ATS3100
German Advanced 4
Beyer & Sebald

Writing an Essay: Start to Finish

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Sir Louis Matheson Library
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Contact

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Overview

- What are you having trouble with?
- Getting started
- Refine your essay question and research
- Refining your argumentation via debate
- Introductions and conclusions
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

https://goo.gl/Xi3Zaf
Your assignment

Due date: Friday, Week 12 (20 October)

Details of task: Interpretation of set topic/text

Word limit: 1,000. The essay is to be written in English.

Value: 40% (of culture component)
Your assignment

Criteria for marking:

Essay will be assessed on coherence and sophistication of argument, style, and referencing
Criteria for marking

The goal is an HD. To achieve this, you must demonstrate:

1. Excellent understanding of the text and the critical and interpretive issues and debates raised by the question
2. A sophisticated grasp of methodology, original and independent thinking
3. An argument which *is supported by evidence* from the text
4. An ability to incorporate original and personal insights into the text.
5. A commitment to presenting work to the highest standard (i.e. coherent argument, correct spelling, grammar and citation)
The process of writing an essay

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The process of writing an essay

1. Analyse the topic
Finding your topic

- Morbus Kitahara
- Die letzte Welt
Drafting your essay question

How do you choose ‘the one’?

First seek an essay topic that is interesting to you. Second, make sure your topic is manageable in size. Third, your essay topic should preferably be phrased as a clearly defined question, rather than a statement.
I’ll prepare special and mysterious love tea for you.
Example Question

**Topic:** Austerlitz

**Question:** Does Sebald provide a more accurate understanding of the atrocities of the Holocaust than history? Discuss in relation to Austerlitz.
How do I like to argue?

Ask yourself:

What sort of question do I want to answer?

– Do you want to do a comparison?
– Do you prefer a close reading of the text?
– Are you interested in the genre of writing?
– Do you want to answer a yes/no question?
– Do you want a contentious statement that you can explore?
– Do you like responding to a quote?
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

2. Brainstorm ideas
Brainstorming

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

- **Free-writing**
  - write down everything you know on a topic
  - 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!
Frauen in schwedischer Turnkleidung, am Ribbstol -
http://europeana.eu/portal/record/2048429/item_VSLZTIEZ2FDQX0B0GWRCD3PZ24.html.
The process of writing an essay

- Research and read sources
Scholarly sources

What are scholarly sources?

- Scholarly sources are also known as academic, refereed, peer-reviewed, or secondary sources
- They are written by experts in the field and are intended for an audience with knowledge of the subject
- Scholarly sources include a reference list or bibliography
- They can include journal articles, book chapters, monographs, conference papers, encyclopedias,...
Why use scholarly sources?

- Scholarly sources provide an analysis and/or commentary on the subject and usually have a high level of expertise.
- They offer you insight in the wider discussion in the field and the theoretical framework.
- Scholarly sources provide crucial background information that allow you to write more knowledgeably about the topic.
- Can support your argument or show alternative points of view.
Use the right source for the right job

- Handbooks and encyclopedias are good initial sources to gain an understanding of the wider context and main topics.
- Monographs provide in-depth analysis and broad examination of a topic.
- Journal articles cover a very specific aspect that is analysed in-depth.
Search Tips

Truncation

Use the asterisk at the end of the word to find word variations

art* will find:
- art
- arts
- artist
- artists
- artwork
Phrase search

Use double quotation marks to find exact phrases and expressions.

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers will find results that include the words in any order, excluding the articles [die & des]. This search could include results like ‘Die Jungen leiden unter der Strenge Werthers’.

“Die Leiden des jungen Werthers” will find results that include the words in exactly this order.
Combined search terms

- **AND**
  - [both concepts together]
  - Goethe AND Schiller

- **OR**
  - [either of the concepts]
  - Autor OR Dichter

- **NOT**
  - [excludes concept]
  - poetry NOT prose
Research Tips

Where to search

Course readings and notes
- Go through your assigned and recommended readings and the notes you took throughout the semester
- Where any useful resources mentioned in any of the seminars or in one of the presentations?

