Manual

"Writing a Master's thesis in Comparative Women's Studies in Culture & Politics at Utrecht University. A Collective Do-It-Yourself Guide to Feminist Scholarly Writing.

List of contents

Introduction

This guide is written for students in Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics (CWSCP) at Department of Gender Studies, Utrecht University and it will directly address the students. That is why it is written in the "you" form. The author, or the "I", here is rather a "we" since there have been several people involved, who have initialized it, read it and commented on drafts. The contributions of Rozanne Drost, Quirijn Backx and Jennifer Lum should be mentioned especially. Many of the ideas here on feminist writing in general and on structuring arguments in particular was taught at Department of Gender Studies, Linköping university, by Professor Nina Lykke in 2000-2001. Professor Rosi Braidotti has, besides her extensive contributions on and within feminist scholarly writing, generously commented on a draft for this manual.The initiation of the idea, repeated reading, collegial comments and contributions from Iris van der Tuin and Professor Gloria Wekker were completely indispensable - as were your feminist scholarly writing and teaching. Without you there would be no manual on how to write a MA-thesis within CWSCP.

This manual (or guide - I use the terms interchangeably) is meant to be a continuous project in two ways. Firstly, it is recommended to read it not only in the beginning of your thesis work, but also while you write and especially when you feel discouraged. Secondly, we urge you to hand in comments and ideas for further elaborations in order to keep this guide relevant and make it even more useful in the future. Hence the "we" form of the manual also intends to include *your* ideas on the topic. That is also why there are empty lines and margins where you can doodle and write down your own thoughts or tips to other students on how to write a Master's thesis.

The main purpose of this guide is to provide you, the MA student of Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics, with the proper tools for writing a scholarly thesis. The manual will also give some hints of the criteria used when grading and evaluating the thesis. But don't use this guide as a yardstick for getting good grades; use it as a toolbox with handy instruments for learning how to do be both a critical and creative writer. Use it for learning how to enjoy academic writing. This is the overarching goal for this guide, but there is also a subset of intentional drives behind it: The manual is intended to supply you, the *students*, with a sense of confidence in relation to the thesis work and to give you an idea of the demands and pleasures of thesis work. This manual will also allow you to, early on, create an idea of what kind of product is expected – an idea that in interaction with your supervisor will be constantly

challenged and updated until the final result – the thesis itself. This guide is then to some extent also for the *supervisors*. It might be of support regarding joint criteria for all students. The manual might also to some degree be of guidance in the situation of supervision for both student and supervisor. The *presumed reader* of the thesis is also of great importance in this manual. Writing for an academic audience demands certain things. There is the aspect of communication that needs to meet up with creativity, especially if the audience is both academic and non-academic as is the case with the MA-thesis. The MA-thesis of CWSCP needs to be written in a way that enables both university and internship supervisors and other internship contacts to benefit from reading it. So, there are certain demands on behalf of the reader of a MA1-thesis that need to be taken in consideration. The thesis needs to be written by the student in a way that properly reports and gives a scientific account of the research done so that the intended readers (interviewed subjects from the internship, supervisor, second reader, peers or others invested in the study) can assess and take part in the text at hand. The research component of the internship should be visible and analyzed in a clear and scholarly manner. The research component of the internship should be (self-) critically dealt with, whether you, during your internship, did an analytical follow up of a project run by the internship organization, wrote a policy-paper or organized a small conference.

All the above points to the importance of learning the academic conventions for *communication*. Using the proper means and academic tools makes it easier for the involved readers to take part in the knowledge sharing process and be able to critically adopt the given information. Taking the reader, so to speak, carefully by the hand and leading her through the text makes her (or him) able to take part in the dialogue that the text should open up for. But there is more to writing a feminist piece of academic work than clear or transparent communication. That will be evident after reading this manual with its focus on creativity within academic constraints.

As it is now, this guide is divided in to the following three parts (I, II & III). Firstly, it deals with general matters such as what a master's thesis entails within Comparative Women's Studies. Further, part I consists of raw information regarding key criteria and special requirements (for instance, the number of words for the thesis) and instructions on how to submit it properly and how to apply for graduation after it is written. Secondly, in part II, the manual deals with the pragmatics of writing a thesis, for instance, communication with supervisors, time

management and reading. Footnotes, sources and how to make references are here touched upon, but thoroughly stated in the Appendix *How to write an essay* (by Rosi Braidotti). Here, in part **II**, you can also find ten quick tips on how to get started with your writing, what to do if you are stuck but also what measures to take if you are experiencing serious problems due to illness. Thirdly, the guide invites you to contemplate the intertwined politics and poetics of feminist scholarly writing. By that I mean that feminist work, at its best within the powerful frames of scholarship, can be simultaneously creative and critical (Braidotti 1991; Haraway 1989). This part **III** discusses ways of setting up a thesis, creating a productive research question and the importance of an outline, of writing drafts and of rewriting. This third part of the manual also touches upon style, argumentation and issues around interdisciplinarity as they are part and parcel of feminist scholarly writing.

In this guide, we have done our best to both provide you with as much concrete information and useful tips on writing as possible. It has been a pleasure to imagine how Women's Studies students could put these constraining guidelines to use and produce pieces of edgy academic texts and thought provoking feminist work. We have here collected some of the established conventions on writing and communicating Women's Studies research on Master's level and added our own experiences on writing. It might, for instance, be handy to keep a little note close to your work place (by your computer screen) with these three overarching good pieces of advice for academic work, as I did during my work on my PhD-thesis. Remember:

- *Limits come with territory – deal with it!*
- *If you aim to please everybody you will please nobody!*
- *Emotional charge is the key to success!*

Have these three general points of advice simmering in your head and keep this manual with constraints and guidelines under your pillow at night as you write your Master's thesis in Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics.

Pleasant Writing!

Cecilia Åsberg

[1] See further examples of proper referencing, how to lay out quotes, etc in Appendix *How to Write an Essay* by Rosi Braidotti. Also available online: http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies (last accessed 2006-08-26).

What is a Master´s thesis in Comparative Women's Studies?

The Master's thesis consists of an individual, written assignment that is related to the student's work during the internship. Therefore it is professionally oriented. It is also written and intended for an academic context. Therefore it should be designed and written in such a way that it fits the standards of a *critical and an independent piece of academic work*.

- ❑ The thesis should be based in the experiences and knowledge you gained from the internship, but it should take these experiences and knowledge to a more abstract level with the use of theory.

Perhaps it is worth noting that the term *critical* does not intend a pessimistic or negative attitude towards the object of study, quite the contrary. Being critical means not to take received dominant, common sense knowledge for granted. A critical and independent study means a serious, deeply invested and careful investigation. Being critical also means for the writer to adopt certain ethical attitudes such as, within the text, being (self-) reflexive and open towards other understandings. It also means taking previous research into proper account and avoiding plagiarism. These stances are important because being critical means dealing openly with issues of power at work on several levels. Because even while (struggling with) writing, power is at work. This will be touched upon later in the guide, when dealing with writing styles and the voice of the author (for instance using an authoritative voice, or allowing many voices in the analysis to be heard.) Doing a critical study within Comparative Women's Studies means - *in particular* - sensitivity towards issues and theories of ethnicity and gender.

- The thesis should reveal knowledge and in depth interest in how gender and ethnicity as social categories are enacted within the field of study.

Gender is always a relationship, not a preformed category of beings or a possession that one can have. Gender does not pertain more to women than to men. Gender is the relation between variously constituted categories of men and women (and variously arrayed tropes), differentiated by nation, generation, class, lineage, color, and much else.

Donna Haraway, 1997:28

Concrete numbers & facts

Special academic requirements need to be met for this Master's thesis; here is a list of concrete key criteria.

- The master-thesis equals 15 ECTS. That really means 420 hours of work.
- This work is to be translated into a thesis with a length of between 12 000 and 15 000 words – *excluding* the bibliography and possible appendices. This means approximately 25 to 35 pages in a reader-friendly layout
- Use a font no smaller, nor larger than the equivalents of Times, Garamond and Arial 12 pts, 1, 5 spaced and add page numbers at the bottom of the page.
- The thesis should have a title page with title and subtitle of the thesis, name of the program, supervisor and of course your name and student number.
- The thesis should have a visible structure. Use headlines and subtitles throughout the thesis and include a list of contents in the beginning.
- It should entail an introduction with research question, aim or thesis statement, as well as a methodology section, a bulk of analytical chapters, a conclusion and, lastly, a neat bibliography.
- At the end of the process of writing it is a nice practice to insert a brief foreword in which you thank those who have been meaningful in your trajectory.

- ❑ Use a systematic and coherent way of citing and referencing throughout the thesis. Stick consistently to it at all times.[1]

After adhering to the above formalist framework, the content needs of course also to follow certain key criteria. A Master's thesis in Comparative Women's Studies needs to meet specific requirements in relation to the program of study. As mentioned, it should be an independent piece of scholarly work based on the research component of the internship. Importantly, the thesis should reveal knowledge and in depth interest in how gender and ethnicity as social and symbolical categories are enacted within the field of study. And in line with this, the specific requirements in relation to the program of study do also entail that the student should be able, at the end, to …

- ❑ Apply her/his knowledge about the functioning of gender and ethnicity to a context in social, cultural and political fields.
- ❑ Exhibit basic skills in assessing and analysing the correlation between various forms of social and cultural exclusion and inclusion.
- ❑ Attempt a comparison of historical and contemporary interventions aiming to improve gender and ethnic relations nationally and internationally.
- ❑ Critically analyse and assess academic research on gender and ethnicity in terms of its value and usefulness in the relevant context (the internship should here provide the context at hand).
- ❑ Exhibit ready knowledge of the national (i.e. Dutch) and international infrastructure of institutions and scholarship in the fields of gender and ethnicity, and indicate an ability to apply this in a professional context.

Here are a few suggested topics for the thesis, and how such topics can relate to the internship. Some of these suggestions are vaguely modelled on previous student work with the Master's program of CWSCP:

Internship **Thesis topic**

Ex 1) Director of "The Vagina Monologues"
> *Transgressive artistic practices*

Ex 2) At medical research institute > *A cultural study of laboratory life*

Ex 3) At non-governmental organization (NGO), such as "TransAct"
> *Gender, ethnicity and violence*

... and why it is good for you.

