How to Write a Research Paper/ Essay
– Style Sheet (MLA) –

1. Principles of Academic Writing

1.1 Research as Exploration and Communication

- We undertake research in order to explore an idea, investigate an issue, solve a problem, and make an argument.
- The research paper is generally based on a combination of primary (e.g. novel, film, text, performance, interviews) and secondary sources (e.g. articles, books, academic debates).
- Research entails discovering, adopting, and assessing others' research and developing, articulating, and summarising one's own ideas.
- A research paper is a form of written communication that follows a set of conventions.
- You need to support your line of argument and claims by referencing existing scholarship in the field. Please be as precise as possible and include page numbers.

1.2 Selecting a Topic

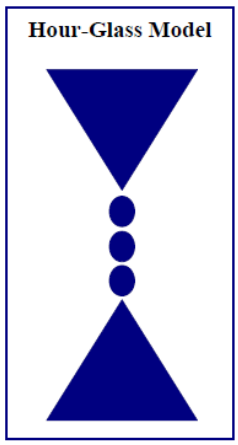
- Your paper should relate to an important aspect of the seminar.
- The topic of your research paper needs to be problem-oriented: narrow your topic by focussing on a single aspect of the subject or a particular approach to the problem.
- You can use methods of brainstorming, mind-mapping, and clustering to find your focus.
- If your choice is limited by a particular list of essay topics you still need to decide which aspects to explore or which approach to use.
- Come up with a good and pointed title. Instead of "Louise Bennett's 'Colonization in Reverse'" rather use "The Politics of Language in Louise Bennett's 'Colonization in Reverse'".

1.3 General Structure

Any research paper contains an introduction, main part, and conclusion.

- The **introduction** includes (1) a teaser and lead-in to the topic with a historical and/ or cultural contextualisation of your topic, (2) your central questions and hypothesis, (3) the material/ primary sources that you seek to analyse, (3) a brief outline of the structure and approach of your research paper.
- The **main part** (1) introduces and elaborates specific theories and methods relevant to your research topic and (2) contains an interpretation of relevant primary sources based on the respective theories and methods; your interpretation serves the development and specification of your main arguments.
- The **conclusion** consists of (1) a brief summary of the arguments and interim results developed in the main analysis. (2) It answers the main question by referring to the meta-level of the topic (see explanation below) and (3) possibly lists questions for further research.

The overall structure of any research paper is based on the so-called 'Hour-Glass Model':



- Your paper begins on a general thematic **meta-level** (on a higher level of abstraction).
- **Narrow the scope** of your paper to **specific aspects** by means of explanation, qualification, and/ or definition.
- The main part of your research paper provides **specific examples** which illustrate and specify your topic in reference to context and texts. It supports your line of argumentation by offering examples (direct and indirect quotes) from your primary material. Structure your main ideas by concise paragraphing!
- The summary provides answers to your main question and subsequently relates the results to the overall **meta-level** of the topic. You can, for example, end your analysis by referring back to the title or the teaser of your paper.

1.4 Paragraphing

- Use a topic sentence for each paragraph; each paragraph should focus on and elaborate the subject introduced in the topic sentence. Each topic sentence should relate to the topic of your paper and develop the main argument.
- A paragraph is a unit of thought: It consists of several sentences that develop one line of argument step-by-step, i.e. the sentences illustrate, specify, and exemplify the central issue of the topic sentence.
- Avoid one- or two-sentence paragraphs.
- The last sentence of each paragraph should establish a link to the next one.
- Each new paragraph is either indented or separated from the preceding paragraph by a blank line.

1.5 Best Practice: Textual Analysis and Logical Argumentation

- Never simply summarise or describe the text you are analysing. Your paper should present a well-informed interpretation of the primary source.
- Support your ideas with concrete examples, references or quotes from the text.
- Explain and elaborate the textual references. Do not let quotes stand by themselves.
- Support your argument by referring or quoting from relevant secondary sources.
- Use secondary literature adequately. Others' thoughts should not crush your self-developed ideas.
- Assure that you document your sources correctly.
- Pay attention to argumentative conclusiveness.
- Avoid redundancies.

