

Guidelines for writing a paper

This information sheet is meant to help you during the process of planning, researching and writing a longer paper as part of your study requirements for “Roads to Democracy(ies)”. If you follow the advice listed below, your finished paper should meet the quality standards necessary for research papers at MA level as they are commonly expected at German universities.

- Please meet with your lecturer/supervisor who will be grading the finished paper well before you actually start writing to agree on a specialized topic for your study. Make sure that the topic is a case study or more detailed research into a specific aspect of broader concepts discussed in class rather than a general summary of everything you know about the topic. You will find it much easier to structure your paper if you focus on an actual question that you aim to research, explain and finally answer in your paper.
- The first page of your paper should be a cover sheet containing standardized information (your full name, course, university, semester & title of the paper as agreed upon with your supervisor).
- On average your paper should comprise 15 to 20 pages. Please use a computer to write your text, with a neutral, easily legible font/size, e.g. Arial 11, Times New Roman 12, line spacing of 1,5 and a margin of 3 centimetres on the right.
- To meet academic standards at German universities your finalized paper needs to be subdivided into chapters and subchapters that must be coherently numbered and given a title that informs the reader about the expected content (short and significant). Typically, this structure consists of an introduction which leads into the topic under discussion and presents the question that is being researched or the thesis/theses that the paper sets out to examine (usually of a length of a page or a page and a half). Next follows the main body of the text which presents all the necessary evidence which can be gleaned from working with historic sources and secondary/scholarly writing. Take special care to develop a logical structure for your findings since this is the main part of your paper. Last, there needs to be a summary which concisely answers the question(s) asked at the beginning based on the analysis in the main part of the text.
- Depending on the topic under discussion in your paper, you need to present theoretical background knowledge as well, but a mere recitation of theoretical ideas that is not linked to an actual case study or research question is not the aim of your paper. Rather, theoretical

concepts are meant to aid you in your research and help you understand how different historians can approach certain topics in different ways.

- Make sure that you use up-to-date publications and do not fall behind the current state of a historical debate. This makes it necessary to research what has already been written about the topic under discussion and read widely before you start writing. Moreover, try to avoid one-sided presentations by omitting certain viewpoints. If there is a debate going on between historians who cannot agree, present different viewpoints in your paper, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to answering your research question.
- Whenever you use direct quotations from the publications of other scholars or even indirectly refer to their ideas/concepts, it is absolutely elementary NOT to commit plagiarism by passing other people's thoughts and/or words off as your own. This is why you MUST use footnotes in your own writing to document where quotations and ideas come from. Failing to name your sources will have a negative effect on the grade you can expect for your paper. If you repeatedly or willfully plagiarise from others, your paper will be rejected. To follow the standards of historiography at German universities you should use footnotes instead of references in the text.
- Typically, this is what a footnote should look like to meet the quality standards expected at German universities: quotation - Christian name surname of the author, title of the book including subtitle, place of publication, year of publication, page or pages you refer to, fullstop (e.g. Mark Mazower, Hitler's Empire. Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe, New York 2008, p. 7.) Add a "cf." if you only refer to a page or pages. If you have questions on this, please do not hesitate to ask the tutor accompanying this course.
- Following the cover sheet, the second page of your paper must contain a table of contents, indicating the subdivision of the paper into smaller chapters. For each subchapter give the title and the page number on which it starts. Subchapters are enumerated. The introduction usually "1.", the main body of text starting with „2.1“, followed by 2.2, perhaps „2.3“, etc. If you need even smaller subchapters, use “2.1.1”, “2.1.2”, “2.1.3” etc.
- Following on the conclusions/summary of your paper there needs to be a bibliography listing in alphabetical order of authors' surnames all the books and other publications that you have quoted from with their full titles as well as the place and year of publication. If you have used online sources, please give (if available) the full name of the author, the title of the text and the URL under which it can be accessed online. You also need to add the date on which you found the website in the way you used it for your paper. Please note that

due to its highly interactive nature and lack of stability, Wikipedia and similar Wiki sites are not considered acceptable for quoting at German universities. You may use them for your own research, but they have no place in footnotes and bibliographies.

- If your text contains illustrations that are relevant for the topic under discussion (e.g. photos, cartoons, charts, maps etc.) but are not your own, they must be documented in the same way as quotes, using footnotes and a separate list of illustrations that is part of the bibliography at the end of the paper.
- Make sure that your paper looks tidy and well-presented. Use cohesive layout, do not switch fonts and font sizes. Write your text in paragraphs. Always indent the first line when you start a new paragraph. Bold print is only for headlines, italics can be used to highlight important terms or words in the text.
- Even if English is not your native language, you should take as much care as possible to write your texts in a quality of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, idioms) that is adequate for the academic level. Use the spell checker of your PC and dictionaries if necessary or ask others to proofread your writing before you hand it in.