Have in mind that the general purpose of the MA thesis is to give you an opportunity to show that you have been able to assess the content of the courses and independently make use of the new knowledge. Without the intention of being patronizing, there are some really useful aspects of writing a master thesis. It will enable you to go into depth with the topic you have chosen to write on. A common practice among scholars is to work through the *intellectual process of writing* in order to gain new understandings. It is a process that could be called "thinking through writing", as one of my former supervisors, Professor Jackie Stacey, called it during a meeting. Of course this means a lot of rewriting and rethinking. This is a good practice also outside academia. Throughout the process of thinking through writing, drafts and outlines might be helpful in assessing and presenting complex situations for peers. So writing a thesis is good practice whether you later find a job within or outside of academia.

Writing a thesis will also train you in practicing precise, concise and persuasive presentations of written or non-written arguments. Your work on the thesis will thus force you to exercise your ability to perform the previously mentioned critical and independent ways of thinking in an academic manner.

But let us not forget the pleasurable aspects or writing an MA-thesis, since it can give you the opportunity to be both creative *and* critical – two important aspects of feminist writing according to Rosi Braidotti (1991: 147-173). The feeling of handing in a piece of work that entails your experiences and thoughts over a period of work is truly a golden moment that you don't want to miss out on. It is indeed very satisfactory. Bear in mind that this is one of few chances in life where you have the opportunity to think, read and write about something no one else has thought or written about before. It is a unique and privileged opportunity in your life.

Life-transformning ideas have always come to me through books.
(bell hooks, *O Magazine*, December 2003)

Delivering the thesis: When you have ticked the boxes on the previous pages…

... and are ready to hand in your thesis there are certain measures that should be taken. Make sure beforehand that your supervisor and second reader have agreed on the final version of the thesis. Provide paper copies for the supervisor (the first reader) and the second reader; the persons grading your thesis. It is also important to provide a *digital version*. According to the regulations on how to hand in a master thesis (these regulations can and should be obtained from the IMR secretariat), you are *obliged* to deliver a digital version of the master thesis at the Faculty of Arts Library. The blueprint for the graduation procedure can be found on our website, see below.

- ❑ A digital version of the thesis is to be given to the Faculty of Arts Library for the files and archives. File your individual MA-Thesis on http://www2.let.uu.nl/solis/Bibliotheek/scripties.htm - or file a hardcopy of your thesis at the Library of the Arts and include a statement of the Library that a copy of has been handed in.

- ❑ A blueprint for graduation within MA1 Comparative Women's Studies can be found online:

http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/education/docs/Blueprint_graduation_form_MA.doc

On applying for graduation

Once you have obtained the 60 ECTS points required, students who wish to graduate must first complete the application form for their "final examination" (i.e., the assessment by the Board of Examiners of whether the student has met all the programme requirements and qualifies for graduation). Completed application forms must be submitted on time to the Secretariat (KNG 29, room 1.22). Please note that application forms may differ per Master's degree programme. You can find the application form online:

http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/education/docs/Aanvraagform_IMR_MA_VRO.doc

Together with your completed and signed application, you must submit the following documents:

- A recent OSIRIS print-out showing the final results (not the provisional results) for the courses taken and the associated credit points obtained. (The date of the results overview should be in the same month as your application for the final examination).
- A copy of your proof of registration for the Master's degree programme.
- Your most recent diploma (for pre-university or follow-up education) or a photocopy of your passport (in order to check the correct spelling of your name and surname, and your correct date and place of birth).
- Proof of registration with Utrecht University as a full-time student of the Master's degree programme (students may only take their final examination if they are properly registered on the date stated on the degree certificate).

What does a previous student say about Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics?

Read some of Jennifer's thoughts on her experience:

"The MA-1 program in Women's Studies at Utrecht University provides its participants with unique and valuable opportunities for scholarly, social, and personal growth, all within the convenient time span of one year! I hope that the following reflections may be of some use to its incoming or continuing students.

To begin with, one of the most initially daunting and yet immensely rewarding components of the MA-1 program is of course the thesis requirement. In undertaking such a project, I would strongly encourage students to have confidence in their abilities to produce meaningful work, and to take genuine pride in the energy they invest in crafting creative and original scholarship. They deserve to take themselves very seriously. After all, an MA thesis is never 'just an MA thesis'. In addition to being an intellectually

enriching experience, it may be instrumental in laying the foundation for further scholarly inquiry, broadening professional networks, and opening doors to futures never before deemed possible.

Within the process of researching and drafting the thesis project, I would also urge students to pay heed to their intuitions. It would be a good idea for them to identify their individual needs and even weaknesses as soon as possible, and to be prompt and clear in communicating about such issues with their supervisors. Most importantly, they should not be afraid to ask for help, nor should they feel embarrassed about needing it. On the contrary, the writing of the MA-1 thesis is a fantastic occasion upon which to collaborate with a friendly expert from the UU Women's Studies Department in a field in which they have taken an interest! In addition to dramatic academic growth, the cultivation of greater self-confidence, which emerges largely through exposure to a strong mentor's sincere enthusiasm for and sharp insights into one's project, may be one of the most lasting rewards of the thesis experience.

Finally, I would encourage all incoming and continuing students to invest themselves as thoroughly as possible in their friendships during their period of study in Utrecht, and especially in their relationships with their colleagues within the Women's Studies Department. One will never regret having taken the time to cook dinner, watch a film, or spend an evening on the town with some of the diverse and extraordinary members of the department's scholarly feminist community. It is common for such connections to last well beyond the duration of one's stay in Utrecht, and little can be substituted for the exhilaration and pure happiness one feels after receiving a letter or a phone call from overseas.

These are my thoughts. Enjoy your stay, and best of luck in the year to come!

Jennifer

Managing a thesis in Women's Studies

It requires discipline to write a master thesis. The thesis is something that will take up a lot of your energy, time and space (both physical and mental). It might be hard to start such a project without some guidelines on how to organize your work and getting started. Make sure that everybody involved, such as supervisors, readers (and even partners), agree on the conditions and rules you set up together. These are only meant to assist in the realization of the master's thesis which is everybody's primary goal.

In the following we will be dealing with the pragmatics of writing a thesis in Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics. Below issues of supervision and group tutorials are touched upon. Further you can find some serious recommendations on how to deal with the whole academic apparatus around writing an MA-thesis. But you can also find important tips on time management, on how to read (there are many ways of approaching texts depending on for instance your intentions - of course we focus here on reading for the purpose of writing a thesis) and, perhaps most useful – hands-on advice on how to get started, what to do if you are stuck and how to learn to enjoy writing.

Supervision and group tutorial

Supervision is an integral part of your training. You can choose a supervisor from Women's Studies who has expertise in the field of interest relevant to the topic of your thesis. Ask one of the teachers to be your supervisor (in block 3). There will be approximately four collective writing seminars and at least three individual sessions during the process of

writing. You should together with your supervisor discuss the appointment of a second reader to your thesis, but it is your responsibility to ask this person to be your second reader.

Relationships with your supervisor and with other students are an important aspect of being a master student at Utrecht Women's Studies. They can provide a source for intellectual, social and practical support extending far beyond your time in Utrecht. Of great help are the Comparative Women's Studies seminar stream and the group tutorials where we jointly discuss common problems and solutions.

- ❑ Attend the group tutorials on writing an MA-thesis in Comparative Women's studies in Culture and Politics. Helpful comments, good and bad practices, will here be exchanged in an open atmosphere.

There are certain things you should have in mind regarding supervision. Most teachers supervise several students and while they are glad to do so, supervision also takes up considerable time. So while not effortless, supervising is both pleasurable and time consuming. That is why, for best possible results, these guidelines should be adhered to. For instance it is of great importance to report continuously to your Women's Studies supervisor if you are working away from the university (for instance during the internship). It is, at those occasions, a lot easier to loose contact and to loose "the vibe" of writing within a scholarly community. Preferably you should report back to your supervisor at least every two weeks. However, this is something for you and your supervisor to negotiate and agree upon. If you have an agreement on delivering a specific piece of work on a certain date that piece can of course substitute the report on your progress. The supervisory meetings will also provide you with a certain work rhythm that will aid in the structuring of time. You should make sure to inform your supervisor of your progress regularly and the difficulties you might experience.

The supervisor will give you guidance on the nature of scholarly research, academic writing, the standard of performance required, planning of studies and targets within the one year period of study. When you feel the need for a meeting or have submitted a piece of work, make an appointment via phone or e-mail (the way you two have agreed upon is the best). It is your responsibility to make contact and to organize meetings on a regular basis. Deciding on dates in advance might protect

you from your own fears of giving away texts (some people have such fears, some do not) or your own reluctance to face that there is a problem.

Don't expect the supervisor to be available at all times. S/he might need more than one week, especially if the supervisor has to comment extensively on your expanding text. In fact, s/he is entitled to ten working days (two weeks). Any appointment made earlier is pure benevolence. While waiting for the appointment, make good use of your time. Do some reading or prepare for the next step or next chapter. Before the appointment you can for instance prepare the questions you want to pose. While you are preparing, the supervisor is likely to be busy with other students or have other urgent matters (lectures, seminars, administration or writing) scheduled as well. Therefore the responsibility of keeping deadlines is harder on your part of the agreement.

- ❑ Report back to your supervisor.
- ❑ Make appointments.
- ❑ Deliver texts well in advance if you want the supervisor to comment upon them and help you further.

In supervisory meetings the duration of the meeting should be decided upon in advance. This calls for a certain discipline during the meeting. Don't waste time on defending yourself, but listen instead to useful critiques. It is also good to make the distinction between a supervisory meeting and a friends' meeting to chat. Remember that your supervisor is there to help you. Your success is also theirs.

Time management

When starting with the program, the thesis might seem eons away. In fact time is scarce and needs to be distributed carefully. So make sure to keep appointments and do as you and your supervisor had agreed upon doing. There is nothing wrong with revising a time plan, but do it as soon as there seem to be problems on the horizon – and make sure to immediately inform your supervisor. Try to solve the problems yourself, but *don't ever hesitate to contact your supervisor* about them. A lot of problems are actually very common and can be solved, such as having too many activities, writer's block, personal problems, or a fear of writing related to a feeling of not having read enough. *Whatever happens, don't panic.* Take it easy and keep in mind that for every problem there are

several solutions. Supervisors have good experience with engineering solutions to seemingly overwhelming problems.