2. Language, Style, and Grammar

Seminar papers and essays must be written in English. Effective writing depends on clarity, analytical precision, and readability. Pay attention to academic language, diction, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and coherence.

2.1 Academic Language

Good scholarship requires precise definitions of central concepts and avoids language that implies insubstantial or irrelevant generalisations. Use appropriate academic language and terminology.

2.2 Style

Dos	Don'ts
• Use the present tense when writing about literary works, essays, paintings, etc.	• Avoid frequent use of the passive voice. • Avoid clichés and slang. • Avoid meaningless filler words.

2.3 Spelling

Spelling should be consistent throughout the research paper.

Dos	Don'ts
• When you use quotations, you must reproduce all accents and other marks as they appear in the original. • Use spell check. • Proofread the paper.	• Do not mix American and British English. • Avoid contractions (e.g., don't, it's).

2.4 Punctuation

Punctuation clarifies sentence structure.

Use a comma

- to join two independent clauses. The comma must be followed by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, so, yet).
- to separate three or more words, phrases, and clauses in a series.
- to set off introductory phrases and clauses.

Use a semicolon

- between independent clauses not linked by a conjunction.
- between items in a series when the item contains commas.

Use a colon

- to introduce a list, an elaboration, the formal expression of a rule.
- to introduce a quotation that is independent from the main sentence.
- Capitalize the first word of any independent clause following a colon.

2.5 Capitalisation

In a title, subtitle, or whenever you cite the title from a published work capitalise the first and all following principal words including those that follow hyphens or compound terms.

Capitalise	**Do Not Capitalise**
nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, subordinating conjunctions:	articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, 'to' in infinitives:
The Flower of Europe, Save Our Children, This Is Literature, The Ugly Duckling, Only Slightly Corrupt, One If by Land	Under the Bamboo Tree, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, How to Play Chess

3. Formal Aspects: Layout Conventions

All papers must be word-processed. A research paper contains the following elements: title page, contents page, main text, list of works cited, and declaration of authorship (*Eidesstattliche Versicherung*).

3.1 Title Page

The title page features (1) context information: university, title of the seminar, name of instructor, semester in which the seminar took place; (2) information about yourself and your paper: title of the seminar paper/ essay, name, address, email address, student number (*Matrikelnummer*), semester, course of study, date when you handed in the paper, word count, and, most importantly, requested credit allocation (i.e., *Art der Prüfungsleistung*).

Sample Title Page

Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf

Philosophische Fakultät

Anglophone Literatures / Literary Translation – Anglistik V

Prof. Dr. Birgit Neumann

Queering Gender in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

Hausarbeit

im Rahmen des Seminars

How to Write a Term Paper

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WS 2021 / 2022

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Fachsemester: 3

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Anzahl Wörter: 4450

3.2 Contents Page

Sample Contents Page (of a paper with the topic "The Female Cultural Sphere in 19th-Century American Short Fiction by Women: Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman")

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The Female Cultural Sphere in the U.S. in the Second Half of the 19th Century	4
2.1 The Cult of True Womanhood	4
2.2 Female Social Reform and the Early Feminist Movement	5
3. The Female Sphere in 19th-Century Fiction	6
3.1 Local Color vs. Regionalism	6
3.2 Breaking with Literary and Cultural Conventions and Taboos	7
4. Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman as Case Studies	8
4.1 Kate Chopin: Local Color Writing as Female Agenda	8
4.2 Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Social Reforms as Driving Force	11
5. Conclusion	15
Works Cited	17

Note:

All the headings on the contents page should be equivalent to the headings in the text.

