Study Skills Guide

2015-16

MA in Film and Film Culture
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Notes on the Writing and Presentation of Written Work

1. Format and font

Use A4 (210mm x 297mm) paper. Type your essay on one side of each page only, using 1.5 line spacing throughout (but single spacing for block quotes). Be consistent and use the same font and font-size throughout the essay: **11 point type is preferred**.

2. Lay-out and presentation

Type your student number and degree course at the top of the first page, with the full title of the essay you are tackling underneath. Make sure that each page has the page number on the top right-hand side.

3. Paragraphs

So as clearly to demarcate the beginning of each paragraph, make sure that you indent the first word of each paragraph: **do not use blank lines for new paragraphs**. There is no need to justify the text but justification can give a neater impression. Paragraphs should consist of more than one sentence, but avoid over-long paragraphs.

In a shorter essay there is no need for sub-headings but you may choose to use them in your dissertation (in addition to chapter headings). Make sure you include a table of contents in your dissertation.

4. Illustrations and figures (tables, graphs, charts, etc.)

Illustrations should be clear and of good quality: you should use them to elucidate your argument and therefore refer to them in your text. They should be numbered and accompanied by a figure caption (**not a footnote**) that includes all the relevant information (artist, title of work in italics, date, size, location; citing the source is optional). Avoid lengthy discussions in figure captions.

You may insert illustrations into the main text or add them as a separate section at the end of your text (after the bibliography): in a dissertation it is advisable to add a list of illustrations. Tables and other figures should be numbered, headed, and a source cited. Always ensure that presentation is clear and that you explain the relevance of the illustration or information in the main body of the text.

5. Quotations

These should be used sparingly, and not as a substitute for your own words or ideas. The words of contemporaries should be used to illustrate a particular point, and lengthy quotations are usually to be avoided. Quotations should be placed in single inverted commas. Any quotations that appear within a quotation should be placed in double inverted commas. Lengthy quotations (of over 60 words) should be broken off from the main text, indented and single-spaced: such block quotes should not include quotation marks. Always make sure that your quotations are placed in context by saying who said what to whom, when, and why.
6. Numbers, dates, etc.

Dates should take the form 11 October 1996 (not October 11th, etc.).

Numbers up to a hundred should be written as a word; for larger numbers use figures. When referring to percentages in the text use ‘per cent’, not ‘%’.

7. References

These should acknowledge your use of specific information, arguments or quotations. They should take the form of EITHER footnotes (placed at the bottom of the page) OR endnotes (placed at the end of the essay or dissertation). The word-processing package will allow you to choose between endnotes and footnotes. Do not place references in brackets within the text: this can be an unwieldy system which serves only to deflect the reader’s attention away from the main content of the essay. Do not use Roman numerals to number your footnotes/endnotes. Reference numbers should be placed at the end of a sentence after the punctuation mark. Avoid multiple references within one sentence: instead combine sources in one footnote, but make sure they clearly refer back to the main text.

8. Films

The first time you refer to a specific film in any essay or other written work, you should identify the country of production, the surname of the director and the year of release in the film’s country of origin in brackets immediately after the title itself (it is only necessary to do this once for each film, for the first reference only, and not subsequently throughout the essay). For example:

*Jaws* (USA, dir: Steven Spielberg, 1975).

9. Footnote/endnote citations

When using a referencing system you need to give full details of a specific source or sources that you have used. It is this information that is to be found in footnotes or endnotes. When first citing a source you should give full details of the author, title, place and year of publication (for books, but not for journals!), and relevant page numbers. There is no need to give details of the publisher. After the first use of a particular work, it is only necessary to present abbreviated details of the author and source.

The titles of all books and journals should EITHER be underlined OR set in italics throughout. Underlining is often easier to work with if you are editing on-screen, but italics look neater.

**Titles of articles, essays, chapters and unpublished sources** (such as inventories or dissertations) are placed in single inverted commas: do **not** use underlining or italics here.