Use the Library Guide
- The Library Guide includes a selection of resources to get you started with your further research
- The Library Guide shows you where to find more resources on the subject
Research Tips

Use Library Search and Google Scholar

- Use Library Search to find books and to get an idea what is available in the Library
- Use Google Scholar to extend your search - don’t forget to login through the link on the Library Guide!

Search in databases

- Search in databases for secondary sources - Library Search and Google Scholar do not have access to all of the content
- You can find a selection of recommended databases on the Library Guide
Read!

- It is not enough to just find a specific number of resources - you will need to read and analyse them.

- Each source you read will increase your understanding of the subject - keep on revising your search terms and continue searching.

- Use the sources you found to find other relevant search terms and references - if you have a secondary source that talks exactly about what you need to know, chances are that the sources used will do as well.
Research

http://guides.lib.monash.edu/german-studies/ATS3100
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Frauen in schwedischer Turnkleidung, am Ribbstol - [Link](http://europeana.eu/portal/record/2048429/item_VSLZTFDTSIEZ2FDQXQB5OWVCRRCD3P24.html).

Hamann, Heinrich. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg - [Link](http://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/de/object/Frauen+in+schwedischer+Turnkleidung%2C+am+Ribbstol/P1994.221/mkg-e00138423). Public Domain - [Link](http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/).
What makes a good essay question?
Essay instruction words (direction verbs)

- **Explain** – give reasons for something
- **Evaluate** – consider strengths and weaknesses; carefully judge the importance or qualities of something in presenting your position
- **Discuss** – explore the topic from different points of view; make a judgment based on the evidence and present your own position
- **To what extent** – discuss an issue and evaluate what you find. Say how much/ how little X influenced/contributed to X.

*Analytical response vs descriptive response.*
Developing the essay question

Topic: Austerlitz

Question: Does Sebald provide a more accurate understanding of the atrocities of the Holocaust than history? Discuss in relation to Austerlitz

What I know

- Sebald creates a witness account of the Holocaust
- He combines images and text to construct memory
- What happened in the Holocaust

What I don’t know

- How does Sebald use history?
- What is memory?
- The problems with history that Sebald is finding
- The background to Austerlitz and the archives used

What I need to know

- All of the above
The process of writing an essay

• Construct an outline/plan
What is an argument?

- States a position
- Gives reasons backed with evidence as support
- Considers the opposing arguments
Questions to ask yourself

1. What is the question actually asking you?
2. What are the key reasons for your position?
3. What evidence do you have to support your argument?
4. Does any specific scholarship help you articulate your point? Why or why not?
5. What theoretical ideas inform your argument. Explain why.
6. What are the objections to your argument?
Example question

Does Sebald provide a more accurate understanding of the atrocities of the Holocaust than history? Discuss in relation to Austerlitz
The first draft: descriptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Death in Venice</strong> includes a lot of imagery and reference to Greek mythology. What were the Greek understandings of the concept of love and how are these alluded to in the novella?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**
Austerlitz, an architectural historian, is befriended by the narrator of the book during the sixties. Over the next thirty years the relationship between the narrator and Austerlitz slowly begins to unpack Austerlitz’s life history and his background as a survivor of the Holocaust. In the story, I argue that Sebald provides through the relationship between narrator and Austerlitz, and his approach to memory and signification a more than accurate understanding of the Holocaust.

| Point 1 | What is the history of the Holocaust? (the problems with trauma, fact and memory) |
| Point 2 | Sebald’s historical approach through the narrator and Austerlitz |
| Point 3 | Sebald’s approach to memory and the connection of the individual to history |

**Conclusion**
History as a discipline represents the Holocaust in terms of facts and archival documentation that strip away the individual emotional experience from the record, leaving the witnesses dislocated and setting up a risk of repeating the same circumstances that lead to their treatment. Sebald in comparison, attempts to unify the underlying historical truth with the individual’s experience of both history and their memory of events. He does this by encouraging the reader work through the process of knowing the event, what happened, and determining how it happens themselves. In this way the signifiers no longer belong to the institutions that dominate, but to the changing life of the narrator and to Austerlitz.
The process of writing an essay

5. Draft versions, revisiting steps 1 and 4
Turning a description into an argument

Debate!