Dos	**Don'ts**
• The headings should tell a 'story' and give a first impression of how you develop your topic. • There is always an "Introduction" and a "Conclusion", although they do not necessarily have to be titled thus. • Choose topic headings or sub-headings which outline the content of your paper. • Sub-headings serve the clarification of main headings. • Pagination: Start counting from the title page but start page numbering on the first page of the introduction. • Number all pages consecutively throughout the research paper.	• Avoid literal repetitions of headings (e.g., 2. Women's Liberation, 2.1 Women's Liberation and Counterculture). • Avoid filler words, one-worded headings, generalisations, questions, and specialised terms. • Avoid more than three levels for the structure of the paper (hence no 2.1.1.1 etc.) • Do not use sub-headings if you only have one sub-item (e.g., if you write 2.1 you must at least write 2.2). • Do not add a number before 'Works Cited', which is also not part of the chapter count und is thus not numbered.

• If necessary, place a 'List of Abbreviations/ Figures/Tables' after the Contents page. • If there is an appendix (*Anhang*) it is placed after the 'Works Cited' pages.	• Do not use the abbreviation "p." in front of a page number. • Do not include the "Declaration of Authorship" (*Eidesstattliche Versicherung*) in the table of contents.

3.3 Page Layout

- **Margin**: left 4cm; right 2 cm; top and bottom 2.5 cm.
- **Font**: with serifs (e.g. Garamond, Georgia, Times New Roman) in the standard size of 12 points; footnotes in the standard size of 10 points.
- **Spacing**: 1.5 in the body of the text and 1.0 in footnotes.
- **Setting**: full justification (*Blocksatz*)!
- **Set-off quotations**: Direct quotations that are longer than three lines are indented on the left margin (1 cm) and remain in 12 points, 1.0 spacing, and full justification.

3.4 Works Cited

- The list of works cited appears at the end of your paper.
- Begin the list on a new page and number all pages.
- As the heading 'Works Cited' indicates, this list only contains works (including DVDs or other media) that you cite in your text.
- The list of works cited should be broken down into primary and secondary sources/ literature.
- Entries in the list are arranged in alphabetical order by the author's last name (or, if the name is unknown, by the title of the publication).
- If an entry runs more than one line, indent the subsequent line or lines.
- To cite two or more works by the same author, give the name in the first entry only. Thereafter, in place of the name, type three hyphens which stand for exactly the same name as in the preceding title.
- You can use programmes like CITAVI to generate your 'Works Cited' list and document your sources.

3.5 Declaration of Authorship

Eidesstattliche Versicherung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die *Hausarbeit/ Bachelorarbeit/ Masterarbeit* mit dem Titel

Titel

selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen benutzt habe. Die Stellen der Arbeit sowie evtl. beigefügte Zeichnungen, Skizzen oder graphische Darstellungen, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, habe ich unter Angabe der Quelle und unter Berücksichtigung der Vorgaben für direkte Zitate, Paraphrasen und Zusammenfassungen als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit ist nicht bereits in einem anderen Seminar vorgelegt worden.

Ort, Datum *Unterschrift*

4. Conducting Research

4.1 A Selection of Useful Research Sources

Library Open Shelves:	sections for reserved works, reference works, key text collections, textbook collection, periodicals
Library Online Information System at the *Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf*: • Library Catalogue (*Präsenz- und Ausleihbestand*, *Magazin*, *Online-Ressourcen*) • Library Catalogue of Inter-Library Loan (*Fernleihe*): *Bibliotheksverbund NRW*	
Bibliographic Databases: etc.	MLA, Virtual Library of Anglo-American Culture & History,
Full-Text Databases:	ARTstor, Early English Books Online, JSTOR, Project Gutenberg, Project Muse, etc.

4.2 Searching a Catalogue or Reference Database

The following items may help you to find the source you are looking for in an online library catalogue:

- Author
- Subject
- Form of Publication
- Call Number (*Signatur*)
- Title
- Keyword
- Year of Publication
- International Standard Book Number (ISBN)

5. Documentation of Sources

5.1 Plagiarism

YOU ALWAYS NEED TO DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCE

when you are quoting, paraphrasing or summarising ideas and arguments.