- ❑ Organize your working time.
- ❑ Keep in touch with your supervisor.
- ❑ For every problem there are several solutions.

Make a daily schedule and stick to it. Writing can be lonely and no one will force you to keep your plans. You have to do it yourself. It is also important to make room in your daily schedule for relaxation and other physical activities. It is also a good tip to announce yourself unavailable at times for coffee breaks and spontaneous visits. Some people prefer to read all their e-mail in the morning, but it might also be eating away on some of your best, most concentrated, working time. In that case, save e-mails for the end of the day. It is not a good idea to have your mailbox open all day. Do away with anything that can divert your attention from your most important daily task; working on your Master's thesis.

Tips!

It is important to sit comfortably and ergonomically correct, with both feet firmly on the ground, shoulders low and arms in a 90°angle, while writing. Remember to change position often and to take breaks to stretch your legs, back and arms. Move your shoulders and hands to get the circulation going every now and then. Mind your body and embody your mind when writing.


Health, study advice and international relations

If you encounter serious health issues or personal problems: The student advisor, Anneriek van Bommel, is specialized in issues facing students within Women's Studies. You can book a meeting with Anneriek van Bommel if you need advice on planning your studies or if you have personal difficulties or have encountered serious health problems. There is a possibility of getting a part of your fee back if you have encountered such serious problems that they have made further studies impossible. Anneriek van Bommel can help and advice you in this case.

Women's Studies at Utrecht University is a nexus for transnational feminist work and it sees a lot of international students. Marlies Bussemaker is the coordinator of international relations. She can advice you on transnational issues regarding visa, permits or fees for students from non-EU countries.

- Anneriek van Bommel: Student advisor
  Office at Kromme Nieuwegracht 29, room 0.11.
  E-mail: anneriek.vanbommel@let.uu.nl
- Marlies Bussemaker: Coordinator of International Relations
  Office at Drift 8.
  E-mail: international.office@let.uu.nl)

Reading

It is good to read. Reading is inspirational. But don't spend too much time on general reading before you start writing. Choose specific texts or passages that fit your needs. Remember that being well read and theoretically well grounded is something that evolves with the process of writing. Read what you have *to as you move along* in your writing. It is only normal, and perhaps even productive, to have *a feeling of insecurity*. If you knew everything before there wouldn't be something called studying. It is a good idea to prepare for surprises during the process of researching that neither the reading nor you could ever have foreseen. Learn to live with the uncertainties of doing research without fleeing into endless reading that you might forget before you can put it to use in the thesis. So, do not delay the process of starting to write with arguments that you need to read more. That is a common way of getting stuck. If you start out writing immediately you will not be caught in the vicious

circle of reading and forgetting the apparent relevance, hence feeling the need to read more and so on. *Combine writing and reading.*

In the end, you need of course to make sure that you have covered the necessary reading for your topic and that you are showing in depth understanding of the literature from the courses you have taken. It is also here that your supervisor will be of great assistance. She can point you to relevant literature and help you map out the theoretical landscapes ahead of you.

Tips!

If you are having trouble with assessing an article or a book you can start with first skimming it through. As you move towards the conclusions in the text, make notes in the margins (make sure it is not a library book) of supportive arguments that are used. Then put the text aside and phrase, in your own words, the main points and the conclusion. Try to understand the text before rushing into evaluations. Now it is time to check if you got it right and how the author came to such conclusions. Make notes on questions you might have, supported or unsupported premises, questionable claims and the relevance of the text for your studies; be critically affirmative of the insights you got through reading it.

Annotations: on references, sources and quotes

Feminist scholarly writing depends on quotations and references to other scholarly work. It is important to have mastered proper referencing by the time of your MA-thesis since it also has to do with a feminist politics of citation and with gaining access to scholarly field. A feminist politics of citation implies connecting with a feminist community of previous scholarly work and contribute to it by crediting were credit is due – and doing it in a *critically affirmative* manner (cf. Min-Zhan Lu 1999). Hands-on examples on how this is done is provided in the online document "How to Write an Essay", by Rosi Braidotti. In the following, however, a general introduction to ways of annotating and referring to sources are provided.

There are several accepted manners of annotating re/sources. The most important thing to remember here is to be consistent, to stick systematically to one accepted manner of providing the reader with your scholarly sources. If you are supporting your interpretation or claim with another study, make sure to give the proper reference with name of

author, year of publication and page number. You can either write it within brackets after the sentence or you can use footnotes. If you give your references within brackets, you can still use footnotes for extra comments that otherwise would disturb the line of thought you pursued in the paragraph.

Quotes, another type of usage of previous written work where you make use of the actual words of that previous author, can on the one hand be integrated within the text. The quote is then to be framed by double inverted commas – single inverted commas are (mostly) used for quotes within quotes. This goes for short quotes. On the other hand, for quotes longer than two sentences, the quote should furthermore be separated from your main text and blocked. This is a good way to make it clear that it really is a quote.

Quotations are useful since they can strengthen your argument. They can also point out what scholarly field and theoretical framework you subscribe to in your thesis. Quotes are, however, to be used with care. You should *earn every quote* you put into your text. You do this by framing the quote analytically with your own words and by making good further use of the point it provides. It is hence not only perfectly acceptable to use other people's ideas, or even their own words, as long as you make sure you document the correct sources. Actually, quoting and referencing is a major part of what feminist scholarly writing is all about, namely contributing to and affirming the (imagined) community of the field. Giving due credit to other feminist scholarly work strengthens both your and their authority.

Referencing is part of both maintaining and altering this particular space for scholarly work and debates we call either Women's/Gender or Feminist Studies. It is hence a political act within academia where feminist perspectives, however heterogeneous, seldom are in a hegemonic position. So make the best of the opportunities a Master's thesis offers and thrive as an intellectual amidst previous and ongoing scholarly work. Just make sure to document your sources properly. Otherwise it might be plagiarism.

Plagiarism is easy to detect these days, but it also has some severe consequences. It might even ruin your future career. The etymological roots of the word plagiarism come from the Latin words for abduction and stealing. To plagiarize means to abduct another author's work and present it as if it was your own. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship, it undermines the credibility of the plagiarist and detection can result in sanctions such as dismissal from the Master's

program. The gravest and most tangible consequence of plagiarism is though the repugnance of the community of scholars. It is of the greatest importance to stay clear of any unsolicited copying of texts - not least since student theses are screened electronically for variants of plagiarism. The best way of avoiding anything even resembling plagiarism is to be explicit, careful and generous in acknowledging your intellectual debts.

Your Master's thesis should include a bibliography at the end. A bibliography documents all the previous work you have consulted. The bibliography is ordered alphabetically and should only include the texts that you actually mentioned and used in your text. Sometimes literary texts are separated from scholarly texts in a bibliography, and if you use film or other visual material in your analysis it might be a good idea to list this material separately (see further "How to Write an Essay"). The bibliography should be as comprehensive as possible and the difference between books and articles should be made clear. If you use internet material, state the author of the text as usual, the web addresses (URL) and the date you last accessed this material. It might be a good idea to also keep a printed copy of the web material due to the unstable and fluid nature of such material. All in all, the bibliography is there for several reasons. Firstly, it gives your readers a chance to consult the material or scholarly works annotated. Secondly, it provides the reader with insight into your intellectual universe and your academic frames. Thirdly, the bibliography is also an important resource for your future scholarship.

Tips!

10 quick tips on writing

Below you can find ten very handy tips on how to become a good writer. At least, these (sometimes light-hearted) tips can help you to get started. You can customize these and change them to better fit your way of working with, and thinking through, writing.

❶ Write!

You do not become a good speaker through listening to a lot of speakers. Neither do you become a good writer through reading or hearing about it. You have to do it yourself and practice. It is the same with a pen or computer, as when handling other tools like a sewing machine. You have to get started. You have to write.

Start with a suggestive opening. ❷

Make an opening that allows for many threads or traces to be followed. If you have chosen a theme – make some wild associations and pen them down. Quickly write down a few key words. Move immediately to the next association and the next keyword. Don't think too long about each idea, but make room for plenty ideas to flourish. Be open-minded in the beginning. You can later be critical about what thoughts and points to select and pursue further.

Make an outline. ❸

If you are the kind of person who needs a thorough disposition then make one and stick to it. Be systematic, but don't let the disposition terrorize you. You can always edit it. Just pen/pin down the passages or key moments in the text that need to be there. Eventually, however, the text needs to be systemized. It should in the end look like the result of a very systematic and lucid disposition. It can be of some help to think in terms of headlines and subdivisions while writing. The headlines should add to the central theme of the text and help building the text around it.

Don't go to the library – just yet. ❹

Go to yourself. To what you know, have experienced or your own thoughts on, for instance, the internship. Write on the basis of your own material. Later, you should of course go to the library and the bookshelves. Later you should add the proper references and review the existing research on the topic. But don't start with books in order to avoid to be too stuck in the canon, to be sucked in and subjected to the mainstream literature on the topic. Content matters aside, it is with respect to learning the codes and manners of academic writing a good idea to learn your own style of writing by reading writers that inspire you. As a writer you can read to understand technique and style. Authors with an evocative and poetic style or a "voice" of their own, such as Audre Lorde or Donna Haraway, can also put you in an associative and creative mood. Good texts have this quality of "voice", they sound like they are written by a real human person. But bear in mind a) the limits of the genre you have to work within (the genre of MA-theses), b) your communicative ambitions and responsibility towards your presumed reader and, c) finally, that only Audre Lorde and Donna Haraway can write like Audre Lorde and Donna Haraway.

❺ Imagine your reader!
Ask yourself who you are really writing for and have in mind that your peers (class mates for instance) will need as much explanation as you once did on the subject.

