



The Weiss-Livnat International MA in Holocaust Studies

**The Art of Academic Writing II:**

**Writing a Thesis**

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**Course Description:**

This course teaches students how to design and execute an original research project in the field of Holocaust Studies. Our aim is practical—to guide students through the MA thesis-writing process, as well as conceptual—asking what makes a research project valuable, compelling, and original. The students are encouraged to apply these techniques to the topics they are interested in and use this course as a platform for improving their research and writing skills for the purpose of working on an MA thesis.

**Course Requirements:**

**Full attendance.**

**Weekly reading assignments:** Students are required to read the assigned items for each week and to prepare to respond to them in class.

**Writing assignments:** Throughout the course, students will be asked to write assignments on a weekly basis. The assignments will be the basis for our class discussions.

**Grades:** the course is a pass/fail course.

### **Week 1: Introduction**

Assignment:

Think of the topic and possibly the research question you would like to explore in MA thesis. Why this topic? Why this research question?

### **Week 2: Thesis 1 (1)**

Assignment:

Read the introduction to one of theses on Moodle and create a schematic sketch of the content of the introduction (presentation of the topic and research question, discussion of the secondary literature, assumptions and foundations, etc.).

### **Week 3: Thesis 1 (2)**

Assignment:

Read chapter 1 of the thesis you chose and write:

1. What is its main purpose?
2. What is the structure of the chapter?
3. Create a schematic sketch of the content of the chapter (main arguments, secondary arguments, assumptions and foundations, body of research, contradictions, findings, conclusion/s, etc.).

### **Week 4: Thesis 1 (3)**

#### Assignment

Read chapter 2 of the thesis you chose and write:

1. What is its main purpose?
2. What is the structure of the chapter?
3. Create a schematic sketch of the content of the chapter (main arguments, secondary arguments, assumptions and foundations, body of research, contradictions, findings, conclusion/s, etc.).

### **Weeks 5-7: Thesis 2**

#### Assignment:

Repeat the above analysis for another thesis.

### **Week 8: Roundtable thesis writing**

### **Week 9: Research proposal 1**

#### Assignment:

Half of the class: Read "thesis research proposal 1" and write a short (up to a page) research proposal for a thesis you have in mind. The proposal should include: 1-2 passages explaining the topic, a research question, explanation of the research question and its importance/relevance in light of the existing literature on the subject, what you hope to show, and 4-5 sources you will probably use. Prepare to present your research proposal in class.

### **Week 10: Research proposal 2**

#### Assignment:

The other half of the class: Read "thesis research proposal 2" and write a short (up to a page) research proposal for a thesis you have in mind. The proposal should include: 1-2 passages explaining the topic, a research question, explanation of the research question and its importance/relevance in light of the existing literature on the subject, what you hope to show, and 4-5 sources you will probably use. Prepare to present your research proposal in class.

### **Week 11-14: Students' research proposals**

#### Assignment:

Prepare a research proposal for your thesis, present it in class and respond to students' and professor's comments.

#### **Recommended reading:**

Christopher Browning, "Survivor Testimonies from Starachowiec: Writing the History of a Factory Slave Labor Camp" in *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimonies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

Alon Confino, "Narrative Form and Historical Sensation: On Saul Friedländer's *The Years of Extermination*," *History and Theory* 48: 3 (October 2009): 199-219.

Sara Horowitz "The Night Side of Speech" in *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

Dominick LaCapra, "Writing History, Writing Trauma" in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Donald Bloxham and Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust: Critical Historical Approaches* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

Henry Greenspan, "The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irrecoverable," *Oral History Review* 41: 2 (2014): 229-243.

Kobi Kabalek, "Edges of History and Memory: The 'Final Stage' of the Holocaust,"  
*Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 29: 3 (2015): 240-263.