It is most important that you are **consistent** in the way that you structure your notes and references. Examples are as follows, and we recommend you should follow this good practice (there are numerous different citation systems in operation, as you will find in your reading). Note that italics may be used in place of underlining in all cases listed below.
A. Books

ii) Subsequent citation: Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 73.

B. Articles
i) First citation: John Ellis, ‘Art, Culture, Quality: Terms for a Cinema in the Forties and Seventies’, *Screen*, vol.19, no.3 (1978), p.9


C. Essays in books


D. Internet
Websites can serve as a useful first step in your research, but beware of relying on them too much: some (such as Wikipedia) are not scholarly tools and thus unlikely to impress your marker. It is best to list websites in a separate section in your bibliography. You must give the website address and the date of when you accessed them as they are apt to change or even disappear quickly. (N.B. this does not apply to on-line journals, which should follow the format of articles under B above.) The following is a suggested format for an Internet source:


10. Abbreviations in footnotes
When citing the same work in consecutive footnotes you may use *Ibid.* (a contraction of *Ibidem*, meaning ‘in the same place’) instead of the short title of the book or article concerned. Using *Ibid.*, p. 163 now, for example, would refer to Lawrence’s article cited in the previous footnote. It is best to avoid strings of footnotes with *Ibid.*, though. *Op. cit.* and *Loc. cit.* are now not generally used so there is no need for you to worry about them.

11. Bibliography
At the end of your essay you should include a bibliography. This should list all the sources you have consulted in preparing your essay. It is axiomatic, therefore, that every source cited in your footnotes or endnotes must also be included in your bibliography. However, your bibliography should also include any other sources you have consulted, even if you have not quoted from them directly in the body of your essay.

The bibliography should be in alphabetical order by author surname. The conventions are the same as for footnotes/endnotes, with the exception that in the bibliography the surname comes first. For
book chapters and journal articles you give the page numbers in the volume. Thus a bibliography for an essay on the Hollywood western might include:


Bucombe, Edward, *Stagecoach* (London: British Film Institute, 1992)


Kitses, Jim, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: British Film Institute, 2004).


12. Filmography

You should also provide a filmography at the end of your essay listing which films you have viewed in preparing your work. The usual convention is to list film titles alphabetically by title (ignoring definite or indefinite articles). Film titles should be italicised and followed in parentheses with the country of origin, the director and the date. American films can be abbreviated to ‘USA’ and British films to ‘GB’. For foreign language films you should render the title as it appears in the English-language subtitle along with the original language title for films using the same alphabet. For Russian, Japanese, Chinese etc. films the English title alone is acceptable. (NB. The English language title is not necessarily a literal translation, as in the first example below.) Certain films, including *La Grande Illusion* and *Belle de Jour*, are invariably known in English by their original language titles rather than as ‘The Great Illusion’ or ‘Afternoon Flower’.

*Breathless/A bout de souffle* (France, dir. Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

*The Battleship Potemkin* (USSR, dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

*Bicycle Thieves/Ladri di biciclette* (Italy, dir. Vittorio De Sica, 1948)

*Citizen Kane* (USA, dir. Orson Welles, 1941)

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Taiwan, dir. Ang Lee, 2000)

*The Dam Busters* (GB, dir. Michael Anderson, 1955)

*La Grande Illusion* (France, dir. Jean Renoir, 1937)

*Millions Like Us* (GB, dirs Frank Launder & Sidney Gilliat, 1943)

*Seven Samurai* (Japan, dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1954)
The Seventh Seal/Det Sjunde Inseglet (Sweden, dir. Ingmar Bergman, 1957)
Stagecoach (USA, dir. John Ford, 1939)
Vertigo (USA, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

13. Punctuation

Please take care with spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most mistakes arise from sloppiness rather than from any lack of basic skills. Avoid the common mistakes: there/their, its/it’s, etc.

DO NOT INSERT APOSTROPHES INTO SIMPLE PLURALS!!