❻ Yearn for writing!
Start writing when you are yearning the most for it. Catch the precious moments when you feel the urge to write, for instance after a thought provoking lecture or after an inspirational meeting with your supervisor. And start writing the things you want to write the most – go with the lust principle! It may well turn out that the passages that worry you the most will turn out to be the most exciting, or, that you will not need them at all because you have already touched enough upon them in the other parts of the text.

❼ Start with the end. Assemble the rest.
Build your text out of pieces (like a quilt or a dress) – don't "knit" it! That is, don't start from the beginning and move towards the final chapters. Focus instead on important building blocs or, let's use another metaphor, focus on all the different pieces of cloth that will form "the quilt" or "the dress" you will stitch together. You need a background, a red thread and a sketch that will instruct the readers on how your text should be fitted. It might well be that it is better to write the introduction of the paper last, when you are clear on what you have done.

❽ Make time for writing.
Don't use your writing time to sort papers or clean your desk. Use it for writing. The amount of time you need is of course conditioned by the size of the task. It is possible to work 12-14 hours per day during one week if the circumstances are allowing (or begging) for it. But that's only to be recommended for smaller tasks. If the task at hand is larger, like an MA-thesis, you need to organize your days differently. For some (like Cecilia), four hours per day of writing is enough in order to maintain full concentration and motivation. Others enjoy twelve hour sessions (like Gloria), while yet others write intensively for a couple of days in a row, and then winds down (like Iris). However, it is important to not overdo your own rhythm and to not steal energy from the following day. Leave the text in the middle of a "flow" – then you can pick it up and surf it again the next day. Force yourself to leave while it's going fine. Don't ever start with a white sheet of paper or a blank document – but pick up

where you left the “goodies” last time. Some have their best writing periods at night and some in the early morning. Make sure that you find the best writing routine for you and stick to it. And don’t expect to be able to do anything else that is demanding a lot of effort and focus above writing. Writing is work and it takes its toll.

❾

Pick up were you left off.

Don’t start with reading too carefully what you wrote last time. (This is a particularly difficult advice to follow, I know.) Just pick up where you were last time. Look ahead. Finally you need of course to read and revise your manuscript, but that is a thing for the final polishing when you have some distance to your words.

❿

Choose the right tools for the work.

This might sound banal, but it is important to have all the gadgets needed, necessary equipment and proper surroundings. Use a pen if you need to be particularly short and precise – and a speedier tool like a computer if you need to write a lot. If you are an oral kind of person – use a tape recorder to tape and transcribe your own words, or less technofixated; see to it that you have carrots or seeds to nibble on while writing. If you are a social person – take a laptop to a crowded café but make sure that you don’t engage in anything else but writing. A library can for instance be a productive and work intensive space where you can plug into the collective atmosphere of concentration and silence. Enjoy and take pride in writing as hard work.

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(write down your own best tip on writing)

Are you stuck?

It is rather common to get stuck once in a while. Perhaps you find it hard to distinguish between analytical levels, or you feel that you don't really grasp an important concept or how to apply it to your study. Here is another, hopefully useful tip: try to explain to a friend what it is you want to say. S/he should be allowed to ask questions and you should keep explaining until s/he gets it. Sometimes things can come out of your mouth that are much clearer than what you had thought while writing. You can also try to talk out loud to yourself. It might create some worries over your sanity if there are people around, so make sure then to be alone if you opt for that one. But you might also get some real good answers by asking yourself things out loud. For this you might, as above mentioned, even use a tape recorder and then transcribe your own spoken words into comprehensive text.

Whatever the reason or reasons for getting stuck – it is pretty common and it can be solved. Talk to your supervisor and she will probably be able to point you in some workable direction. Remember the following strategies:

- ❑ Explain your research to a close friend with no previous knowledge in your topic. Let her/him ask you questions *until s/he gets it*.
- ❑ Say it or read it out loud to yourself (or record it and transcribe it).
- ❑ Talk to your supervisor.

Remember, getting stuck could also be a way of getting deeper into your work. Just make sure to ask for assistance when finally you want out of it or need help to get distance and a fresh perspective. Don't be afraid to get down and get messy with the subject matter. Later, you clean up your analysis for the audience of readers and they will marvel over the three-dimensional landscape of text you have created. If you are experiencing persistent problems; it is a good idea to take a writing course.

Part III. Writing and thinking

Advancing your work

The following third part of this manual, will deal with the important issue of setting up and structuring a thesis. It will also entail some hints on how to do analysis, like close readings, and how to pick a fruitful research question. Further, the important issues regarding scholarly writing will be dealt with together with the joys and challenges of doing interdisciplinary research. Moreover, this third and final section of the manual, points to the intertwined relation between form and content in relation to style, argumentation and the politics of feminist scholarly writing.

Writing and *rewriting* – that's what we do!

Perhaps you had to rewrite something during one of your courses? Did you feel ashamed and sat cringing when the teacher asked you to revise your written work? That is perhaps because in school we are taught that the final product is that what-you-merely-sit-down-and-write-and-then-simply-hand-in. If it's good enough you get away with it and can spend your time on other things. It is also perhaps due to the myth of the solitary humanist thinker, sitting in his (sic!) chamber and producing one brilliant piece after another without ever changing anything. However, in practice all texts that surround us as adults today in contemporary society, whether newspaper articles, advertisements or reports within organizations – and especially scholarly work within academia – are revised and reworked texts.

Writing in a scholarly way means revising and rewriting after getting helpful comments or new perspectives from supervisors or peers at seminars. Depending on the atmosphere created collectively in the seminar room, sharing one's writing can be a very pleasurable experience. Thinking together can be demanding but also exhilarating.

In Women's Studies theoretical reflexivity and detailed analysis is required which means that the process of writing is part and parcel of the study (cf. Buikema & Smelik 1993; Griffin & Braidotti 2002). Your critical thinking is done by writing, so is your self-reflexivity. It is important within feminist work to be aware of one's position along significant and intersecting axes such as race, gender, class and sexual orientation (cf. Wekker 2004). As touched upon earlier in this manual, feminist scholarly writing is a collective act of thinking together with previous researchers and their work (on power, social positions of privilege and cultural resistance). It is all about revising after getting comments and rethinking through rewriting. So, thinking and writing are intimately connected and that means, as mentioned, a lot of rethinking and rewriting. It is in the instances of writing and rewriting that thoughts and analysis are produced. So, contrary to popular belief writing does not take place *after* you have structured your thoughts around a topic. Thinking and writing are interlinked and simultaneous, it is individual yet collective

How to set up a thesis

It is likely that you will be achieving more and more as time goes on, and as you learn more from books and courses, that is, you will be a

more productive writer as you follow the Master's program. That is also part and parcel of why it is very important that you immediately start out by writing small pieces of text, and, by drafting a preliminary *outline* of your thesis. So, an outline of your work is essential. Spend time now and then reading and re-reading the texts, interview transcripts or material that are to be analyzed. Take notes of all your ideas and try to order them logically.

- ❑ Draft and maintain an outline!

It is a good idea to start out with a one line sentence that is the boiled down version of what each section or paragraph should be about. These one-liners are very helpful in your outline. They will help you flesh out each section accordingly. Of course you will have to revise your outline constantly, but it might be a good idea to save the first and following outlines to keep track of your developing thoughts and the red thread of the thesis. In line with this advice, it might also be a good idea to *keep a research diary* with you during your internship and during the stages of writing the thesis. In this research diary you can pen down small comments, toy with ideas and possible outcomes of your research outline.

- ❑ Keep a *research diary* with old revised outlines, notes from the internship and ideas for the analysis.

As you are setting up your *research question*, try to move through the topic you feel like writing about and write on it in an as specific as possible manner. This will help you to narrow down the research topic to a manageable topic or research question for a Master's thesis. When you are choosing your research question, remember to relate it to the research component of your internship.

A Master's thesis needs a central problem or *research question*. What ever made you turn your initial idea into a Master thesis project can be regarded as your central problem or research question. Your motivation and task is to find answers or more elaborated questions to this initial research problem. Of course the process of writing is never straightforward, so you will probably rewrite your initial research question or thesis statement while working on it. You are very likely to discover that your initial research question was too broad and that, during the working process, you need to specify it.

- ❑ Specify your central research question, the overarching issue you want to investigate.

The thesis must have such an overarching problem – a red thread that can be followed throughout the chapters, but each chapter should also have its own central problem that relates to the overarching problem. If you start out with a draft of the central issue of the thesis and then the related subset of chapters dealing with one aspect of the major theme, you will be able to follow your red thread and make some well considered adjustments as the project takes you places. If you consider writing and researching a linear process, you might find the fact that the initially needed central question only will become clear at the near finish of the project a paradox. The best way of dealing with this problem is to keep and maintain an outline, or even a diary, of the thesis and its chapters throughout the working process. An outline used in a reflexive and creative way can help you steer clear of the Scylla of messiness and the Charybdis of rigidity. Remember that the thesis consists of a beginning with questions, the steps taken for answering them and some anticipated answers. Then there is a middle where you develop the announced steps and questions and finally, there is the end with a systematic referral or retelling of what you have done in the beginning and the middle. Have in mind that you might just as well end up, not with simple answers, but with more questions. These might in the final chapter be suggestions for further research based on your small and limited study. It is not merely good to show *the limits of the study*, it is intrinsic to doing accountable scholarly work. In the end of the thesis, you can point to the aspects that you could not look into and suggest further or point to existing research also into these areas.

Once you have stated a preliminary central research problem you should immediately consider your methodology; your ways of applying analytical concepts (or thinking tools) and your way of structuring your investigation. Research method and research problem must be connected. If they don't link up with each other the work either becomes dominated by methodology, putting the central problem in the shadow and appearing rigid and pointless, or, a messy or even irrational path to the central issue and hence hiding or forgetting important steps of thought needed for the reader. So don't fixate on either methods or central problem – make them work together. Be prepared to adjust *both* central problem and analytical approaches used during the process of writing.

Bear in mind that the analytical concepts you use (as "thinking tools") or the questions you ask in the analysis will inadvertently guide what answers you receive in the end. On the one hand, the thinking tools you use will forge your analytical results. Choose them carefully. However, there are always more things going on in the interface between you-the-writer, the text and the material. So, on the other hand, don't let method terrorize you – be open and accountable for the unexpected, for the surprises you might encounter. Aim at being transparent and accountable about your approaches and claims (Haraway 1991; Hill Collins 1990; Wekker 2004).

