



MA Thesis Guidelines

MA Thesis

Your thesis will be a substantial piece of academic writing in which you pursue a specific research question or interest in the field of American studies. In an extended analytic project, your thesis gives you an opportunity to display your advanced understanding of methods and theories relevant in American studies, as well as to reflect on your methodological choices and selection of sources.

Supervisors and Readers

For your thesis, you will choose a supervisor and a second reader. Your supervisor will be your chief advisor in your work on your thesis: S/he will discuss the topic of your thesis with you as well as your work-in-progress, and s/he will be available for your questions. Your supervisor can also suggest possible second readers for your thesis. Both your supervisor and your second reader will grade your thesis.

Your supervisor as well as your second reader generally will be American Studies Leipzig faculty. A list of available supervisors and readers from American Studies Leipzig's faculty will be announced at the beginning of each academic year. It is possible, however, to nominate as your supervisor a member of the University of Leipzig faculty outside American Studies (if s/he works in a field relevant to American Studies), and/or for your second reader, an instructor from another university. Generally, at least one of the two needs to be regular American Studies Leipzig faculty. Nominations of supervisors or readers not on the above list require approval by the Exams Committee (Prüfungsausschuss).

Please be aware that there is a maximum number of projects to be supervised per professor, so talk to your desired supervisor **early** to ask for the conditions to have your work supervised by him/her.

Topic

As a first step of your work, you need to propose a topic to your supervisor for his/her approval. This involves a three-step process.

- First, you should discuss your preferred topics as general ideas with your supervisor. Together, you will identify the most promising one to pursue further.
- Second, you will prepare an official proposal for your supervisor **and** your second reader. This proposal should be about two to three pages long and include:

- A short description of what your thesis will focus on, your research interest, and what makes your project relevant in the context of American Studies
 - The methodologies you plan to employ
 - A brief working bibliography, consisting of both primary and secondary sources.
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- Third, in consultation with your supervisor your proposal goes through a final round of revision after which s/he will officially approve your proposal and sign the application form for the Exams Office (Prüfungsamt).

Procedures and Deadlines

The deadlines for handing in the official application at the exams office are published online at http://americanstudies.uni-leipzig.de/curriculum/degree_exams. If you plan to hand in your thesis during the summer term, you should make sure to meet your supervisor and agree on a topic with him/her early on in the winter term. Likewise, for handing in your thesis during the winter term, you will need to meet your supervisor and decide on your topic early in the summer term. The necessary form for your application is available for download from the above website.

Once you have filed the (accepted) application with the exams office, you will have 23 weeks to write, revise, and hand in your MA thesis. The Prüfungsamt will tell you the final deadline for submitting your thesis.

Please submit your MA thesis at the Exams Office (Prüfungsamt) by handing in two printed and bound copies and one electronic (pdf-format) copy.

Format and Length

Generally, theses may be submitted in English or German. Individual instructors may stipulate you use either of the two.

Your thesis should be about 30,000 words, excluding notes and bibliography, i.e. 60-80 pages of text in 1.5 spacing. Unless your supervisor requires you to use a different style sheet, formatting and quotation style must consistently follow the MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style.

The completed MA thesis must include an "Affidavit / Eidesstattliche Erklärung" in which the student declares that the work submitted has in no way, partial or otherwise, been plagiarized. Any doubts as to whether passages could be construed as plagiarized should be clarified with the supervisor of the thesis. The instructors may utilize plagiarism detection software as part of the grading process. The form for the "Affidavit / Eidesstattliche Erklärung" can be downloaded from the American Studies website.

You should also include at the beginning of your MA thesis an abstract of approximately 250 words, single spaced, in which you outline your theme, thesis, and main points and findings.