



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

## DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN & SWEDISH STUDIES

### GERMAN ESSAY WRITING GUIDE

#### Contents:

<b>WHY ESSAYS?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ANSWERING AN ESSAY QUESTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PRESENTATION AND SUBMISSION OF ESSAYS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CITATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DOCUMENTING SOURCES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PLAGIARISM</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>COLLUSION WITH TUTORS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONSEQUENCES OF PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TIPS FOR WRITING ESSAYS IN GERMAN</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>7</b>

## Why essays?

An essay is the opportunity for you to demonstrate your knowledge and skills, including:

- language skills (accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary, creativity or elegance)
- knowledge of and ability to critique literature (creative or theoretical)
- your ability to make an argument or solve a problem (usually with reference to that literature).

## Answering an essay question

An essay may require you to *answer* a question, *explain* an area of knowledge, or *analyse* or *contrast* issues. Make sure you know what the question is asking you to do and ensure that you have done so in your essay before handing it in. That is: *you must answer the essay question*.

Most commonly, you will be required to make an *argument* in your essay, that is, to assert the correctness of a particular point of view. To do this you may need to consider and adequately refute opposing perspectives and make your case with reference to the literature under consideration (be it film, fiction, philosophy or linguistic or historical texts) as well as to other literature (such as scholarly essays or reviews, theoretical writings). Use existing arguments in the literature to support your point of view. This is most commonly done by quoting relevant passages from the literature in question (for advice on citation see below).

Seek advice from your lecturer as to how much independent research is expected of you, you may be allowed to confine your research to materials considered in class.

Make sure your essay has a clear *structure*, including:

- an *introduction* which summarises what is to come;
- an argument which progresses through subsequent paragraphs (thematic *sub-headings* will guide the reader); and
- a *conclusion* which summarises your argument and the evidence presented to support it.

The more clearly structured your essay, the easier it will be to convince the reader of the rightness of your argument. A rambling essay with no structure or progression will by contrast fail to convince the most enthusiastic reader.

## Presentation and submission of essays

Essays must be typed, double spaced and at least 12-font. Include page numbers and a word count. Handwritten essays are not acceptable in this, the twenty-first century. The university has 127 student computer labs! For details, see: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au>

Give your essay a title and indicate on the essay which question you are answering (where relevant).

Essays should be within 10% of the required word length.

Unless your lecturer makes alternative arrangements with you, essays should be submitted with a departmental **assessment cover sheet** attached (cover sheets available above the essay box at the south end of level 6).

You will be required to sign a declaration that you have not *plagiarised* or *colluded* (see below).

Essays must be submitted by the due date unless an extension has been granted *before the due date* by the course coordinator. Essays up to two weeks late will incur a penalty of up to 20 percentage points (i.e. 2 per working day). An essay submitted more than two weeks late will not receive a mark, but a pass in the subject is nevertheless contingent upon its submission. *Always keep a copy of your assessment.*

If you are submitting end-of-semester assessment and would like it sent to you when marked, attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

## Citation

For research essays you will be required to quote from primary and secondary sources to support your argument. Remember that quotes never speak for themselves—you must interpret them. Do not quote excessively, only where it strengthens and supports your argument. Quotes should be absolutely accurate and representative of the source.

**Shorter quotes**—in either English or German—can be introduced by a colon, or integrated into the text, for example, as follows:

1) Klaus Theweleit schreibt: „Von Frauen geht irgendetwas Bedrohliches aus“ (88).

2) Klaus Theweleit schreibt, dass „[v]on Frauen [...] irgendetwas Bedrohliches aus[geht]“ (88).

3) Klaus Theweleit beschreibt, wie „von Frauen [...] irgendetwas Bedrohliches“ ausgehe (88).

Quotes introduced by a colon (see 1) should be grammatical sentences in their own right. Where a quote is integrated into your sentence (see 2), the whole sentence must be grammatically correct. Changes to the word order or declination of German quotes may be necessary to achieve this. These changes can be indicated in square brackets.

Use double German quotation marks. Microsoft Word automatically inserts the German quote marks if the selected language is German. Highlight the text and then select German from “Language” under the “Tools” menu.