OTHERWISE YOU ARE COMMITTING

PLAGIARISM.

Plagiarising results in a fail!

- Plagiarism is not crediting another author for his/her ideas. To plagiarise means to commit literary or intellectual theft. Plagiarising constitutes fraud.
- General forms of plagiarism: paraphrasing wording, taking a particular apt phrase, presenting an identical line of thinking, one-on-one translation without documentation.
- Only information and ideas broadly known by your readers and widely accepted by scholars, such as the biography of an author or the dates of historical events, can be used without documentation.

5.2 MLA Documentation Style

When quoting your source material and documenting it in 'Works Cited', make sure that you adhere to the **MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style** (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html).

- For all papers, use the so-called **parenthetical (in-text-citation) style**! This means that when you quote from a book, an article, or any other source, the quotation should be followed by a parenthetical citation giving the page number where the quotation can be found.
- **Footnotes** are only used for necessary explanatory remarks or content-related comments.
- **References in the text** must clearly point to specific sources in the list of works cited.
- According to MLA guidelines, you must provide both the **name of the author and the page number**, e.g., (Müller 35).
- You may abbreviate the **titles of primary sources**, e.g., *Brick Lane* (*BL* 15), but should briefly explain the use of this abbreviation in a footnote or, when using several abbreviations, in a list of abbreviations.
- If the work has **more than three authors** (e.g. John Brown, Klaus Turm, Fred Smith, John Fry) give the first author's last name followed by "et al.", e.g., (Brown et al. 10).
- When referring to **more than one work** use a semicolon to separate the citation, e.g., (Brown et al. 10; Müller 35).
- If you use **more than one author with the same last name** (e.g., Andrew Patterson and Lee Patterson), add the first letter of the first name, e.g., (A. Patterson 183-85), (L. Patterson 230).
- If you use **more than one work by the same author** (e.g., Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture*), add a shortened version of the title, e.g., (Bhabha, *Nation* 25), (Bhabha, *Location* 85).
- If **no author** is given, cite a work by title, e.g., ("Noon").

- When **quoting a reference that is not originally from the source you have**, include the abbreviation "qtd. in" (quoted in) before the indirect source in the parenthetical reference (e.g., Watt qtd. in Hunt and Jacob 493). However, citations taken from a secondary source should generally be avoided; consult the original work whenever possible.
- The **second and following parenthetical citation** of the same source omits the author's name, e.g. "aaaa" (Müller 12); "bbbb" (10). Note that you do need to mention the author's name in brackets if you have quoted someone else in-between quotes from the same author.
- If the **author's name is already mentioned** in the sentence containing the quotation, the following parenthetical citation omits the author's name and only mentions the page number, e.g.: Smith points out that xyz (10); According to Smith, "xyz" (19).
- Direct **references longer than three lines** are indented (see above for layout specifications). Do not use quotation marks for these set-off quotations.
- When **quoting from a poem** refer to the lines in parentheses, e.g., (lines 6-10).
- When **quoting from a drama** give number of act, scene, and lines in parentheses, e.g. (2.4.254-58).
- If you quote **two to three lines from a poem** within the continuous text use a slash (/) to separate them.
- If you wish to **omit a word or a sentence** from the reference you are quoting, use ellipses: "[…]". Ellipses are also used to align subject, verb form, and capitalisation, etc., in order to fit sentence fragments into the continuous text, e.g.:

Examples:

- Mary Davies describes the animal at East Mountain Reservation as "unlike any known to previous civilizations, strange and exotic to the human explorers" (176).
- The animals at East Mountain Reservation are "unlike any known to previous civilizations, strange […] to the human explorers" (Davies 176).
- "Remember that this sentence, like many others, is just an example" (Müller 10).
- Müller stresses that "this sentence […] is just an example" (10).

