

Department of Gender and Cultural Studies

Style Guide

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1) Introduction: What is a Style Guide?

A Style Guide provides information on the rules that govern all forms of written expression and the presentation of a piece of work, whether this is for an author submitting something for formal publication or a student presenting an essay for a Unit of Study. This Style Guide has been written specifically for students in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies. In this guide you will find information about referencing and footnoting/endnoting your essays as well as information about structuring and writing an essay. The guide also includes information on common grammatical errors in student essays. Please print this document and keep it as a handy reference when writing and submitting essays.

2) Researching, Writing and Submitting an Essay for Gender Studies

All assignments/essays must be typed on A4 paper using either 1.5 or double spacing with pages numbered consecutively. Please leave a wide margin so that your marker has enough space to write comments. Use a font size that is large enough so that your markers do not have to strain their eyes in reading your work. Although font sizes differ from font to font, it is recommended that you use Font size 11 or up. All essays must be submitted with a cover sheet to the school office. Please keep a copy of all assignments that you submit.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The Department of Gender Studies encourages critical analysis and independent written work. Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use of another's words or ideas and is not acceptable within the University.

While most assignments require that you present the work of other scholars as evidence of your critical engagement with the course material, it is essential that you reference this material. If you are lifting text directly from another author into your essay then you must use quotation marks around the text and reference appropriately. If you are using an author's argument or ideas but paraphrasing this material, you must still provide a reference for the idea/s that you have incorporated. **To pass off the ideas or arguments of others as your own work constitutes plagiarism.** You can do this in two of the following ways:

a) According to Mason (2002), the use of personal safety maps by gay men and lesbians constitutes a form of self-management that works to control the visibility or invisibility of their homosexuality in relation to the perceived safety of any given social context.

OR

b) The use of personal safety maps by gay men and lesbians constitutes a form of self-management that works to control the visibility or invisibility of their homosexuality in relation to the perceived safety of any given social context (Mason: 2002).

Here I have summarised the central argument from Gail Mason's chapter on "Body Maps" in *The Spectacle of Violence: Homophobia, Gender and Knowledge*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Although I have rephrased Mason's argument in my own words, the concepts and ideas here originate from my reading of her work and therefore must be acknowledged.

For more information on the University of Sydney's policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism, please visit the following web site: <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/000007x.pdf>

Plagiarism and the Internet

The Internet can be a valuable research tool and source of information. It is important to remember, however, that any information that you get off the net should be correctly referenced. Do not cut and paste information from web sites and pass it off as your own work. This constitutes plagiarism and is easily detected by your markers. Furthermore, do not be tempted to download an assignment from one of the many "cheat" sites offering student essays. This material is easily spotted by your markers as a plagiarised piece of work and can be traced to the site that you found it.

Researching a Topic

If you are looking for research material for an essay or assignment please consult the Course Outlines or your Lecturer or Tutor. If you require any further material then the best place to access this is through the Library Catalogue using a subject or keyword search or through the Library's Databases, which are located on the Library homepage. The most common Databases that you will need for Gender and Cultural Studies courses include the MLA, Expanded Academic Index, APAIS, Science Direct, LegalTrac and Lexis Nexis (a database which allows you to search articles in all major Australian and International English speaking newspapers).

In recent years students have come to rely on the Internet as a resource for information. While the Internet can be a valuable tool for finding all sorts of information, the Department encourages scholarly research in the writing of your essays and assignments. Some of the material on the Internet is produced without the refereeing process that pertains to scholarly publishing. Please be careful when pulling material off the net and remember that the library catalogue and databases are usually a better place to do your research than the net.

Writing an Essay Outline

Although we all have different ways of beginning an essay, it is important that you learn how to write an essay outline. This not only saves you time but forces you to focus on the essay question or topic. An outline is like a synopsis in that it provides a script for what you want to cover in your essay.

After you have done your reading and made substantial notes, write a list of the main points that you want to cover in your essay, making sure that you leave lots of space in between the points so that you can add material as you go. Once you have a list of main points, sift through your notes and build up comments and quotes around these main points that will serve to remind you what you want to say and the evidence you want to use to back up your statements.

This is just one approach to writing an outline. You may have your own method for producing an outline. Just remember that an outline will save you time and help structure your ideas so it is a good idea to use one.

Essay Structure

Although the essay is not the only form of assessment that you will encounter in your studies, it is the most common one. While the basic structure of an essay includes an introduction, the main body of the essay and then a conclusion, there are other factors to consider when writing essays.