- ❑ Choose analytical concepts carefully and use them as "thinking tools" to navigate your area of research and to approach your material.
- ❑ Be open for surprises!

In sum, start figuring out your topic and pin down the central issue of the thesis by writing drafts. Remember to outline the chapters and carefully connect methodology to the central issue of the thesis. Be specific about the limits of your study in order to deepen and anchor a) your focus during work and b) your accountability as scholarly writer (cf.Haraway 1991). Choose your theoretical approaches carefully, but be ready for analytical surprises during the process of writing.

Research questions: bad examples and better ones...

As you know by now, your research question should be linked to the research component of your internship. There are several ways of creating an overarching research question depending on what material you are considering. Let us first start with a few research approaches that probably will *not* yield very interesting results.

It will probably prove unsuccessful, for instance, to start out with a focus on the mere task of collecting data. A research question like, how many scientific articles in chemistry were published by black women during a certain period? is likely to produce a dull answer. It might very well provide useful side information, but it will hardly work as an overarching research question in Comparative Women's Studies. Instead of putting emphasis on such a quantitative question and task, try to

examine and compare an already existing collection of texts. Make it into a *qualitative* task of comparisons. Perhaps you need rather to argue why this collection can be considered an important body of texts. Or it might prove fruitful to ask questions about the image of black women scientists or their work during the given time. Productive questions might be instead; What views of/on black women are inscribed in these documents? How do these representations of black women scientists embedded in cultural politics and normative patterns? Remember that the task of collecting data never can be the central question.

It is at all times better to be specific and detailed rather than broad and sweeping. If you are considering doing a broad historical survey on, for instance, "the development of novels dealing with female sexuality during the twentieth century" consider this: Using the above example topic as a broad research question might be a bit too wide a topic for limited MA-thesis, though, of course, historical analysis is indispensable for Women's Studies. Perhaps it is better here to narrow it down to a few, or perhaps only two, selected novels and to situate them historically, to frame them in terms of social and cultural change. Equally fundamental as historical awareness within Women's Studies is to situate and position yourself historically.

A good advice, and a writing strategy sometimes used within historical cultural studies, is to start out and later return to the present historical context and the cultural changes taking place around you. Positioning yourself in a historical context also means that you cannot consider yourself a neutral historical observer but that your selections of perspectives and material are shaped by your location in time.

You can specify your research question by focusing on issues of canon formation, or issues of inclusion and exclusion at work in how these novels previously have been treated by scholars. Reading how scholars have treated a certain body of literature, for instance novels by lesbian writers, would be to employ a *historiographical* approach. That is, a historiographical study is to investigate and analyze how others previously have written about the issue at hand. You could then for instance investigate why a specific set of novels or poems were intensively debated in a certain historical context or why they later seemed to have disappeared from the public eye or from the literary canon.

Try to avoid research questions that are impossibly ideological, like; how can we end sexism? Such research questions, however important, cannot serve the purpose of guiding an academic investigation. Try also to stay clear of negative questions, like, "What is wrong with

the Dutch democracy of today?", since this surely will lead into uncalled for (unproductive and unhelpful) "dissing" or "trashing" of the topic at hand. Do instead try to find a workable balance between criticism and constructive alternatives.

Another good tip is also to avoid essentialist questions like, what are the typical characteristics of migrant women? A question like that will hardly prove productive since it is based on a pre-given assumption – that all migrant women are basically the same. Such assumptions or taken for granted characteristics tend to generate blindness towards difference, nuances, historical context and your own presumptions. However, this should not be conflated with the actual usefulness of a degree of "strategic essentialism", as Gayatri Spivak (1993) called this sort of temporary "essentialization" of a group for the purpose of solidarity and social action. This strategy can help you look for particular texts, written by certain local groups at a specific moment in time. That is, this methodological application of strategic essentialism could entail doing a clear description of the provisional and partial selections and samples you have chosen. But, you have to make clear in your writing what you have assumed, why and how. And it is your job to persuade the presumed reader by arguing this well.

Brick by brick: structuring your thesis from start to end

One way of making the reader agree with you is embedded in the seemingly banal task of putting words together in sentences that make sense in the way you intended. For instance, mind the structuring of your text into *paragraphs*. How you order your paragraphs, introduce the topic and conclude, have bearing on the persuading qualities of your thesis. A paragraph should preferably be structured in such a way so that the top sentence lets the reader know what the paragraph will be about. Thereafter you state the major idea, the idea in the paragraph you will be discussing. You can then use three minor supports (in at least three sentences) for the major idea. This is a kind of "rule of three" which means that at least three sentences are used to explain, elaborate, to give examples or descriptions that support the major idea. The paragraph can also have a minor idea that relates to the major idea but in a different way. Use again approximately three supporting arguments that underline the minor idea and move then to the conclusion of the

paragraph or a transition to the next paragraph. The *first* and the *last* paragraph in the thesis, the beginning and the end, should however have a little bit of a different format.

The introduction to a thesis is usually not more than one or two paragraphs. However, these are important. Here you introduce the thesis statement (the over-arching research question) at the end of the introduction. In a manner of speaking, you can bring the reader from the world, into your specific topic with historical or social background information, to the thesis statement. Avoid, in the introduction, a) to start out with an outline; b) to announce that you do not really know very much about the topic; c) to be too general. Start out instead with something that grabs attention; make the reader curious and willing to read more. You can grab attention by either posing a question; the rest of the introduction should then provide the answer. But you can also state an interesting problem or a statistical fact, or, you can start out with a quotation, or, by defining an important word, or, by disagreeing with some kind of accepted wisdom. You can also start with a picture or a poem and introduce your research question by giving a "sample analysis" that introduces important approaches and situates you as a MA-thesis writer.

Whatever way of grabbing attention you chose, make sure that the introduction follows it up. Connect your "attention grabber" then to the main idea of your thesis by providing background information. The next step is to move on to listing the important points you are about to discuss. Line out the main points, but avoid exposing all the "goodies" in advance. There should be something "juicy" left for the reader as s/he moves along in the thesis. And again, remember to end the introduction with the thesis statement/research question.

The last paragraphs in the conclusion of your thesis work a little bit differently. They should answer the "so what-question" (cf. Braidotti 2006:9) and drive home and emphasize the points you have made earlier. You can restate those points in a brief and direct manner, preferably by putting them in different words. Don't repeat all the points one by one since the thesis already has been read. Avoid introducing new information in the conclusion, avoid also making points that have no connection with the research question or have not previously been mentioned in the thesis. The last concluding paragraph should then give a few sentences that render your results visible. It is done by either referring back to the topic sentence, the attention grabber, in the introduction or by explaining the most important aspects of your thesis. You can also tell the reader

how this relates to the world we live in, and rephrase (with new words) your thesis statement. Then there are also the paragraphs in-between the introduction and the conclusion that constitute the body of text in your thesis.

Each paragraph should start out with a justification for their being. Also, make sure that the whole works together with its parts. Each paragraph should have a beginning that invites the reader and an end that shows that you have kept the promises you gave in the beginning. Announce continuously what you are setting out to do and how you plan to do it. It is important not to be too redundant; you might then miss or skip steps in your argumentation. But try also to avoid being too wordy, and be instead precise, so as to not bore your reader. A paragraph should not be longer than one page, and they should not be constructed of too long sentences either. It is suggested to use one clear sentence for each idea. If it's not your own idea but part of previous scholarly work that you use to support your claim, it is, as you know, of the greatest importance to annotate it properly. Actually, your argumentation will be much strengthened of you support it with references to academic texts arguing in the same line.

The process of writing a thesis looks nothing like the end product. The actual process of writing, as discussed above, might just as well start with imagining and writing down the results. The introduction might also be what you write in the end. The chronology of the actual work is hence very different from what the structure of the thesis as a finished product should suggest. Your thesis, when it is finished, needs to be structured in a specific way to follow academic conventions and make it accessible to the reader. Let me now take you through some steps that should be reflected in the thesis *as a finished piece of scholarly work*.

Below you can find six suggested chronological steps that you can take through the finished thesis. Whether in a small report or a large thesis, these steps if followed in one way or another, give the text a chronological frame that makes it more persuasive. The steps introduced here can actually also be handy when doing a verbal presentation in class or when reporting back to your internship organization. These steps are to some extent summarizing of the necessary moves to make in the introducing and concluding paragraphs of your thesis discussed above. But moreover, these steps can help with all your driving arguments, and to structure them in a coherent, comprehensive and accessible manner. In any conventional scientific setting, such rhetorical strategies are used to present the authors arguments as valid, and even, as somewhat better than other scientist's arguments. These rhetorical steps are widely used and more or less consciously taught to students in academia. In feminist writing workshops, where the conventional, positivist mode of doing science is challenged and the collaborative efforts of scholarship emphasized, these steps have often been modified and altered slightly in a more post-positivist manner.[2] That is also the case here.

Step 1. Catch the audience! Start out with an interesting claim or quote that immediately will make the reader interested in what you have to say. This is the "attention grabber" (discussed above) that introduce the overarching political question of why this is important feminist research. Be unconventional and creative, that is allowed or even called for in the introductory part of the thesis. Since you have a specific audience of readers in mind, think about what could be considered a striking feature of your topic in relation to Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics.

Step 2. Establish the topic! Make a clear statement in the introduction on what the thesis is about, or what the field of interest is. You should here indicate that you are about to make an important contribution to research. There are two conventional ways of establishing that you are writing about something important. It can be done by a) asserting significance; that is, present arguments why this is significant research – and/ or – by b) stating current knowledge; that is, presenting what scholarly knowledge there is about the subject.

