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Overview

- What are you having trouble with?
- Getting started
- Refine your essay question and research
- Essay writing: Writing and introduction and essay structure
- Refining your argumentation via debate
- Essay writing: Conclusions, Citing & Referencing
The process of writing an essay

1. Analyse the topic
2. Brainstorm ideas
3. Research and read sources
4. Construct an outline/plan
5. Draft versions, revisiting steps 1 and 4
6. Edit and proofread before submitting
Before we start

ATS3104 - German Literature in the Age of Goethe

Before the workshop begins, how would you rate yourself across the following aspects of research and essay writing?

*Required

Finding good essay topic and formulating essay questions *

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Finding relevant journal articles with relevant keywords *

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Your assignment

Due date: Week 11

Details of task: Written essay on one of the texts discussed in class including at least 6 titles of relevant research literature

Release dates: I expect participants to come to my office hour in week 9 at the latest in order to discuss the individual essay topic.
Your assignment

Word limit: 2,500

Value: 50%

Presentation requirements: The essay is to be written in English.

Criteria for marking – in general:
- content (60%),
- use of research literature (20%),
- style (20%).
## Criteria for marking

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<th>Very High Distinction (90-99%)</th>
<th>Pass (50-59%)</th>
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<td>A finely expressed answer showing an excellent understanding of the text and the critical and interpretive issues and debates raised by the question, together with a sophisticated grasp of methodology, original, independent thinking, and rigorous argument accurately supported by evidence from the text.</td>
<td>A solid answer which shows a satisfactory grasp of the main issues, some faults in expression, minor errors and omissions of essential material.</td>
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<td>There is a broad range of original and personal insights into the work of this author.</td>
<td>Overall, the essay is focused on description with scant evidence of critical analysis or reflection. Critical sources are cited with little attempt at independent judgement.</td>
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<td>Presentation meets the highest standard (e.g. argumentative coherence, spelling, referencing, grammar).</td>
<td>Guidelines for presentation (e.g. argumentative coherence, spelling, referencing, and grammar) have been met at a basic level.</td>
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The process of writing an essay

1. Analyse the topic
Drafting your essay question

- **First**, and foremost, seek an essay topic that is interesting to you. A topic that genuinely engages your interest should be fun to read and write about, and will likely result in a better essay.

- **Second**, make sure your topic is manageable in size. Subjects such as ‘Goethe and German culture’ and ‘Goethe and his impact on his contemporaries’ are the matter of careers by professional academics. You should aim at a limited and sharply focused essay topic.

- **Third**, your essay topic should preferably be phrased in the form of a clearly defined question, rather than a statement. This minimises the tendency towards describing rather than arguing. It also allows subjective judgement by a competent specialist (=Franz-Josef).
Finding your topic

- Deutsche Literatur der Goethe-Zeit
- Erzählen gegen die Revolution
- Ästhetische Bildung
- Erzählen als Selbstzweck
- Die Nachtseite der Phantasie

→ Remember your presentations
Where to start?

To establish one of the ‘debates’ that are to be found in the writing on the topic. Finding this debate is what your research is to help with. Read the topic thinking about:

- What you do know
- What you don’t know
- What you need to know
The process of writing an essay

- Brainstorm ideas
Brainstorming

- **Bullet points and mindmaps** set out the basic details, ready to be expanded. Very good for creating: plans – organizing free writing – brainstorms. They are also useful for setting up placements for: headings – subheadings – quotes.

- **Free-writing** is where you write down everything you know on a topic. Equally it is a place to clarify your thinking or find new insight into the question. Don’t try to compose perfectly, just write everything you know, what you think about the question and see what happens. Only do it for 10-15 minutes at a time!
The process of writing an essay

3. Research and read sources
What sort of question do you want to be answering?

- Are you interested in context, art, society, culture, religion, the author?
- Do you want to do a comparison?
- Do you prefer a close reading of the text?
- Are you interested in the genre of writing?
- Or a contentious statement so that you can explore it?
- Do you like responding to a quote?

Problems:
- Is it too broad?
- Too narrow?
- Have you got sufficient case studies?
- Sufficient variety of points of view?
Your turn!
The process of writing an essay

• Construct an outline/plan
Essay question
To what extent did Goethe’s works uphold or complicate the dominant gender assumptions/hierarchies of his time?

