-, Kunst- und Medienwissenschaften
Semester
Course Title
Instructor

Title

Date of Submission xx.xx.20xx

Name
Matriculation Number
Program
Your Semester of Study at the Time of the Seminar
e-mail address

Universität Konstanz
Fachbereich Literatur-, Kunst- und Medienwissenschaften
Wintersemester 2021/22
Transatlantic Modernism
Prof. Dr. Timo Müller

Functions of Irony in *The Sun Also Rises*

Date of Submission 10.04.2022

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4.2 Irony as a Means of Self-Reflexion

As we have seen in chapter 2, irony frequently conveys a critical or mocking attitude. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to the use of irony in *The Sun Also Rises* as a means of self-reflectiveness and self-criticism. A close reading of the novel reveals a wide range of criticized topics. Irony plays an especially important role in the critique of consumption, materialism, and capitalism in general. One such example is when Bill and Jake walk by a taxidermist and Bill wants Jake to buy a stuffed dog:

“Pretty nice stuffed dogs,” Bill said. “Certainly brighten up your flat.”

[...]

“Mean everything in the world to you after you bought it. Simple exchange of values. You give them money. They give you a stuffed dog.”

“We'll get one on the way back.”

“All right. Have it your own way. Road to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs. Not my fault.” (Hemingway 64)

Bill's ironical utterances are certainly the most amusing and well-formulated ones in the novel. However, although this passage is funny at first glance, it takes a closer look to see what and where the actual irony is. In this case, the irony is best understood with help of the “pretence theory” which was briefly introduced in chapter two. Bill is not actually so fond of stuffed dogs and it is also not truly so important to him that Jake buys one of them. He merely pretends this speech act in order to express a mocking/critical attitude. He carries this pretense to extremes by predicting Jake a “road to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs” for not buying one. This statement sounds so ridiculous that the reader supposes it cannot be meant literally but should be read as an ironic utterance. What Bill intends to criticize with this ironic passage, is the absurdity of consumer society purchasing a dead animal just to “brighten up [the] flat”.

Another example is during Jake's stay in Bayonne towards the end of the book when he observes:

The waiter seemed a little offended about the flowers of the Pyrenees, so I overtipped him. [...] It felt comfortable to be in a country where it is so simple to make people happy. [...] Everything is on such a clear financial basis in France. It is the simplest country to live in. No one makes things complicated by becoming your friend for any

Bibliographical Guidelines

Book by a single author

In-text Citation: (Author Page)

If more than one source by the same author: (Author, *Short title* Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Last Name, First Name. *Title: Subtitle*. Publisher, Publication date.

Hayes, Peter L. *The Critical Reception of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises*. Camden House, 2011.

Physical object or event experienced firsthand (by one author), such as exhibitions in museums or performances

In-text Citation: (Author)

Bibliographical Reference:

Last Name, First Name. *Title*. Day Month Year, Location.

Knapp, David. *Beneath the Smokestacks*. 15 July-29 Nov. 2020, Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield, Ohio.

Book by two authors

In-text Citation: (Author and Author Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Author 1 (Last Name, First Name), and Author 2 (First Name Last Name). *Title: Subtitle*. Publisher, Publication date.

Wilson, Deirdre, and Dan Sperber. *Meaning and Relevance*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Book by more than two authors

In-text Citation: (Author et al. Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Author 1 (Last Name, First Name), et al. *Title: Subtitle*. Publisher, Publication date.

Sanderson, Rena, et al. *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway, Volume 3: 1926–29*. Cambridge UP, 2015.

Book by an unknown author:

In-text Citation: (*Title* Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Title: Subtitle. Publisher, Publication date.

The String of Pearls, or the Barber of Fleet Street: A Domestic Romance. E. Lloyd, 1850.

Anthology

Last Name, First Name, editor. *Title: Subtitle*. Publisher, Publication date.

Scaffela, Frank, editor. *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment*. Oxford UP, 1991.

Essay in Anthology

In-text Citation: (Author Page)

If more than one source by the same author: (Author, "Short title" Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Essay." *Title of Collection*, edited by Editor's name(s), Publisher, Year, Page range of entry.

Royit, Earl. "On Psychic Retrenchment in Hemingway." *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment*, edited by Frank Scaffela, Oxford UP, 1991, 181–188.

Article in a Scholarly Journal

In-text Citation: (Author Page)

If more than one source by the same author: (Author, "Short title" Page)

Bibliographical Reference:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, Volume, Issue, Year, Page range.

Halliday, E.M. "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony." *American Literature*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1956, 1–22.

Article in an Online Magazine or E-Journal

In-text Citation: (Author, "Short Title")

Bibliographical Reference:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine or Journal*, if available volume, issue, publication date, Page range. Name of Database, URL. Date of access.

Bond, Adrian. "The Way It Wasn't in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*." *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1998, 56–74. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30225482?searchText=Hemingway+Sun+also+rises>. 11 December 2022.

A bibliographic citation from e-journals or e-books must always include two containers: the name of the e-journal or e-book and the name and URL of the database they were accessed through (e.g. JSTOR)

Dictionary Entry (and other reference books)

In-text Citation: ("Short Title")

Bibliographical Reference:

"Entry." *Dictionary Name*, Publication date, Publisher, Page range (print) or URL. Date of access.

"Irony." *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 2009, Bedford/St. Martin's, 251–256.

Film

In-text Citation: (Title)

Bibliographical Reference:

Title. Directed by First Name Last Name, Film studio or Distributor, Release year.

Hemingway. Directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, PBS, 2021.

TV Series

In-text citation: (season.episode (HH:)MM)

Bibliographical Reference:

For listing an entire show: First Name Last Name, creator(s). *Title*. Production Company, Distributor, Release year(s).

Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan, creators. *Westworld*. Jerry Weintraub Productions, Kilter Films, Warner Bros. Television for HBO, 2016-.

For listing individual episodes: "Episode name", *Series*, written by Creator's name(s), directed by Director's name(s), Season, Episode, Production Company, Distributor.

"The Bicameral Mind." *Westworld*, written by Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan, directed by Jonathan Nolan, season 1, episode 10, Jerry Weintraub Productions, Kilter Films, Warner Bros. Television for HBO.

For other common sources and more detailed instructions see:

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