Most mistakes occur with the possessive. There is particular confusion about proper nouns (names) ending in -s. The general rule is that the possessive of a singular name is formed by apostrophe-s and the possessive of a plural name by an apostrophe alone. Thus:

Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane*;
Charles Dickens’s novels;

But:

the Coens’ films;
United Artists’ production strategy.

14. Word Count

The word limit of each essay includes footnotes but not the bibliography.
Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

You must always be sure that you credit ideas, data, information, quotations and illustrations to their original author. Not to do so is plagiarism: the repetition or paraphrasing of someone else’s work without proper acknowledgement.

The University expects students to conduct their studies with exemplary standards of academic honesty and will penalise students who submit work, or parts of work, that have been:

- plagiarised;
- completed with others for individual assessment (collusion);
- previously submitted for assessment, including self-plagiarism;
- prepared by others;
- supplied to another for copying.

Plagiarism and collusion

Plagiarism is used as a general term to describe taking and using another’s thoughts and writings as one’s own. Examples of forms of plagiarism include:

- the verbatim (word for word) copying of another’s work without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- the close paraphrasing of another’s work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another’s work;
- the deliberate and detailed presentation of another’s concept as one’s own;
- reproduction of a student’s own work when it has been previously submitted and marked but is presented as original material (self-plagiarism).

Any student who prepares or produces work with others and then submits it for assessment as if it were the product of his/her individual efforts (collusion) will be penalised. Unless specifically instructed otherwise, all work you submit for assessment should be your own and should not have been previously submitted for assessment either at Leicester or elsewhere.

See also www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/plagiarism

Penalties

The University regards plagiarism and collusion as very serious offences and so they are subject to strict penalties. The penalties that departments are authorised to apply are defined in the Regulations governing student discipline (see www.le.ac.uk/senate-regulation11, paragraphs 11.62 to 11.77).

Avoiding Plagiarism and Poor Academic Practice

Check the Learning Development website for guidance on how to avoid plagiarism

http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/study/plagiarism-tutorial

If you are in any doubt about what constitutes good practice, ask your personal/academic tutors for advice or make an appointment with Learning Development for individual advice. You can book an appointment online by visiting: www.le.ac.uk/succeedinyourstudies.
Remember that the Department requires that you upload all coursework to Turnitin, plagiarism checking software that will automatically identify any uncredited material in your essays.

Assessment and Examinations

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I submit assessed work for the Department of the History of Art & Film?

All assignments need to be submitted electronically to Turnitin by the assignment deadline. No hard copy is required except for the dissertation. The dissertation will need to be submitted electronically and two hard copies provided to the school office by the advised deadline.

Assignments will be marked electronically using GradeMark. When you are notified that feedback is available you must log on to Blackboard to view this. Feedback cannot be collected from the school office.

Turnitin software accepts the following file types: Word, Text, Postscript, PDF, HTML, and RTF.

Must I observe word-limits?

The word limit of each essay includes footnotes but not the bibliography. You should ensure that your work keeps to the stated limit.

When are my assignments due in?

Submission dates for assessed work are provided with every module outline – copies of all module outlines are available in the slide room, and also on Blackboard.

What happens if I fail?

If you do not have a mark of at least 50% for each taught module, you will be offered one opportunity only to resit this work, usually in summer period. For a resit or resubmitted piece of work, the maximum mark is 50. Students following a 90-credit dissertation route are entitled to resit up to 45 credits of the taught modules: if you fail more than that at the first attempt you will not be able to write your dissertation or complete the course. Students following a 60-credit dissertation route are entitled to resit up to 60 credits of the taught modules: if you fail more than that at the first attempt you will not be able to write your dissertation or complete the course.

When will my essay be returned?

Marked essays are normally returned within a three-week period.

What if I can’t meet an essay deadline?

It is very important that you keep to assignment deadlines, as a system of penalties for late submission operates: [www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/late-submission](http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/assessments/late-submission)

If you cannot complete your work because of problems as illness, bereavement, or major personal difficulties, you may be eligible to claim for mitigating circumstances. The procedures for claiming for mitigating circumstances are available at [www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/mitigation](http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/mitigation).