5.3 Integrating Sources in Your Own Text

Secondary sources can appear in your own text in a number of distinct ways:

- **Quotations** must be identical to the original; they use a narrow segment of the source document word for word: In his famous and influential work *On the Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud argues that dreams are the "royal road to the unconscious" (5).
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from the source material into your own words. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage. It takes a somewhat broader segment of the original source and condenses it slightly: Freud claims that dreams are a way for the dreamer to work through his/her unfulfilled wishes in coded imagery (8).
- **Summarising** involves putting the main idea of a secondary source into your own words, including only the main aspects. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material: According to Freud, actual but unacceptable desires are censored internally and then subjected to coding before emerging in a kind of rebus puzzle in our dreams (11-18).

5.4 Biographical Format of References

- **Author's Name**: Give the author's name as it appears on the title page. Omit titles, affiliations, degrees, etc.
- **Title**: State the full title of the text in question, including any subtitle. Use a colon between main title and subtitle. Capitalise all titles (see 2.5). (1) Italicise books, plays, collection of poems, pamphlets, periodicals, web sites, films, albums, dance performances, visual art. (2) Put titles of articles, stories, poems, pages on a web site, episodes, songs, and lectures in quotation marks.
- **Original Date of Publication**: Give information of the first date of publication after the title followed by a full stop.
- **Publisher and Place of Publication**: With MLA 9, you only need to specify the place of publication for texts published before 1900 and for publishers with several offices in different countries. It is not necessary to identify the state or country. Only cite the last name of the publisher. Omit articles, business abbreviations, and descriptive words. When citing a university press use the abbreviation UP.
- **Common Abbreviations**: n.p. (no place of publication); n.pub. (no publisher); n.d. (no date of publication); n. pag. (no pagination given).

Type of Entry	**Works Cited List / Citation in Text**
Book by a single author	Author's last name, first name. *Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book*. City of publication (if the book was published before 1900 or if the publisher has various offices in different countries), publisher, year of publication.
Works Cited:	Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. 1900. Introduced by Richard Lingeman. New York, Penguin, 2000. Nielsen, Jakob. *Hypertext & Hypermedia*. Academic Press Professional, 1993.
Citation in Text:	(*SC* 55), (Nielsen 141)
Book by more than one author	First author's last name, first name, and second author's first name last name. *Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book*. City of publication (see above), publisher, year of publication.
Works Cited:	Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale UP, 1979. Guignery, Vanessa, and François Gallix, editors. *(Re-)Mapping London: Visions of the Metropolis in the Contemporary Novel in English*. Publibook, 2008.
Citation in Text:	(Gilbert and Gubar 9), (Guignery and Gallix 2)

Essay in a collection or **work in an anthology**	Author's last name, first name. "Title of Entry." *Title of the Collection/Anthology*, edited by First Name Last Name of the Editor(s), city of publication (see above), publisher, year of publication, page range.
Works Cited:	Colvert, James B. "Stephen Crane." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, edited by Donald Pizer, vol. 12, Gale, 1982, pp. 100-24. Hooker, Thomas. "A True Sight of Sin." *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, edited by Perry Miller, Columbia UP, 1982, pp. 153-64.
Citation in Text:	(Colvert 120), (Hooker 154)
Article in a reference book	"Title of Entry." *Name of Reference Book*. Edition of publication. year of publication.
Works Cited:	"Tutankhamen." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*. 15th ed. 1994.
Citation in Text:	("Tutankhamen")
Introduction/ Preface/ Foreword/ Afterword	Author's last name, first name (of the introduction, etc.). Introduction/ Preface/ Foreword/ Afterword. *Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book*, by Last name of the author(s), city of publication (see above), publisher, year of publication, page range.
Works Cited:	Knowles, Owen. Introduction. *Heart of Darkness*, by Conrad, Penguin, 2007, pp. xiii-xxxviii. Bhabha, Homi K. Preface. *The Location of Culture*, by Bhabha, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. ix-xxv.
Citation in Text:	(Knowles xiii), (Bhabha ix)
Scholarly Edition	Author's last name, first name. *Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book*, edited by name of editor, city of publication (see above), publisher, year of publication.
Works Cited:	Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*, edited by Fredson Bowers, UP of Virginia, 1975.
Citation in Text:	(Crane 65)