Step 3. Summarize previous research! Every thesis needs to present the current state of knowledge regarding the topic at hand. You can summarize previous research (or the arguments at hand in the literature) in at least two ways, by a) using strong or weak author orientation or b) by using a subject orientation. The first (a) suggested

[2] In the following I am highly indebted to the writing seminars and hands-on advice given by Professor Nina Lykke at Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University.

way of writing about previous research is two-fold; either you use a strong author orientation *or* a weak author orientation. The three examples below can illustrate the difference between author orientations, or subject orientation, when summarising previous research:

The case of *strong author orientation* puts emphasis on a specific author's and her or his utterances: "Importantly, John Berger (1972:47), in one of the first post-modern texts considered accessible and yet still of high relevance, demonstrated how practices of looking, within art as well as popular culture, are highly gendered where men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at." In this case the name of the author and what the author has done is of importance. This way of referring to previous researchers is often done in the past tense.

The case of *weak author orientation* puts emphasis on a specific issue dealt with by scholars: "Previous research has suggested how analytical approaches, like intersectionality, developed within a black feminist theoretical framework can highlight the co-constitutive dimensions of ethnicity, nationality and gender … (Hill Collins 1990; Wekker 2004)". In the case of weak author orientation, it is the issue - here intersectionality - that is of importance but the author names within the brackets are the ones referred to as the significant group of previous researchers. The name of the authors are also there in the end (within brackets) to form examples of and strengthen the claim made about previous research. It is often written in the tense of present perfect. But previous research can also be written about in a manner that emphases the subject matter over the authors of previous scholarship.

That is the case with *subject orientation*: "Socialist feminism developed in tandem with radical feminist practice (Hennessy 2003:58)." The sentence does not as such refer to scholars or previous work. It is clear from this example that the topic is the important part here, and that the references between the brackets are there solely to support the claim made on the subject matter. This is the subject oriented way of presenting previous research. By now, you are sure to remember to use quotes in all these cases with a lot of care and respect, and to always, give the correct source when referencing.

Step 4. Prepare for present research! The fourth step to take chronologically is to prepare for present (your) research, or the arguments you want to make – and this is done either by a) indicating a gap in previous research or by b) raising questions about previous research and hence, indirectly, pointing towards some problem there that you are to work on in your thesis. From a feminist point of view, this practice of

pointing towards holes or problems in the work of others raises some ethical considerations. Research is painstaking work, whether feminist or not, and should be treated with the respect it deserves. Hence, my advice is that if you are about to build your own research on a critique of how previous research has handled the topic - make sure to treat the previous arguments with fairness. Treat previous research generously; give it a benefit of the doubt. Contrary to your intention, an un-nuanced and unfair critique can lead the reader to think less of *your* work, since perhaps your judgement was based on the wrong premises or, simply, too little knowledge about the critiqued matter.

Step 5. Introduce the present research! The fifth step is to introduce what you are about to do. This can be done by simply, stating the purpose, research question or aim of your thesis, or by an outline of what you intend to show in the thesis.

Step 6. Situate your knowledge! This step doesn't necessarily have to be separated from the previous steps, but it is an important part of Women's Studies (cf. Lykke 2002; Wekker 2004: 496). By situating from what perspectives you are about to view the topic, by declaring your affiliations and *the limits of your own point of view* or position, you are openly declaring your sincere intentions and positioning yourself along sites of social privilege that inform the production of knowledge (cf. Haraway 1991).

Last but not least, in the structuring of a thesis, it is as already emphasised also of the greatest importance to end with a conclusion of what you have accomplished in your text. There is also room in the final paragraphs for some more generalized statements about the grander implications of your study. Put energy in the "grande finale" of your thesis. End with an evocative yet concluding statement that makes your text memorable.

Arguing well: on writing styles

All writing is about communicating one's idea and there are both indirect and more direct ways of doing just that. The use of great words, descriptions, explanations, opinions backed up with references, poems and illustrations is important to interesting and engaging writing. The trick is to structure your text in a manner best suited for reaching the presumed reader and getting your message across. You are writing for someone, think of that someone and try to be nice to her or him. Take

the presumed reader, so to speak, by the hand and lead her/him carefully through the text and work at hand. The way you address the reader and argue your case is here of the greatest importance.

Mind carefully how you address the reader. Don't use an all inclusive (or royal) "we" in the text if it doesn't refer to an already described group including yourself. And, this might come as a surprise; don't be afraid to once in a while make claims with the use of an "I" in the text referring to the author of the MA-thesis (you!). An otherwise passive voice might sound scientific, but also boring – and, yes, impersonal – as if your experiences or approaches were neutral, general and not at all mediated through your specific dealings with them. There are also certain phrases that are best left alone. For instance, phrases such as "obviously", "of course" and "naturally" are actually not persuading at all. Such phrases might even sound intimidating; they might put your reader off and provoke the reader to resist your argument instead of following your line of thought. It is also good to try to avoid so called rhetorical questions, at least the more bombastic kind of rhetorical questions, since they have a manipulative feeling to them and might provoke the same antagonistic reader's reaction as the over-confident phrases above.

It is basically better to try to say what you want to say in an as clear and direct a manner as possible. Try also to say them in the right order and present them in a strong enough way to hold for objections. You can, while writing, position yourself in the role of the presumed reader and in that way assume and imagine the readers' reactions, or rather, go into a more open kind of dialogue with the presumed reader. If the point you want to make is indeed a contested one, provide the reader with the arguments that previously have been presented *against* your point – and go through them step by step and argue how your point still is sustainable in spite of that criticism. Be open (transparent) and fair (accountable). If you are trying out an argument, make sure your reader is clear on your tentative approach. The same goes for trying out poetry or more artistic, or otherwise evocative, means of expression: make sure you actually help the reader to understand. Explain everything carefully and provide all necessary information needed for the interpretation you want to pursue.

As mentioned, the main claim of your thesis is of course the most important one. This claim will need more argumentative work and it will also need to be maintained throughout the whole thesis. Put some extra effort also on other claims that are hard to grasp, for instance theoretical ideas or interpretations that were less obvious for you when

your first encountered them and hence also less easy to accept for your presumed reader.

Writing in a straightforward and direct manner is often stressed in guidelines and books on academic writing. That is because indirect formulations or the use of a passive voice of the writer, vague statements or double negatives have a tendency to cloud rather than clarify arguments. Moreover, being clear and comprehensible is not the same as being simplistic. There is more to stringency (keeping a read thread) and to accessibility than meets the eye. Actually, writing in a very clear manner is a very powerful tool of persuading the reader. A concise and clear style of writing is in that sense a double-edged sword; it might risk confirming a normative construction of the real. Moreover, put to use it often also acquires the highest authority. This brings us to the politics of language and the different ways of doing feminist scholarly. Different approaches are needed for different situations; your style of writing depends on what it is that you want to achieve.

It is always a good idea to work hard on getting the reader to understand, to follow your line of thought, since that is the main goal of your writing. However, you can achieve new understanding whether you use scholarly prose or occasionally give a new dimension to your claim with the help of a piece of poetry, a film still or another kind of image. Such images, quotes or pieces of poetry, might also help your argumentation to become more persuasive, and yet, make your text open and accessible for the reader's own thoughts and associations. Part of the politics and poetics of some feminist scholarly work (often post-structuralist in orientation) is namely to *get the reader to engage with the text*, to get her/his thoughts going and not to close the text down by grand claims of "telling it like it is".

Within some feminist poststructuralist work, this engaging and association-rich way of reading is achieved by writing in a more poetic manner where several layers of meaning are allowed to flourish and work together in the text (cf. Haraway 1989). Quotes and citations are mixed and different discourses are collided as a way to situate research as a performance in itself, a construction and a staging of problems that always are situated, shaped by assumed positions and perspectives. This approach allows for unexpected constellations and comparisons (cf. Braidotti 1991). It seeks to find links and associations for the reader where they previously did not seem to exist. It is a way of bringing out the messiness of reality. This is not a very linear approach to analysis or argumentation, but rather a way of untwining possible meanings and

links to a complex cultural phenomenon (cf. Braidotti 1994; Haraway 1997; Lather 2000). If your aim is to show the complexity of the material and topic you are working on, this is a difficult but rewarding way of writing. If you, however, aim at making one important and direct intervention, get one piece of message out loud and clear and bring out a disturbing regularity, pattern or norm you came across, this writing style might be much too fussy and indirect. Then again, there is always the distinct possibility of combining the creative and the critical, of trying to bring out both mess and consistent patterns simultaneously.

Start with a detail... on doing a "close reading"

The more aggravated, general and perhaps theoretically abstract kind of piece by piece interpretation you do is called analysis. Analysis is really the investigation of the parts or components of a whole and their relations in making up the whole. There is nothing wrong with being analytical through descriptions, since descriptions are filtered through your theoretical assumptions. Descriptions are not mimetic representations of reality, they are your interpretations. Careful and selective descriptions of your material is also necessary for the reader in order to understand why you are making the points you are in the analysis.

An inspiring way of getting started is actually to start with a detailed analysis of a small piece of text, a newspaper article, part of an interview or an image. Frame it with some general research questions and let the result of the close analysis determine and inspire a more detailed research question. In that way bold and creative close analysis can inspire your general theoretical problems and help you to get rid of pre-given assumptions. This research process could be described as a continuous traffic between detailed close analysis and the overarching research question. Perhaps it is worth while to expand here a bit on what a close analysis, or *close reading*, can entail.

A close reading is a method of detailed analysis of a specific image or text. It is like looking into a magnifying glass – only that the glass is prismatic and diffracts the light and that which is seen in many ways depending on the person seeing, the way she is handling the magnifying glass and the type of magnifying glass used. A close reading is usually done like this: The researcher observes and comments on facts and details in the text or the image at hand, or discusses the

whole of the singular text or image. (Note here that a "text" could be transcribed interviews, a newspaper article or your internship field notes on how people interact in the organization.) Striking features, rhetorical tactics, structural elements or patterns in the text are described and retold for the reader. The things to look for might, moreover, be styles, figures of speech, settings and historical context, narrative devices, social circumstances – not the correctness of representation nor its fidelity to some great original (cf. Said 1978:21). The question of *how,* rather than the question of *what*, is of the greatest importance.

It is the retelling of the close reading that produces a new representation of the analyzed object, framed in a new way so as to highlight for instance the cultural conventions or transgressions of gender and ethnicity. Close readings are a kind of interpretative reasoning drawn out of the studied object and communicated to the reader. The studied object, among scholars of feminist literary or cultural criticism widely referred to as a "text", can actually be likened to *a ball of yearn.*[3] Threads are untwined and held up to the reader. Threads followed in the close reading are also very likely to take the researcher outside the specific text, then becoming part of a *contextual* analysis, an analysis of the frames that made this particular text or image possible in time and space.