Problems:

• Narrow according to works?
• Definitely too broad – What ‘assumptions’? – Masculinity and/or femininity? Although one cannot really exclude the other…
• Close reading? Across a number of texts?
Essay question

Revised:

Does the work of Goethe reflect a moment of ‘crisis’ in masculinity, or a more ongoing preoccupation with masculinity?
Essay structure: Introduction & Conclusion

Introduction

- The problem you are addressing (broad question or issue with some context)
- Your main contention (your answer to the problem)
- How you are going to do it (case study)

Conclusion

- Restate the problem (that you have identified in the question)
- Outline your argument in the body paragraphs
- What this argument helps you conclude (major themes and issues the unit/topic is dealing with)
How to write a good introduction

- From broad to small…
  - The problem/question and some context
  - Contention (i.e. your clear answer to the problem/question)
  - How you are going to do it (case study/studies)

and then REWRITE.
Your turn!
Essay question

Does the work of Goethe reflect a moment of ‘crisis’ in masculinity, or a more ongoing preoccupation with masculinity?
Argumentation and debate

Why?

- A debate is a the raw argument that considers all different arguments and provides evidence.
- The winner is the one you write into your essay.
- Having done a debate, you have all the material you need for a good outline.
Argumentation and debate

Instructions:

- Choose a **contention** from your group’s assessment (the more drafted it is, the easier!).

- Assign those arguing for it and those arguing against.

- Take 15 minutes to quickly give the reasons why, and what evidence. Then 10 minutes to debate it.
Contention

Essay question:

Does the work of Goethe reflect a moment of ‘crisis’ in masculinity, or a more ongoing preoccupation with masculinity?

Contention:

The notion of a ‘crisis’ in masculinity is problematic. This essay will argue that Goethe’s work reflects more ongoing and deeper uncertainties surrounding gender that were current in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.
Your turn!
The process of writing an essay

5. Draft versions, revisiting steps 1 and 4
Argumentation

**Draft 1**

**Introduction:** In his discussion of European masculinity in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries, Peter Uwe Hohendahl has suggested a ‘crisis’ in masculinity prompted by the French Revolution. What emerged, according to Hohendahl, was a ‘new man’ who was characterised by his ‘broad and well-proportioned’ nature’. Further, the new man was not ‘overly specialised nor fixated on a particular goal’, and was ‘expected to move easily in society’. Reading the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, what evidence is there for this ‘crisis’? Looking at a range of Goethe’s works, with a particular focus on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Faust: Part One*, this essay will argue that Goethe’s work does suggest a considerable preoccupation with gender relations, and in particular an anxiety about the nature of contemporary masculinity. Further, it will be argued that a reading of these works can reveal a celebration of traditional gender roles.

**Point 1:** Looking at *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, we can see a number of ways in which Goethe was concerned to emphasise the fundamental differences between men and women, based on contemporary biological conceptions of sexual difference at the time. The portrayal of the Tower Society in the novel will be presented as the clearest example of this imperative.

**Point 2:** Some of Goethe’s earlier work, not least *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), betrays a similar affirmation of the differences between men and women, but it also shows a particular anxiety about competing forms of masculinity. As Inger Sirgun Brodey has argued, Goethe wrestled with the challenge of creating a more ‘feminised’ type of masculinity, but without writing the distinction between men and women.

**Point 3:** On the one hand, *Faust* appears to idealise the feminine, and the masculine traits of Mephistopheles are cast as a problem. However, the tension between the masculine and the feminine in *Faust* itself suggests that ‘feminisation’ was the greater problem to be guarded against.

**Conclusion:** The notion of ‘crisis’ in the study of masculine identity can itself be problematised, as Michael Kimmel once argued in a landmark article. However, it cannot be denied that masculine identity is always the subject of contestation, and the domain of culture is one important site of this contest. By reading Goethe, this essay has identified the way in which literary texts reflect the gender tensions of their time. In particular, it is clear that Goethe was attuned to the reconfiguration of European masculine identity, and through character and plot tried to recast masculinity in a way that would not stray into the realm of the ‘feminine’.
Your outline

Debrief:

- What have you missed?
- Have you defined all your key terms?
- How can you go back and answer this more clearly?
Research

German Literature in the Age of Goethe

http://guides.lib.monash.edu/german-studies/Goethe
Redrafting the debate

Draft 2

Introduction: Context: Prussia’s resounding defeat at the hands of Napoleon’s forces in 1806 was certainly a military crisis, but as Peter Uwe Hohendahl notes, it also became a crisis for German masculinity. A new and more virile type of man was needed, a man who could be both a warrior and a citizen, and who would be ‘motivated to fight for his fatherland without regard for his life’ (2008, p. 187).

Problem: Historians of masculinity have noted the ways in which various cultural, political, and economic upheavals have prompted considerations of what men should be, and yet it has also been noted that masculinity – and gender more generally – is always an unstable and contested notion. In this way, it might be wondered whether German masculinity was in crisis long before Jena and Auerstedt.