Journal Article	Author's last name, first name. "Title of the Article." *Name of Journal*, volume number, issue number, year, page range.
Works Cited:	Snodgrass, Susan. "The Rubbish Heap of History." *Art in America*, vol. 88, no. 5, 2000, pp. 156-7.
Citation in Text:	(Snodgrass 156)
Newspaper Article	Author's last name, first name. "Title of the Article." *Name of Magazine*, Day Month Year, page range.
Works Cited:	Cowley, Geoffrey. "I'd Toddle a Mile for a Camel." *Newsweek*, 23 Dec. 1991, 70-71.
Citation in Text:	(Cowley 70)
Review	Review author's last name, first name. "Title of Review (if it has a title)." Review of *Title of Reviewed Text/Film/…*, by name of author/director etc. *Title of Periodical*, Day Month Year, page range.
Works Cited:	Mendelsohn, Daniel. "September 11 at the Movies." Review of *United 93*, directed by Paul Greengrass, and *World Trade Center*, directed by Oliver Stone. *New York Review of Books*, 21 Sept. 2006, pp. 43-46.
Citation in Text:	(Mendelsohn 44)
Anonymous Article	"Title of Article." *Name of Periodical*, Day Month Year, page range.
Works Cited:	"Business: Global Warming's Boom Town; Tourism in Greenland." *The Economist*, 26 May 2007, p. 82.
Citation in Text:	("Business" 82)
Web Publications	Last name, first name of the author/ compiler/ director/ editor/ narrator/ performer. "Title of the Work." *Title of the Overall Web Site*, Day Month Year, URL. Date of access.
Works Cited:	Shaffi, Sarah. "George Orwell's Classic Works to Be Published on Substack." *The Guardian*, 25 Oct. 2022, www.theguardian.com/books/2022/oct/25/george-orwell-published-substack. Accessed 27 Oct. 2022.
Citation in Text:	(Shaffi)

Article from an online database	Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Periodical*, volume number, issue number, (day month) year, page range. *database*, DOI or URL. Access date.
Works Cited:	Tolson, Nancy. "Making Books Available: The Role of Early Libraries, Librarians, and Booksellers in the Promotion of African American Children's Literature." *African American Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1998, pp. 9-16. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3042263. Accessed 25 Oct. 2022.
Citation in Text:	(Tolson 11)
Film	*Title of the Film*. Directed by name of director, if necessary: performances by names of performers, studio, year.
Works Cited:	*Encanto*. Directed by Jared Bush and Byron Howard, Disney, 2021.
Citation in Text:	(*Encanto* 01:05:20)
Song	Artist name. "Song Title." *Album Title*, Record Label, Year, *Platform of Access*, URL.
Works Cited:	50 Cent. "Many Men (Wish Death)." *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, Shady Records, 2003, *Spotify*, open.spotify.com/track/5STdMlrBf6pqWiNE7WqxSi?si=DngvDTWMSlunflQkwg_0oQ&utm
Citation in Text:	(50 Cent)
Religious texts (e.g. the Bible and other Biblical Resources)	*Title of Religious Text*. Version, edition, publisher, year.
Works Cited:	*The Bible*. The English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with Apocrypha, Oxford UP, 2009.
Citation in Text:	(*The English Standard Version Bible*, 2 Cor.5.17) (In case of direct reference quote: abbreviation of book. chapter number.verse number)

Work Cited:

"MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*, Purdue U Writing Lab. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

Further Introductory Reading:

Bailey, Stephen. *Academic Writing for University Students*. London / New York, Routledge, 2021.

Macgilchrist, Felicitas. *Academic Writing*. UTB, 2014.

Stickel-Wolf, Christine, and Joachim Wolf. *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten und Lerntechniken: Erfolgreich Studieren – Gewusst Wie!* 6th ed,. Gabler, 2011.