Thesis guidelines for BA and MA students

For all questions related to the administrative process of completing your thesis, you should contact the departmental secretariat.

How to get started

- Find a topic and do some initial research. Focus on something that really piques your interest, or on a question you are grappling with.
- Prepare a one-pager to discuss with me. The one-pager contains your project idea, a draft version of your research question, and your approach/method/theory. You should add a couple of references to relevant scholarship.
- Schedule an appointment via my booking page.
- First meeting: We will discuss your topic (based on the one-pager), whether it is feasible/viable, and whether I can supervise it.
- Next step: If I indicate the topic might work, you should then write up a research proposal (max. 2-4 pages). This is a worked-out version of your one-pager, which should include 1) your research question; 2) your primary archive; 3) your approach, 4) a preliminary outline of the chapters and a timeline; 5) an annotated bibliography
- Second meeting: We will discuss your proposal. I will either send you home to work on the proposal further, or agree to supervise the thesis project.
- Writing process: You will regularly touch base and tell me how your work is going. To make such meetings productive, you should bring a sample from your thesis (ideally an analytical passage) for discussion.
- Please submit your final thesis only after you have received my approval, as submissions made without final approval may not be accepted.

What supervision means

- I will advise you on your research topic, its scope, and how to structure your thesis.
- I will help you when you need to reframe or redirect the project idea by giving you advice on how to get unstuck.
- I will give feedback on your proposal and samples of your writing at various stages of the process.
- I will *not* be your co-author! Remember that a BA or MA thesis should be an independent piece of research. I will therefore not comment on every aspect of your thesis before submission, but I *will* help you to plan for yourself and develop your analytical skills along the way.

How we grade your thesis

Your paper will be graded based on the following criteria: 1) the quality and originality of your argument (your research question and how you answer it); 2) the structure of the thesis (coherence and flow of paragraphs, sections, and chapters); 3) language and style; 4) your command of bibliographical and academic conventions; 5) metacognition (your ability to reflect on your use of sources or to identify limitations in your own approach and positionality).

Timeline

The BA thesis should normally be completed over the course of one semester. You should register for the BA thesis the way you do with regular classes. If you extend the writing process beyond one term, the validation is moved to the next submission date.

An MA thesis may in principle be submitted at any time during the academic year. Once the MA thesis is submitted (provided this happens during the academic year), it will need to be evaluated within six weeks. The oral defense will follow within two weeks after the completion of the evaluation.

When you start the thesis, you should inform me about your anticipated submission date. We can mutually agree on a suitable date for the oral defense in accordance with your graduation plans.

The Faculty of Humanities' regulations for BA and MA papers can be found here.

Final thesis submission checklist
- I have received explicit final approval from my thesis supervisor to submit.
- All required revisions requested by the supervisor have been completed.
- The thesis meets the required length for my program.
- Formatting follows departmental guidelines.
- Spelling, grammar and academic style have been carefully checked.
- Terminology is consistent throughout the thesis.
- All sources are properly cited using MLA style.
- The bibliography includes all and only sources cited in the thesis.
- The table of contents is complete and accurate.
- Research questions and argument are clearly stated and addressed.

Resources
- *MLA Handbook*, 9th edition (2016, available at BLL)
- Student Guide to AI Literacy
- MLA International Bibliography (accessible via Discovery Fribourg-Freiburg)
- Helveticat (catalog of the Swiss national library)
- WorldCat (the world's largest union catalog)
- JSTOR (broad archival repository of scholarly literature; limited by moving walls)
- Project MUSE (repository specifically for humanities scholarship; focuses on current-issue content as well as archival content)