**Longer quotes** (i.e. more than three lines) should be indented and single spaced. Quote marks are *not necessary* for such longer, indented quotes. For example:

Ernst Brandes, ein Beamter des 18. Jahrhunderts, beurteilte die schriftstellerischen Bemühungen der Frauen wie folgt:

Bey den Weibern ist dieses alles ganz anders. Im Ganzen ist Schriftstellerey keine Sache für Weiber. Moralisch verderben sie [...] hierdurch, verlieren die Bescheidenheit der feinen Weiblichkeit, die sich selten damit verträgt, sich der ganzen Welt zur Schau, zur Beurtheilung hinzustellen. (34)

Three full stops in square brackets indicate that a part of the quote has been left out (known as ellipsis).

### ***Documenting sources***

You must always indicate where your quotes have come from. There are various conventions for providing this information. Some styles require that each quote be footnoted, others allow for parenthetical (i.e. in brackets) documentation of sources. You can use any style appropriate to the discipline—the main thing is that you are **consistent and accurate** in the way you document sources.

For those unsure of how to document sources, you may consider the Modern Languages Association (MLA) style, which is relatively straight forward. It comprises parenthetical documentation after each quote and a list of works cited at the end of the essay. After each quote you give the author's surname and the page number of the item quoted in brackets. All cited works are then listed alphabetically in the works cited list. For example:

Ein Interesse am Schönen liegt angeblich in der Natur der Frau: „Das Frauenzimmer hat ein angeborenes stärkeres Gefühl für alles, was schön, zierlich und geschmückt ist.“ (Kant, 34)

Where the author's name is mentioned in the text, only the page number is required. For example:

Kant schreibt, dass ein Interesse am Schönen in der Natur der Frau liegt: „Das Frauenzimmer hat ein angeborenes stärkeres Gefühl für alles, was schön, zierlich und geschmückt ist.“ (34)

Where more than one work by an author is used include an abbreviated version of the title also. For example:

Ein Interesse am Schönen liegt angeblich in der Natur der Frau: „Das Frauenzimmer hat ein angeborenes stärkeres Gefühl für alles, was schön, zierlich und geschmückt ist.“ (Kant, *Beobachtungen* 34)

A full list of the works cited—a *Literaturverzeichnis*—in alphabetical order should follow the essay.

The list of works cited must include all the sources you have cited in your essay. Do not include every book you have read, or even every book you got out of the library—list only those sources you have referred to in your essay. Again, you may use whichever convention you like *so long as you are consistent*. Examples of citations in MLA style are as follows:

**A book** (author, title, publication details, date)

Theweleit, Klaus. *Männerphantasien*. Band 1. Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern, 2000.

**A chapter in a book** (author, chapter title, book title, editor, publication details, date, page range of chapter)

Rainer, Ulrike. "A Question of Silence: Goethe's Speechless Women." *Goethes Mignon und ihre Schwestern: Interpretationen und Rezeption*. Ed. Gerhart Hoffmeister. New York: Peter Lang, 1993. 101–1.

**A journal article** (author, article title, journal name, volume, number, year, page range of article)

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1.4 (1976): 875–93.

**An internet site** (title of site, name of site editor [if given], date of publication or latest update, name of sponsoring organisation [if relevant], date of access, url)

Nineteenth-Century German Stories. Ed. Robert Godwin-Jones. 1999. Foreign Lang. Dept., Virginia Commonwealth U. 10 Jan. 2002  
<<http://www.fln.vcu.edu/menu.html>>.

For full details of the MLA style, see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Note: Internet sites are notoriously difficult to give references to as they might look very different and vary as to what information they include. Use the above as a guide. Ask your tutor if you are unsure.

For those who write a lot of research essays, you may consider a bibliographic program such as Endnote which will automatically insert citations and create a list of works cited for you. Check with your preferred on-campus lab to see if their machines have the program installed.

## **Plagiarism**

The University has a very strict policy on plagiarism and collusion. According to the policy, "work submitted for assessment purposes must be the independent work of the student concerned (or, where joint work is permitted, of the students concerned)".