Make sure that your essay is well structured, with coherent paragraphs that logically develop an argument or thesis position. **Make sure that you include an analysis and interpretation of the topic and include evidence to back up your claims.** You need to explain and provide clear interpretations of the terms that you use in the essay. It is also important to remember that writing an essay is a process that you don't get right in the first draft. It often takes several rewrites to craft your analysis, argument and expression.

INTRODUCTION

(for a 3000 word essay an introduction is usually only one or two paragraphs)

- Introduce the topic of the essay
- Introduce your main thesis statement (this is the position that you will take in the essay or the purpose of your essay).
 - Briefly state what you will cover in your essay

BODY

- The body of the essay should build on your thesis statement. This means providing an argument and evidence that supports the claims that you are making. The evidence comes from your research and note taking that you did to complete your essay outline.
- The argument should determine the order of your analysis and the presentation of your ideas. By beginning with an essay outline you will have already worked out some sense of how you want to structure your essay.

CONCLUSION

- Here you should conclude your argument and reflect on what you have covered in the body of your essay.
- Avoid conclusions that just repeat what you have said in the introduction or in the body of your essay. Repeating what you have said in the Introduction does not constitute a conclusion. Rather think about the significance of the topic you have been discussing and its place in the context of the course as a whole.
 - Do not introduce new material or evidence in your conclusion.
- Remember that the conclusion is the last opportunity you have to convince your reader of your argument, so use it effectively.

Paragraphs

A paragraph is what gives your essay its structure. A paragraph consists of a group of sentences which are linked together to form a main idea. A Paragraph should contain a topic sentence (which states what you will discuss), sentences that explain and elaborate on the topic and evidence that back up the claims that you have made.

Paragraphs that go on forever or contain one or two sentences indicate a poorly structured essay. Very long paragraphs often indicate that you are not clear where one idea ends and a new one starts. Very short paragraphs suggest that you have not provided enough evidence to back up your claims or developed your ideas fully.

As a rule do not break up your essays into sub-headings. This is especially important in an essay length of only 3000 words. Instead structure your paragraphs so that they each contain a main topic or point that you expand on in the paragraph.

Proofreading

Editing your work is an important part of the academic writing process. It is therefore essential that you leave enough time to be able to carefully proofread and edit your work. Be aware of using spell-check programs as you can unintentionally change the intended usage and spelling of a word.

3) Referencing Systems

The use of an academic referencing system enables readers to track the sources that you have used in producing a piece of written work. It is also a system that ensures intellectual honesty and accuracy in terms of how you present information. As such it is vital in writing an essay that you acknowledge all material that you have used. This is done through the use of direct referencing as well by incorporating a Bibliography or Reference List at the end of your essay. Although different disciplines prefer particular referencing systems, The Department of Gender and Cultural Studies recommends that you use either the MLA System or the Author-Date (or Harvard) System shown below. Both of these systems use in-text referencing which assists both the writer and reader in keeping track of the material used.

If you are using an in-text referencing system (either the MLA or Author-Date systems described below) you will not need to include your sources in a footnote or endnote. However, if you wish to give further references on your topic or provide more information to something that you have said in your essay without disrupting the flow of your argument, then you can include this in an endnote at the end of your essay or in a footnote.

a) MLA System

The MLA System is a very straightforward in-text referencing system. As a general rule you need to include the author's surname and the page number of the publication in brackets in the text at the end of the sentence.(eg. i) If you have already mentioned the author in your sentence then you include only the page number (eg.ii). This applies whether you are using a direct quotation or citing someone else's argument. You then include a complete list of references at the end of your essay in a Bibliography.

Examples:

- i) The concept of the public sphere derives from the German philosopher, Jugen Habermas, and is used to describe “the world of communal, economic, and political life rather than intimacy and familial relations” (Green 116).
- ii) According to Lelia Green, the concept of the public sphere derives from the German Philosopher, Jurgen Habermas and is used to describe “the world of communal, economic, and political life rather than intimacy and familial relations” (116).

If you are using indirect evidence, that is, quoting a passage from an author that appears in another text, you must include the abbreviation “qtd. in” (quoted in). For eg:

Jan Fernbank argues that “ Cyberspace has become a new arena for participation in public life”(qtd. in Green: 120).

When you are using two or more works by the same author in your essay, you can differentiate them by including an abbreviated form of the title in your in-text reference. For eg:

Elsbeth Probyn considers the realm of the alimentary an important site for “thinking about an ethics of existence” (*Carnal Appetites* 3).