Answer: Through an exploration of the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the years before and after Prussia’s defeat, with a particular focus upon Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre and Faust: Part One, this essay will show that gender relations and German masculinity was very much an ongoing cultural concern. Whether it was his celebration of ‘traditional’ gender roles or an evident anxiety about appropriate masculine conduct, the works of Goethe suggests that the ‘crisis’ in masculinity was based less upon the failures of the Prussian military and more upon deeper social and economic changes throughout Europe.

Point 1:

Contention: The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) seemed to celebrate a ‘new masculine ideal’ (Brodey, 1999), but Goethe’s novel also betrays a deep ambivalence about men’s participation in the cult of sensibility.

Evidence: Lotte, despite her obvious affection for Werther, is frequently disturbed by the violence of his emotions. ‘I implore you…be calmer. Think of the many joys your spirit, your knowledge and your gifts afford you. Be a man.’ (p. 115) Analysis: This passage suggests a conflict between two different modes of masculinity, and here Lotte is Werther’s tide of emotion threatens to upend his identity as a man. As the object of Werther’s feeling, her censure is especially telling, and it implores Werther to maintain his ‘masculine’ self-control.

Point 2:

Contention: Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795-96) is another novel that precedes the coming Prussian military disaster, but Goethe’s famous bildungsroman shows a world in which the patriarchal order is both maintained and celebrated. Evidence: Wilhelm is initiated into the all-male Society of the Tower, where the differences which would otherwise divide men from each other are overcome by male bonding. A key aspect of initiation is the confirmation by the Society – in what Becker-Cantarino has described as ‘a curious appropriation of procreative labour’ – of Wilhelm’s paternity of Felix. Analysis: With his initiation into the Society of the Tower, Wilhelm enters the patriarchal order. This rite of passage, signalled by the confirmation of his status as a father, is a meant to be a signal of his maturity and of his rightful place among the Society.

Point 3:

Contention: As Robert Tobin has argued, the ‘seesaw relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles’ in Faust reflected an ongoing concern of Goethe, which was an engagement with femininity through competing forms of masculinity.

Evidence: Tobin refers to Goethe’s use of a large number of phallic symbols to underscore the ‘masculinisation’ of Faust. But there are a number of other scenes where Faust of duly instructed in a more spirited form of masculinity. Analysis: Having invited Mephisto into his study, Faust is advised by his guest to dress in a similarly garish and sexualised manner. This is the beginning of ‘education’ into a more masculine mode of conduct, whereby Faust ultimately rejects ‘contemplation, content, fertility, and the feminine’ (Colvin, p. 163).

Conclusion: On the one hand, Goethe’s works seem to unsettle the gender identities of his time. From the emotional masculinity of Werther, to the masculinised women of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and then to the problematized masculinity of Faust, there would seem to be much evidence for a more complicated understanding of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century gender. And yet, oddly enough, Goethe’s complication is more complicated than this. His work presents a consistent and deep concern with gender identity, and particularly masculine identity, long before and after its moment of ‘crisis’ in 1806. What Goethe’s work ultimately reveals is that European masculinity was subject to attention and contestation long before Napoleon lined up against Prussian forces, and that the realm of culture – rather than a battlefield – was the site of some of the fiercest fighting.
How to write a good conclusion

- Small to broad…
  - Restate the problem you have identified in the question
  - Outline your argument in the body paragraphs
  - What this argument helps you conclude (major themes/issues of the unit or topic)
How to write a good conclusion

Learning outcomes

- Upon successful completion of this subject students should have developed an in-depth understanding of key examples of German literature in the Age of Goethe and completed detailed analyses of each of the novels in their socio-historical context. Students will be able to engage in informed discussions about the literature of the period in its context and to employ relevant theoretical concepts. They will be able to present the results of their own research in form of a class paper and a written essay.
The process of writing an essay

6. Edit and proofread before submitting
ATS3104 - German Literature in the Age of Goethe

http://guides.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing
Before we finish

ATS3104 - German Literature in the Age of Goethe

At the end of the workshop, how would you rate yourself across the following aspects of research and essay writing?

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German Studies
Library Drop-in sessions
Matheson Library T1
(ask at the Information Point if you don't know how to find the room).

*Drop by if you have any questions or issues with your assignment for German Studies. We can help with research, finding and expressing your argument, essay structure, writing introduction and conclusion, citing and referencing, and anything else in regards to your assignment - with the exception of proofreading ;)*

**Week 10** Thursday, 11 May: 2-3pm
**Week 11** Tuesday, 16 May: 12-1pm
**Week 12** Tuesday, 23 May: 12-1pm