[3] This metaphor was illustrated by Donna Haraway (1987) in a pedagogical video, "Donna Haraway Reads National Geographic on Primates" (Paper Tiger TV) were she, while describing her analytical approach, untwined strings from a ball of yarn.



Making a difference: feminist scholarly writing is politics by scientific means

While setting up your thesis, keep in mind the relationship between detailed analysis and the overarching research question; the point you want to drive home. Combining theoretical questions and situated perspectives with detailed analysis in an *accountable and limited study* will allow your reader to keep the main idea in mind at all times. Detailed analysis or close readings will help you to remain specific and avoid vagueness and the overarching question and theoretical perspectives will help your analysis to gain momentum and avoid sounding flat or merely descriptive. By being present as a real person in the text, as a scholarly writer positioned along axes of signification such as gender and ethnicity, class and sexual orientation, you assume responsibility of the interests and perspectives presented. You do also indicate how knowledge is something produced in the intersection of material and text, writer and reader. This is crucial within Women's Studies as a kind of *cultural intervention*.

Bruno Latour (1988:229) claimed famously that "science is politics by other means". By insisting on the inseparability of science and society, he did not aim to reduce all science to politics. Instead the social dimensions of scientific practices, in the laboratory or behind the computer, were emphasized and made into an object of critical study. Scientific endeavour was framed as social; a relation between human and non-human actors. As such it was anything but neutral.

Scholarship is also politics by other means; it is also about relations, the inscribing of meaning through difference and processes of signification (cf. Haraway 1989:325). Politics implies collectives; it is about a "we", as Donna Haraway put it in an early essay on the politics of primatology. It can only exist where there is more than one voice, more than one reality (Haraway 1984:492). The recognition, negotiation, suppression, construction and legitimacy of *difference* are what politics is about (cf. Braidotti 1994; Griffin & Braidotti 2002).

Feminist scholarship is taking active part and has special interests in such politics of difference. This since gender and ethnicity also are about difference. Feminist scholarship is in many ways about making a difference, about social change. Guided by the urgent question, "How do we do the most good… speaking from this location (of the academy)?" (Jane Gallop 1991:5 quoted in Lather 1994:183), I would want to claim that *feminist scholarly writing is politics by scientific means*.

We can use scientific means and develop interpretative tools in order pursue a feminist politics through our scholarly practices of writing. However, this does not mean that feminist scholarly writing can or should be reduced to mere politics. It is also about the production of knowledge. Moreover, it is about the co-constituted character of politics and knowledge in the recognition, creation, negotiation, suppression and legitimacy of difference.

In the concrete practice of writing an MA-thesis this means you should try to keep an open mind, prepare for surprises and allow for the material to 'talk back', that is, avoid projecting what you already knew or took for granted onto the material. It means being situated and accountable towards the feminist community of scholars and beyond. Importantly, it means having a special sensitivity towards differences and power differentials along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation (cf. Lykke 2002).

So, difference, knowledge, power and resistance are at the heart of feminist scholarly work. It is about changing the shape of the thinkable. Furthermore, this is done collectively, yet individually. Feminist scholarship means learning and unlearning one's privileges and, while within rigid settings, it entails a constant openness to change. This means that feminist scholarly writing is both difficult and fun; perhaps it is fun because it is challenging. It entails a set of academic constraints that you need to adhere to. Struggling with these constraints in a creative manner is what makes your work lively and dynamic. That is part and parcel of engaging with feminist scholarly writing by scientific means. And those means are most often *interdisciplinary* in character.

Interdisciplinarity

From the get go, feminist research has been interdisciplinary (Pryse 2000). This means on the one hand that much Women's (or Gender) Studies draw upon theories, approaches and methodologies from several disciplines (like History, Anthropology or Philosophy). On the other hand, it also means that a hybrid field of thinking also has been developed on its own premises. There is also the impact of concepts, theories and approaches that have crossed the borders of several disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, such as for instance post colonial theories, deconstruction or "cyborg studies", to take into account (cf. Buikema &

Smelik 1993; Lykke 2002; Ponzanesi 2002). Such work is often labelled "traveling theory" (Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz 2000: 136) and it has impacted traditional disciplines as well as interdisciplinary and interpretative studies such as Women's Studies.

The commitment to inter- and transdisciplinarity of Women's Studies has produced a theoretical, methodological and analytical heterogeneity. The interdisciplinary character of *your thesis* is depending on the research question posed, the methods used and the overarching theoretical work you use in relation to the object of study. You can explore intersections of disciplinary work together with inter- or transdisciplinary theoretical approaches. It is, however, important to navigate such intersections with the help of feminist theory.

- ❑ Use feminist theory in order to navigate within your material.

Feminist theory could here, rather than being understood as a fixed position, be thought of as a set of interpretative techniques, approaches or analytical tools (Franklin, Lury & Stacey 2000). The founding assumption behind this approach to feminist theory is that there are hardly any topics or phenomena to which feminist approaches or analytical tools are not relevant (Ibid.). The intertwined, or disconnected, issues of race/ethnicity/nationality, sexuality and gender at individual, societal and cultural-symbolic level are here also considered intrinsic to feminist theory (cf. Wekker 2004).

- ❑ Think through intersections of gender and ethnicity.

Relevant and fruitful ways of approaching your topic, whether you are dealing with texts, imagery, organizations, subjectivity, meaning and materiality, are likely to be found within the border zone of feminist theory and the loosely defined, overlapping and heterogeneous fields of Cultural Studies and Post Colonial Studies.

As a student within a field at the crossroads of so many influences and more or less disciplinary approaches, you might feel the need to learn the theories of many different traditions. But the limits of time are an important factor here. It is important to not be too superficial and pick concepts from everywhere and nowhere. That is not what interdisciplinarity is about. You do not have to collect a complete set of methodological skills from several fields in order to write your thesis within CWSCP. The advice here is rather to borrow a basic question or a topic, a perspective or a theoretical approach, from another field and then remould it to your purposes for, and integrate it carefully in, the study. Actually, it is not very likely that your work will be too wide or superficial due to interdisciplinarity. More often interdisciplinary work turns out to be very deep and specialized. The degree of interdisciplinarity of your work will be a function of your background, the material and the overarching aim of your research. Your approach should be to treat your object of study as a complex phenomenon in relation to the problematics around gender and ethnicity as these are outlined within the program of study.

The interdisciplinary ambition of Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics aims at producing *intellectual flexibility*. Reading, learning and writing across many critical intersections, disciplinary and cultural borders means to practice intellectual border-crossing without loosing touch with embodiment or local positioning. Such interdisciplinary manoeuvres promote dialogue, translation and resistance within hegemonic situations. And you might agree these are qualities of contemporary use, not only in your thesis, but also in further academic studies or in other kinds of working life outside the university context. That is yet another reason why writing a Master's thesis within Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics is an excellent idea, a stimulating practice and an accountable response to our complex times.

Your reactions to this manual

...and ideas or tips on writing a Master's thesis within Comparative Women's Studies in Culture & Politics

Please, join this collective D.I.Y.-manual and send your comments and ideas to Cecilia Åsberg, Department of Women's Studies at Utrecht University via e-mail: cecilia.asberg@let.uu.nl

Appendix: Internship manual

Student Manual

In this manual for students, you will read about the procedure and requirements for your internship. You will gain information about the requirements to which your supervisors are held. Next to this official side, we have put in some information of a more practical nature. Every internship is different and a new experience, but we tried to consider some of the practicalities that you might come across and wonder about. Use it to your own advantage!

Internship-procedure

Each MA student will follow a compulsory internship in the second half of the master program Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics (CWSCP), preferably in block 3. The internship has to take place after the student has completed 4 MA-1 courses. A standard internship takes 420 hours. The internship will consist of 10,5 full weeks (52 working days). At the end of this period the student will devote time to work on her final internship report. The student will receive 15 ECTS after completion. Internships less then 15 ECTS are possible, yet only when approved by the internship supervisor and the MA-internship committee.

Aim of the internship:

a) Orientation on and preparation for possible participation in the labour process.
b) Possibility to bring theoretical knowledge acquired within the CWSCP program into practice.
c) Possibility to start forming a professional identity.

General description of the internship

The student herself is responsible for finding a proper internship. She can contact a company or organization of choice and try to arrange for an internship or use the internship database for existing internships; the Internet or other media can also be used in search of an internship. When the student has found an appropriate internship, she is required to visit the desk of the Studiepunt (Drift 8). There she will find the appropriate administrative forms and internship manuals for the internship institute. When the student has formulated an internship-work-plan, she

has to contact her university internship supervisor. When the work-plan is approved, the internship contracts can be signed. In this contract, the basic financial and legal issues are arranged. Most internships are non-paid; the experience of the internship is the "payment". Sometimes the student will receive some kind of compensation, this does not mean you earn a salary, which means you are also not covered by social security. The university covers this insurance through the internship-contract. When problems occur, the student can contact Floris Tijl, the student internship-coordinator (stage@let.uu.nl).

The internship requirements:

a) The internship has to be completed on MA level. This means that the student is not allowed to do a 'look-around'-internship and has to be regarded as a junior co-worker, fully taking part in the working process within the internship-providing institute. (For more information for the student, see the Student Manual, www.let.uu.nl stage).

b) The internship has to include a well-described assignment, including a research-component. The nature of the assignment can be very diverse. A student can for example do a research-internship, write a policy-paper or organise a congress. The assignment has to result in a well-defined internship 'product' (of academic level), which is the result of the work the student has been doing during his or her internship. This 'product' is not bound to any specific format (written, audio-visual, digital, etc.).

c) The internship has to provide the possibility for students to bring their acquired CWSCP-knowledge and skills into practice.

d) Preferably the internship-providing institute has an eye for *Women's Studies* related issues or perspectives. When this is not the case, the student has to make clear in the internship-assignment how the internship is related to the CWSCP program, while it has to have certain relevance in regard to *Women's Studies*.)

e) The internship-providing institute has to offer supervision from within the company.

f) During the internship the student is required to reflect on gender and ethnicity, inclusion and exclusion, using an intersectional perspective.

g) The student has to write an internship report according to the general format.