MLA Bibliography

All essays must contain a bibliography. Include all material that you have used in your references. Entries must be arranged in alphabetical order, with the author's surname appearing first followed by the first name. You must include the full title of the work, publisher and place and date of publication. The list must include not only academic works, but also any films, newspaper or Internet articles that you have used. Please note that all titles of books, journals and films appear in Italics.

Examples:

1) Book Title

Probyn, Elspeth. *Carnal Appetites: Food, Sex, Identities*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

2) Book with a Translator

Derrida, Jaques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

3) Book with two or more Authors or Editors

Fuery, Patrick and Nick Mansfield. *Cultural Studies and the New Humanities: Concepts and Controversies*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Grosz, Elizabeth and Elspeth Probyn eds. *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

4) Journal Article

Green, Lelia. "Technology and Conversation: Construction and Deconstruction of Community." *Australian Journal of Communication* 23. 3 (1996): 54-67.

5) Essay from a Collection or Anthology

Palmer, Len. "Regulating Technology." In *Framing Technology: Society, Choice and Change*. Ed. Lelia Green and Roger Guinery. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. 77-90.

6) Newspaper/Magazine Article

McGrath, Ann. "Diversity is Lost in Boy's Own History." *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 July 2003, 13.

If there is no author, the article should be listed with the title first.

7) Film

Boys Don't Cry. Dir. Kimberley Peirce. Fox Searchlight Pictures and the Independent Film Channel Productions, 1999.

8) Video

Heaven. Videorecording. Dir. Tracey Moffatt. Canberra: Ronin Films, 1997.

9) Television Program

“...For Being Lebanese.” *Four Corners*. Reporter Stephen McDonnell. ABC TV, Sydney 16 Sept. 2002.

10) Video Clip

Madonna. “Vogue.” Video Clip. Broadcast ABC TV, 16 Sep. 1992.

11) Internet Sources

Because Internet sites do not always contain information such as authors, dates or titles, the rule is to include as much information as is available. You must, however always include the Internet address and the date that you accessed the site. If there is no author list the site in alphabetical order under the title.

Poster, Mark. “The Net as a Public Sphere.” Nov. 1995.

http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.11/poster.if_pr.html. (Accessed 18 July, 2003).

b) Author-Date or Harvard System

The Author-Date system is commonly used in the social sciences and increasingly in the humanities as well. As indicated by its name, the general rule of this system is that you include the author’s surname, date of publication and page number in brackets within the text. As with other systems, this applies whether you are using a direct quote or incorporating an idea or argument from another author. At the end of your essay, you must supply the full reference details of the texts that you have used in a bibliography.

Examples:

- i. The concept of the public sphere derives from the German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, and is used to describe ‘the world of communal, economic, and political life rather than intimacy and familial relations’ (Green, 2002:116).
- ii. According to Lelia Green (2002:116), the concept of the public sphere derives from the German Philosopher, Jurgen Habermas and is used to describe ‘the world of communal, economic, and political life rather than intimacy and familial relations’.

Please note that unlike the MLA System, the Harvard system uses single quote marks rather than double. Also the year and page number are separated by a colon with no space between them. If the author’s name is mentioned the reference goes immediately after the name. If the author’s name is not mentioned the reference goes immediately after the quote or idea/argument that you have borrowed.

If you are using indirect evidence, that is, quoting a passage from an author that appears in another text, you must include the word ‘in’.

- iii. Jan Fernbank (in Green, 2002: 120) argues that ‘Cyberspace has become a new arena for participation in public life’.

When you are using two or more works by the same author use a, b, c...to differentiate them.

- iv) Elspeth Probyn (2000a: 3) considers the realm of the alimentary an important site for ‘thinking about an ethics of existence’.

Author-Date System Bibliography

As with any system you must include all sources that you have used in a bibliography at the end of your essay. These must be listed in alphabetical order beginning with the surname. Unlike the MLA, however, the Author-Date System only includes an initial for the author’s second name. Also the date of publication follows the author’s surname in brackets, followed by title, place of publication and publisher.

Examples:

1) Book Title

Probyn, E. (2000) *Carnal Appetites: Food, Sex, Identities*, London and New York: Routledge

Please note that a comma appears after the book title and there is no full stop at the end of the reference.