Why debate?

- A debate is the raw argument that considers all different arguments for your contention 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 10 minutes to quickly give the reasons why, and what evidence. Then 10 minutes to debate it.
Debate debrief

- What side was more convincing?
- Write down the answer and why.
Research

http://guides.lib.monash.edu/german-studies/ATS3100
Debating Draft 1

Defining *focus* of my conclusion was *the problem of historiography*.

**Therefore:** The historiography he represents is very much that of the 1960s and located in particular out of Holocaust histories rather than the wider field and questions around it.

**Missing:** I need to add in this debate, and to consider whether or not Sebald himself is providing an accurate representation of history, or adding in another witness perspective.
Redrafting: The 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)
Rewriting your introduction

There is no debate in the literature around what is history in Sebald studies, rather it Sebald’s representation and problematisation is universally accepted. For Sebald history as a discipline represents the Holocaust in terms of facts and archival documentation that strip away the individual emotional experience from the record, leaving the witnesses dislocated and setting up a risk of repeating the same circumstances that lead to their treatment. In comparison, he attempts to unify the underlying historical truth with the individual’s experience of both history and their memory of events. He does this by encouraging the reader work through the process of knowing the event, what happened, and determining how it happens themselves. In this essay, I argue that rather than pioneering a new form of history, Sebald represents early twentieth-century historiography and the state of contemporary Holocaust studies most accurately, exploring issues in signification and the individual that are fundamental to history.
Redrafted introduction: The Breakdown

The problem you are addressing, Your answer, Case study (how you are going to do it)

There is no debate in the literature around what is history in Sebald studies, rather it Sebald’s representation and problematisation is universally accepted. For Sebald history as a discipline represents the Holocaust in terms of facts and archival documentation that strip away the individual emotional experience from the record, leaving the witnesses dislocated and setting up a risk of repeating the same circumstances that lead to their treatment. In comparison, he attempts to unify the underlying historical truth with the individual’s experience of both history and their memory of events. He does this by encouraging the reader work through the process of knowing the event, what happened, and determining how it happens themselves. In this essay, I argue that rather than pioneering a new form of history, Sebald represents early twentieth-century historiography and the state of contemporary Holocaust studies most accurately, exploring issues in signification and the individual that are fundamental to history through Austerlitz and the narrator.
The second draft

**Question:** In *Death in Venice*, love and desire are often portrayed in reference to Greek mythology and classical approaches to beauty and truth. How does Thomas Mann use classical Greek ideals to describe Aschenbach's obsession with Tadzio in the short story, and was this approach radical for early twentieth century German literature?

**Introduction**

There is no debate in the literature around what is history in Sebald studies, rather it Sebald’s representation and problematisation is universally accepted. For Sebald history as a discipline represents the Holocaust in terms of facts and archival documentation that strip away the individual emotional experience from the record, leaving the witnesses dislocated and setting up a risk of repeating the same circumstances that lead to their treatment. In comparison, he attempts to unify the underlying historical truth with the individual’s experience of both history and the memory of events. He does this by encouraging the reader work through the process of knowing the event, what happened, and determining how it happens themselves. In this essay, I argue that rather than pioneering a new form of history, Sebald represents early twentieth-century historiography and the state of contemporary Holocaust studies most accurately, exploring issues in signification and the individual that are fundamental to history through Austerlitz and the narrator.

**Point 1**

Sebald and the archive are postmodern criticisms of traditional empirical history

**Point 2**

Austerlitz and the narrator provides a subtle exploration of the interview processes of Holocaust survivors and witness testimony

**Point 3**

The signification of building and architecture allows the reader to see the power of cultural discourse in rhetoric.