Internship Supervisor

a) During the internship the student-trainee will be guided by two supervisors: one from within the internship-providing institute and by a teacher from Utrecht University, *Women's Studies* department.

b) Before commencing an internship, clear written agreements have to be made with both supervisors on the form and frequency of supervision.

c) The agreements have to be inserted in the 'internship work-plan'.

d) The internship-assignment should be well-discussed by the student and both supervisors, in order to level expectations and prevent unnecessary miscommunications.

e) The main part of the supervision will be coming from the internship -providing institute, while the student works there on a daily basis.

f) The supervisor within the institute will be the first person for students to address during their internship.

g) Contact with the university-supervisor can take different forms, ranging from written reports, e-mail contact or 'comeback' meetings. Another option is that the student is left to decide when to get into contact with the university supervisor. The student is allowed maximum 1 day off from the internship to have a meeting with the university internship supervisor.

h) It is expected that the university supervisor visits the internship providing institute at least once, at the beginning of the internship.

Expectations of the university internship supervisor

a) The university internship supervisor will read the internship-work plan and discuss this with the student. The supervisor needs to approve the internship-work-plan before the internship begins.

b) The supervisor will contact the internship-providing supervisor by email, through which the supervisor introduces herself as university supervisor and will explain her position in the internship.

c) The supervisor will be the one to address with questions from the internship-providing supervisor.

d) The supervisor will judge the internship on the basis of the comments of the internship-providing supervisor and the internshipassignment. The end-mark has to be motivated to the student.

Expectations of the internship-providing supervisor

a) The internship supervisor of the internship-providing institute will be a person who has direct contact with the student in the daily work-routine.
b) The supervisor reads the internship-work-plan and discusses with the student how the aims of the internship can be reached.
c) The supervisor will facilitate office space and facilities, and explain the responsibilities that the student has.
d) The supervisor will give feedback to the student and the university internship supervisor at least once a month.
e) The supervisor will read the internship assignment and comments on the internship period.

Grading

An important part of the grading is based upon the final, reflective internship report and its approval by both supervisors. There will be a distinction made between the students who write a report (max. 8000 words) and students who also worked on a special project, like a performance or an article. These students will have to write a report of approximately 4000-6000 words. Data like questionnaires or a list of workshops you have followed can be added to the report as addendum. A Master student is expected to show a great deal of reflection on the internship, the institute and the CWSCP-program in this context, by taking on a meta-perspective. The format is given in the general internship leaflet of the faculty of Arts. It should at least content the following elements:

a) A clear description of the internship assignment and the progress of the internship.
b) A thorough reflection in which gender, ethnicity, in- and exclusion are taken into account.
c) The final internship-product (or a description of it).
d) Reflection on learning goals and how they were achieved.
e) The report has to show that the student can place the institute within a social context.
f) The report must show that the student has developed insights in the dynamics of the institute.

g) A reflection on the CWSCP-program in regard to the internship (-providing institute).

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Should the internship providing institute give me a financial compensation?

A: No, this is not compulsory. The institute should provide you with a working-environment where you can do your research and gain work-experience.

Q: I am always the one copying or making coffee. What can I do about this?

A: In so far as copying and making coffee is part of the daily routine of your work position, you can just go with the working routine. But, the institute should not forget you are working on your own assignments. Use the internship as a working experience!

Q: Does the internship providing institute cover my insurance?

A: No, you are not on the salary list and therefore not insured by the institute.

Appendix: How to Write an Essay[4]

Rosi Braidotti

Guidelines

The following guidelines will help you structure your essay into a clear argument.

- State what your paper is going to explore. What is your paper about? Why do you have an interest in this subject? Some reasons can be directly related to the themes of the course, or it can simply be related to your more general interests, nonetheless state explicitly what these interests are. Use the "Guidelines for the analysis of a theoretical arguments" (see this as a separate memo) as your point of reference.

- Make sure that you address directly and explicitly the aims of the course for which you write the paper. Note also that the course material and the compulsory reading set for the course are expected to make up at least 75% of the bibliographical material and the references you use in your paper.This means that no more than 25% of material you refer to is allowed to come from sources outside the course reading material.

- State clearly what the general structure of your argument is going to be. In other words, map out the journey your reader is going to have to take with you. Note that this journey is expected to be linear and understandable, so do tell us how you get from point A to point B, with the conclusion as the final destination.

- Make sure you tell us what the name of your game is : how much of this paper is analytical ? How much of it is based on textual readings ? How much does it have to do with personal experience and story-telling ? Please note that in this course we prefer the analytical and textually-based type of argument.

[4] I acknowledge my debt to Matthew Fuller in drafting these guidelines, which are adapted from the handbook of the MA courses at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam.

- Note that descriptions are useful but it would be a mistake to just repeat what you read in the compulsory texts or heard in the lectures. Too many descriptive details can be distracting from your main point. Use them to enhance not derail your argument. .

- Make your conclusion as brief and synthetic as possible. A conclusion is intended to recapitulate all of the information you have gone through in the paper. Conclusions answer, in a more general way, the ideas or questions raised in the introduction.
  At this point you should be asking yourself: Did I answer the questions I sought to explore in my introduction statement ? Was I successful in going through examples or case studies to prove my point?

- A conclusion can never introduce totally new concepts. It is meant to bring an end to your research, not open up new questions that then need to be investigated and answered as well.

Referencing

Give credit when credit is due. Never borrow thoughts, quotes, or even paraphrase without properly crediting the original source. This is done through footnotes and through a list of references at the end of your paper, which is also known as bibliography. Accurate, clear referencing offers the reader the opportunity to engage in the process of your research, and to understand how your arguments and ideas have been initiated and developed. It is also, of course, essential that you distinguish clearly between your own ideas and arguments, and those of other people.

Plagiarism

Not doing this is called plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting work done by others as your own. Plagiarism invalidates your essay and may result in further disciplinary procedure, including possible expulsion from the course. Utrecht University is extremely strict on

this issue and a special disciplinary procedure has been set up to fight against cases of plagiarism in essay writing.

Lay out for quotations

Short quotations can be written as part of the flow of the sentence, with quotation marks.

Longer quotations (three or more lines) should be separated from the main body of the text by means of indention. In this case quotation marks are not needed. For example:

"I agree with Hal Foster when he says:

> I supported a postmodernism that contested […] reactionary cultural politics and advocated artistic practices not only critical of institutional modernism but suggestive of alternative forms of new ways to practice culture and politics. And we did not lose. In a sense the worse thing happened: treated as fashion postmodernism became démodé. (Foster, 1998, p.20)

Going further from this point, I would suggest that theory, a key feature of the postmodern enterprise, became démodé only after becoming convention…"

The Harvard System of referencing

We do not have a compulsory system of referencing essays. However, we do recommend that you follow the Harvard System.

The Harvard System of referencing works within the text itself and not in footnotes or endnotes. Whenever you quote, or refer to someone's words (directly or indirectly), or use someone's argument, or refer to a source, you should use the system described below.

Whenever you quote you write the surname and the date of publication in brackets. When you quote directly, you should also add the page number:

> In studying the anatomy of brains of early man, some 19th century anthropologists came to a conclusion which one writer reminds us was 'at the time considered highly provocative but which is now obvious to every anthropologist' (Wendt, 1974, p.12).

If the name of the writer is part of the sentence itself, put the date in brackets after the name:

> Wendt (1974, p.12) reminds us that the conclusions of some 19th century anthropologists were 'at the time considered very provocative'.

The same applies when you are not quoting directly:

> Wendt (1974) reminds us that the conclusions of some 19th century anthropologists were considered very provocative when they were published.

Sometimes, you find a useful quotation from one author in a book by another. In such cases, reference like this:

> Johnson sweeps aside this argument: 'His expressed view of the world has more style in it than sense – or evidence' (quoted in Mason, 1990, p.44).

In this case, you are quoting Johnson from a book which you have not read and which you therefore cannot quote directly. So the reference is to Mason's book, which you have read.

You will sometimes need to refer to more than one book or article by the same author, each published in the same year. In this case, put a letter after the date to show which of the publications is referred to in this instance:

> Peterson (1989b, p.45) was risking the wrath of her profession by suggesting that 'there is more to be gained by restraint than by rushing headlong into open debate'.

List of references

At the end of your text, you should list all sources you have used. They are normally set out as follows:

Surname, initials of author(s) (date) Title, place and name of publisher

Book
For example the complete reference for a book will look like this:

Gilbert, S and Gubar, S (1988) No Man's Land New Haven, Yale University Press

Article
When referring to an article in a journal, you should put the title of the article in quotation marks, and the journal title should be underlined:

Rollerton, F (1989) 'Wordsworth's Secret Dreams' in Citations Vol.12, No.4 (pp.113-124)

If you are citing an article from an author from a book edited by a different author, the reference works as follows:

Silvershum, P (1978) 'Fellowship Societies' in Donaghue, P. (ed.) The Roots of Masonry Sidney, Outback Books

The list of references or bibliography should be in alphabetical order. When you refer to more than one work by the same author, these should be set out in chronological order.
When you refer to more than one work by the same author from the same year, they should be differentiated by adding 'a, b, c' to the dates: 1989a, 1989b, etc.

Bibliography

The reference list should include *only* those works you have cited in your text. There may, however, be reasons why you would with to offer a list of works which have informed your general thinking and understanding. If you want to cite works in addition to your

references, this should be done in a separate list headed 'bibliography'.

Illustrations

If you use illustrations of work by others or by yourself in your text, make sure you use accurate referencing. Referencing for illustrations will normally include (elements of) the following:

Name of the artist, title of the work, date, materials, size

For example:

Pierre Huyghe, Sleeptalking, 1998, 16mm film, 15 min.

You may add if appropriate:

Site, exhibition, collection or commissioner; place

For example:

Pierre Huyghe, Sleeptalking, 1998, 16mm film, 15 min.
Installation at
Manifesta, Luxembourg, 1999.

Fiona Banner, Le Bar du Peuple, billboard, Marseille, 1995.

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