2) Book with a Translator

Derrida, J. (1976) *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press

3) Book with two or more Authors or Editors

Fuery, P. and N. Mansfield (1997) *Cultural Studies and the New Humanities: Concepts and Controversies*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press

Grosz, E. and E. Probyn (eds) (1995) *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, London and New York: Routledge

4) Journal Article

Green, L. (1996) ‘Technology and Conversation: Construction and Deconstruction of Community’ *Australian Journal of Communication* 23, 3, pp. 54-67

5) Essay from a Collection or Anthology

Palmer, L. (1994) ‘Regulating Technology’ in Green, L. and Guinery, R. (eds) *Framing Technology: Society, Choice and Change*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, pp. 77-90

6) Newspaper/Magazine Article

McGrath, A. (2003) ‘Diversity is Lost in Boy’s Own History’ *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 July p. 13
If there is no author, the article should be listed with the title first.

7) Film

Boys Don’t Cry (motion picture) 1999, Fox Searchlight Pictures and the Independent Film Channel Productions, directed by Kimberley Peirce

8) Video

Heaven (videorecording) 1997, Canberra, Ronin Films, directed by Tracey Moffatt.

9) Television Program

'...For Being Lebanese' (2002) *Four Corners* Sydney, ABC TV, 16 September, reporter Stephen McDonnell.

10) Video Clip

Madonna (1992) 'Vogue' (video clip), ABC TV, 16 September

11) Internet Sources

Because Internet sites do not always contain information such as authors, dates or titles, the rule is to include as much information as is available. You must, however always include the Internet address and the date that you accessed the site. If there is no author list the site in alphabetical order under the title.

Poster, M. (1995) 'The Net as a Public Sphere',
http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.11/poster.if_pr.html. (Accessed 18 Jul. 2003)

4) Footnotes and Endnotes

While many disciplines in the humanities have moved towards the use of in-text referencing, there are still good reasons why you may want to use Footnotes or Endnotes. In certain disciplines such as history, where detailed source information is often needed, footnotes are still preferred. Remember that Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page while Endnotes appear at the end of the document. If you wish to use footnotes/endnotes rather than in-text referencing then you need to consult the MLA Style guide. A copy is available in the Reference section of the library.

5) Written Expression and Writing Style

While writing style is a very individual process, there are certain conventions that are required in academic writing. You need to become familiar with these conventions and avoid common grammatical and style errors. The last two sections will provide information about some of the expectations of academic writing in the humanities and some of the common grammatical errors encountered in student essays.

Style Matters

Style does indeed matter. Below are some suggestions about style in academic writing.

a) Clichés

Clichés are overused expressions that are often inserted in place of a more straightforward statement relevant to your topic. Avoid using clichéd expressions in academic writing because apart from sounding tired they lack precision. Some of the common clichés that students use are:

since time immemorial
bear in mind
the powers that be
an uphill battle
explore every avenue

b) Slang, Colloquial Expressions and Generalisations

Avoid using slang and colloquial expressions in your essays unless quoting something or else to make a point about an expression's usage. As a rule avoid using colloquial contractions such as "can't" and "don't" as they sit awkwardly in an essay. Similarly, avoid the use of generalisations such as "patriarchy", "most people", "society". If you do use these terms, make sure that you critically reflect on the context in which they appear.

c) Use of the First Person : Using "I" in an Essay

Although traditional academic writing often discouraged the use of the first person, it has become more acceptable within the humanities in recent years. While there are important reasons for sometimes using "I" in an essay or other piece of written work, particularly if you are asked to reflect on your own experience, there are also good reasons for not overusing "I" in a more formal essay.

In an essay where you are asked to critically analyse a specific topic or question, you are not required to give your opinion per se, but rather a well-researched and informed response. As such to begin a sentence with "I think..." undermines the critical nature of your argument or analysis. If you do use "I" in an essay make sure that you use it sparingly and only when it is relevant to the context of your argument. For eg:

Appropriate uses of "I"

Although dragkinging has now become a global phenomenon, I first encountered it in Adelaide many years ago when I was researching community art practices.

In this sentence the author is using "I" to situate his/her knowledge about the subject.

Unnecessary uses of "I"

I think that postcolonial theory is important for an analysis of Salman Rushdie's novels.

*Here the use of the phrase "I think" is unnecessary. Since it is a given that postcolonial literature is relevant to an analysis of Rushdie's work, it becomes redundant to say "I think". Instead the sentence should read: **Postcolonial theory is important for an analysis of Salman Rushdie's novels.***

I found the novel a fascinating account of the deprivation experienced by children growing up in the slums of New Delhi.