**Conclusion**

?
Breaking up the essay

For a 1,000 word essay, you should aim for (approximately) the following:

- Introductory paragraph: approx. 100 words (10%)
- Body: approx. 800 words (80%)
- Concluding paragraph: approx. 100 words (10%)

Note: There is no set number of paragraphs per essay!
Redrafting: The 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)

Conclusion
The three Rs: Restate, Rearticulate, Ruminate

Sebald is writing his story in 2001, but representing a period of historiography that ranges from 1960 until 1991. Literary analysis, while bringing to bear complex interpretations of his technique and use of multimedia have however failed to observe that during this period history and the study of it underwent a fundamental change in approach, in particular in terms of understanding the role of memory and oral testimony and the subjective nature of it. The introduction of postmodernism and deconstructuralism into the historical toolbox have in fact enabled us to better describe and assess the uses of history within art, architecture and the power of cultural artefacts to shape discourse that overwrites the personal with the metonymic. Sebald however, is important because he reminds us and the individual reader to not be passive in their engagement with history, to deconstruct it and seek their own signification and agency.
Common issues

- Paragraphs that are too long/short.
- ‘Upside down’ paragraphs: the topic sentence is at the end.
- No evidence to support points, no specific examples.
- Avoiding the topic.
- No logical sequence.
The process of writing an essay

6. Edit and proofread before submitting
## Citing and referencing: MLA 8th

A guide to the styles recommended by Monash schools and departments for students and researchers.

### School of Music Referencing Guide

Includes the preferred style for undergraduates used by the Monash School of Music-Conservatorium.

### Modern Language Association (MLA) Style Guide

The MLA system uses in-text citations rather than footnotes or endnotes. The citations in-text are very brief, usually just the author’s family name and a relevant page number. These citations correspond to the full references in the list of works cited at the end of the document.

**Instructions and examples in this MLA guide are based on more detailed information in:**


### In-text citations - general points

- If the author’s name is mentioned in the sentence, only cite the page number.
- If the author’s name is not mentioned in the sentence, cite both the name and the page number.
- Font and capitalisation must match that in the reference list.
- Long quotations (more than four lines) should be indented.
- If you are citing more than one reference at the same point in a document, separate the references with a semicolon (Smith 156; Jackson 41).
- If a work has no author, use the title.
- If you are citing two works by the same author, put a comma after the author’s name and add title words, e.g. (Smith, “Memories of Motherhood” 77) to distinguish between them in the in-text citation. Do this when citing each of the sources throughout the piece of writing.
- If two authors have the same surname, use their first initial e.g. (D. Brown 26).

### Works Cited list - general points

- The recommended heading for the reference list is Works Cited, which should be centred.
- Each reference should be formatted with double-spacing and a hanging indent.
- Capitalise the first word of the title or subtitle, and all other significant words.
- Authors’ names should be listed with full names if known.
- The name of the first author is inverted to list the family name first. If there are additional authors their names are not inverted (e.g. Smith, Adam, and Laura Childs).
- If you cite more than one work by the same author, give the name in the first entry only. Thereafter, use three hyphens instead of the name, e.g. —.
- If a reference does not have an author, list it by title. Ignore the leading article (A, The etc.) when inserting the reference into the alphabetical works cited list.
- If you cannot locate a reference’s authorship, date of publication or its authoritativeness, especially if it is an online resource, consider using another similar reference that is more authoritative instead.
- For a journal article in an online database (e.g. via the Library website) include the name of the database (Routledge).
- When the title page lists two or more publishers which seem equally responsible for the work, cite each of them separating the names with a forward slash (e.g. Cambridge UP / Routledge).

### How to create a hanging indent

Watch the video [here](http://guides.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing) to learn how to create a hanging indent when you are compiling your Works Cited list in MLA format. These instructions are for MS Word 2010.
Editing and proofreading your work

Editing involves improving the 'big picture' of your assignment: whether it addresses the task requirements fully, how the paragraphs are structured and flow and so on.

Proofreading focuses on specific details like spelling, sentence structure, referencing etc.
Editing and proofreading your work

Need more help? Check out Monash Research and Learning Online:

For Essay and Assignment Writing:
http://www.monash.edu/rlo/research-writing-assignments

For Editing and Proofreading:
https://www.monash.edu/rlo/research-writing-assignments/writing/editing-and-proofreading/editing-and-proofreading
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German Studies Library Drop-in sessions
Matheson Library
(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 11** Thursday, 12 October: 12.30-1.30pm in T1
**Week 12** Tuesday, 17 October: 11.30am-12.30pm in T3
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