The policy identifies several forms of plagiarism: "Any of the following, without full acknowledgment of the debt to the original source, counts as plagiarism:

- direct duplication, by copying (or allowing to be copied) another's work, whether from a book, article, Web site, another student's assignment, etc.;
- producing assignments in conjunction with other people [e.g. another student, a tutor] which should be your own independent work;
- paraphrasing of another's work closely, with minor changes but with the essential meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained;
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;
- submitting one's own work which has already been submitted for assessment purposes in another subject."

### ***Collusion with tutors, friends and family***

Many language students have access to tutors (either privately or through their residential colleges) or German-speaking friends and family. Whilst students may avail themselves of ongoing advice and support from tutors or other persons with a knowledge of the language, students **must not collude** with others on assessment. Students thus have to be very careful about the extent to which they discuss their assessment with others.

Examples of **unauthorised collusion** include:

- A tutor or other person manually correcting a draft of the student's assessment;
- The tutor or other person dictating passages to be included in the assessment;
- The tutor or other person working through the assessment together and verbally correcting mistakes.

**Permissible forms of feedback** from tutors or others include:

- Asking the tutor or other person for general advice on grammar or expression (e.g. "How can I say 'in my opinion'?" ; "What's another word for 'to say'?" ; "What case do I use after the preposition 'in'?" );
- Having a tutor or other person look at a draft of assessment and make only *general* comments about what areas can be improved (e.g. "There are some problems in this draft with verb–subject agreement" ; "Sometimes you have used prepositions with the wrong case").

**In summary: assessment must be the result of the student's individual work. A student may not work closely with a tutor or any other person on a piece of assessment.**

### ***Consequences of plagiarism and collusion***

Where a student is found to have colluded or plagiarised, the student may:

- be required to undertake further assessment;
- receive a mark of zero for the assessment;
- fail the subject;
- be referred to a discipline committee; or
- several of the above.

If the course coordinator reasonably suspects that a student has colluded with another person, the coordinator may require the student to sit an oral exam on the topic of the assessment in order to determine whether collusion has taken place.

For more information, see the University Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism at: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/plagiarism>

### **Tips for writing essays in German**

Writing an essay in German may seem daunting, but it may help to think of the essay instead as several shorter sections of about 300–400 words each. With this in mind you can plan and structure your essay around a number of main points. For example, you should summarise your argument and answer to the question in the introduction and the conclusion.

Start early and allow yourself plenty of time to write, revise and rewrite. If in doubt, keep it simple. If you are feeling anxious, start by breaking your ideas down into their component parts and write short, straightforward sentences. Use the relevant vocabulary you have learned during semester in class or in reading for the essay. You might try to emulate (but not plagiarise!) the language of the secondary literature in German.

Remember that most essays are marked on content (usually 75%) as well as expression (usually 25%).

### **Spellchecking and proof reading**

An essay should be the result of several drafts. Before completing the final draft, you should print out your essay and proof read it carefully. Whilst most essays contain some mistakes, you should strive for as few as possible.

If you have a legal version of Microsoft Word, you can install a German dictionary and spell check your essay (you need to highlight the text and then choose “Language” under the “Tools” menu). The Microsoft support website can give you information on how to set up your computer to deal with multiple languages. Or you can go to the German Microsoft site for downloads of the latest German spellchecker:

<http://office.microsoft.com/germany/downloads/9798/spdeu9x.aspx>

There are also proofreading tools available for purchase at:  
<http://www.duden.de> (go to:> Produkte >Software >Korrigieren).

The Horward Language Centre computer lab (room G15, John Medley Building) has Apple computers with the German spellchecker installed. To enable the language option you must first go to the “view” menu and deselect “Word 5.1 menus”. Then go to “tools”, choose “language” and select German.

Note that a spellchecker will not pick up errors in declension of adjectives as well as a host of other mistakes—you still need to proofread yourself.

### **Resources**

The following web resources may be of use in researching for your essays. Remember to ask your lecturer for advice on research tools.

#### **University Library**

*Library Catalogue:*

<http://cat.lib.unimelb.edu.au>

*Buddy (e-journals and bibliographies):*

<http://xena.lib.unimelb.edu.au/bud/div/budhome.html>

*Key Resources in German Studies:*

<http://dozer.infodiv.unimelb.edu.au/SuRe/subject.php?subject=German+Studies>

#### **Online dictionary**

<http://www.dict.cc>