*Here the use of "I" detracts from the rhetorical force of an argument or analysis. The sentence should read: **The novel is a fascinating account of the deprivation experienced by children growing up in the slums of New Delhi.***

d) Overuse of the Passive Voice

While the passive voice is sometimes necessary in academic writing, try not to overuse it, particularly in an argumentative style essay. The passive voice often creates unnecessary wordiness, which disrupts the flow of your essay. For e.g.:

Passive Voice

It is through this essay that I propose to analyse the effects of homophobic violence on male high school students.

Active Voice

This essay will examine the effects of homophobic violence on male high school students.

Common uses of the passive voice in student essays occur when referring to evidence or examples. Avoid these constructions:

This is also seen when

It is shown that

It can be seen that

e) Non-Discriminatory Language

The University of Sydney Senate policy has strict guidelines about the use of non-discriminatory language. The most common forms of non-discriminatory language include non-sexist and non-racist language. As a general rule it is important to recognise diversity and difference in your writing otherwise it may be perceived as offensive to certain groups. Remember that language discriminates when it makes certain groups invisible.

Because English has no third person singular pronoun that is gender-neutral, traditionally “he”, “his” or “him” has been used to refer to both men and women. This has become unacceptable in recent years so it is important in your writing to include both men and women when referring generically to a person or persons. Ways to overcome this include:

She or he

S/he

They

If a student wants their result early, she or he should go to the student centre.

If a student wants their result early, s/he should go to the student centre.

If a student wants their results early, they should go to the student centre.

(Although this last sentence is grammatically incorrect, in speech it has become common practice to use the pronoun “they” when referring to a generic person).

As a general rule avoid terms that obscure the presence of women in particular occupations or mark out a person’s gender when it is not necessary to do so.

Actor for both men and women

Humankind or humanity rather than mankind

Police Officers rather than Policeman

Chairperson or Chair rather than Chairman

In referring to nationalities, ethnic and racial groups, always use a capital letter (eg. Macedonian, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, German, American). The Koori Centre also prefers Indigenous to be spelt with a capital letter.

6) Common Grammatical Errors in Student Essays

a) Run-on Sentence

This is a sentence that goes on for too long without the appropriate use of a conjunction or punctuation. For e.g.:

Homophobic violence is a form of interpersonal violence it affects gay men and lesbians.

This sentence should read:

Homophobic violence is a form of interpersonal violence, which affects gay men and lesbians.

b) Comma Splice

This occurs where a comma is used instead of a full stop, i.e. Two sentences are spliced together using a comma. For e.g.:

Homophobic violence is a form of hate crime, it affects gay men and lesbians of all ages and from all backgrounds.

This sentence should read:

Homophobic violence is a form of hate crime. It affects gay men and lesbians of all ages and from all backgrounds.

c) Sentence Fragment

This is a sentence that lacks a subject or a verb. For e.g.

The James Bulger case caused a media sensation in Britain. Which is understandable.

This sentence should read:

The James Bulger case caused a media sensation in Britain, which is understandable.

d) Agreement of Verbs and Subjects

Verbs have to agree with their subjects. Singular verbs have singular subjects. Plural verbs have plural subjects. Some times it is difficult to determine the subject of the sentence.

Incorrect Verb Agreement

The representation of unmarried women in Jane Austen's novels *are* comical and ironic.

Correct Verb agreement

The representation of unmarried women in Jane Austen's novels *is* comical and ironic.

Here the subject of the sentence is the representation of unmarried women. Since the subject is singular, the verb should also be singular.

e) Using Colons and Semi Colons

A **colon** is used to introduce a list or a long quotation after a formal sentence or an indented quotation. Remember that what comes after a colon is often not a full grammatical sentence. For e.g.:

i) You will need to bring three items to the lecture: your course reader, a pen and a note pad.

ii) In Bourdieu's argument:

Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is *embodied*, helps shape the class body. It is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically. (Bourdieu, 1979/1984: 190).

iii) In order to convey the currency of Marxism, Amin describes the present in these terms: "One hundred and fifty years after The Communist Manifesto was put forth we are once again in one of those moments when the gluttons hold their orgy" (1998: 22).

A **semi-colon** is used to connect (usually two independent clauses) rather than introduce. This means that a semi-colon is invariably preceded and followed by a full grammatical sentence. For e.g.:

At the meeting the vice-chancellor discussed the new education reforms; the entire audience sat motionless.