

MA WRITING (AND READING) GUIDELINES

Nick Campion

These guidelines emerge out of my personal experience of what students need to know when writing essays. They include some instructions for what you must do, and some advice for what you can do, especially for students who may have been out of academic education for some time. There are simple guidelines to follow which can make the essay-writing process far easier. The following ideas are designed to help you but they are open to improvement so I'd be very happy to receive any feedback.

Below I have used bold, capitals and underlining to draw attention to areas which I have found to be widely ignored!

You will also find hints at
<http://www.waylink-english.co.uk/?page=60000>

Submission of Essays

On your Moodle (our web package) page for each course you will find instructions to 'Upload your 1000 Word Essay here' or 'Upload your 4000 Word Essay here'. Simply follow the instructions.

You **MUST** submit your essay in a form in which we can read it - i.e. Word

You **SHOULD NOT** upload your essay as a PDF. The reason is that markers sometimes insert comments in essays to return them, and we cannot do that with PDFs.

You should fix to the front of your essay a cover sheet, which you will find on Moodle

The referencing system (see below) we use is footnotes. In addition you must include a bibliography of works used. (If you find any course documentation that says you don't a bibliography, ignore it: it is left over from former times!)

The MA level essay

MA level work depends on analysis and discussion, not description. While, of course, description is necessary in order to present evidence, the analysis of evidence in order to answer a question posed within a wider theoretical context is crucial. You should never imagine that you are writing an overview or survey. (See the detailed guidelines and instructions in the Student Assessment Handbook.

You need to describe, because description provides the evidence, but keep the critique in the front of your mind and remember that the function of description is to provide material for the critique. The description must never provide the substance of the essay.

You must not provide an uncritical list of information, no matter how well supported from the scholarly literature.

To list information can be an early stage in writing your essay, in which you sort out the information in your mind. This, though, cannot be the final essay. The essay itself then analyses and critiques the information.

Do not write essays whose argument is based uncritically on a single school of thought. There are no right or wrong answers, only an inquiry into the evidence.

An excellent, simple guide to writing MA papers is on line at http://www.doceo.co.uk/academic/m_writing.htm

Presentation

Firstly, on the front of your essay paste in the Essay Cover Sheet and complete the required information.

Secondly, at the top of the essay always write the EXACT title of your essay (not a paraphrase of it: do not adapt or abbreviate it or you might inadvertently wander off the point and answer a different question). NEVER create a title of your own unless this is agreed with the course director or module tutor.

Thirdly, insert a header which includes your name and student number and a page number in the format 'page x of y' (i.e., 'page 1 of 1, page 2 of 1, etc.' or '1/1, 2/1', etc.)

In other words, write:

Belinda Smith 023456

page 1 of 1

Fourthly, below the title, write the word count. For example:

A Study of Astronomical Beliefs that the Moon is made of Cheese
Word Count: 4595

YOUR TEXT SHOULD BE DOUBLE SPACED.

Writing style

Academic essay writing is designed to reveal the structure of your thought. The use of metaphor, allegory, imagery or rhetorical and journalistic style can obscure your argument rather than assist it. You need to say what you mean, and the use of colourful imagery will obscure your meaning. So, avoid slang phrases like 'red herring'.

The reason it is important to compose a well-written, logically organised essay, is that you want to get your message across. You need to show that you have done the reading, understood the facts - and have composed an argument based on the evidence. You should be familiar with this, otherwise you would not have been accepted on to the course, but the point is always worth repeating.

Please remember: you need to be literary, so do not write essays as lists. Do not write paragraphs consisting of one or two sentences.

If you need a good text on English grammar then I recommend:
Michael Swan, Practical English Usage, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Hints on essay planning

Think about the question. This might seem obvious, but there might be hidden dimensions to an apparently simple question which you only identify after reflection.

Plan your essay. Write out paragraph headings (for your own convenience) and summarise the information you're going to put in each one.

Essay structure

The simplest instructions for academic essay writing are these.

Say what you are going to say (introduction)

Say it

Say what you have said (conclusion)

In your essays you should analyse given texts, primary and secondary sources that deal with the issue and/or time period in question. You will be expected to include and develop a clearly stated conclusion or argument about the issue. The precise criteria are given in the Student Assessment Handbook, posted on the General Information page on Moodle

Introduction

You need a good introduction. Introduce the question - don't assume the reader knows what it is. Give some background if necessary. State the question and say how you intend to argue it. But avoid this very common pitfall: do NOT state your conclusion in the introduction. Do NOT write, 'this essay will argue that the Moon is made of cheese'. It may well be made of cheese, but you can not say that until you have investigated all the evidence and allowed it to lead you to your conclusion

In your introduction, make sure that you provide an academic context or theoretical framework at the beginning of the essay, using previous academic and scholarly work in the field. The reason is that your works should build on previous scholarship.

For example:

Patrick Curry argued that astrology should be seen as divination.[1] Campion disagreed and Hand took a different approach, suggesting that, in some cases astrology appears to have some of the characteristics of divination.[2] This essay will consider the evidence, replying on testimony from astrologers

Do NOT begin your essay with a journalistic flourish, a nice story or a beautiful myth. Journalistic flourishes have no place in an academic essay and the proper place for

nice stories or beautiful myths, if they are relevant, is evidence in the body of the essay.

The body of the essay

Always consider contrary evidence. Remember, you are not prosecuting a case. You are investigating a problem. Keep an open mind: you might reach the opposite conclusion to the one you expected.

Make sure that everything in your essay is relevant to the answering of your question. DO NOT include interesting information just because it is interesting.

Please remember that the following are amongst the criteria on which your work is judged:

familiarity with the latest scholarship

- use of primary source material - i.e. raw evidence

use of secondary material - i.e., scholarly literature

clear-writing and ability to communicate with both specialist and non-specialist audiences - i.e., do not assume that your reader, not even your tutor, possesses exactly the same knowledge as you.

The full list of criteria is given in the Student Assessment Handbook

Read your essay through when you've finished. Then read it again. If necessary leave it over night and read it a third time. This is the best way to spot passages which don't make sense. Read it out loud if it helps: it usually does.

Conclusion

You need a good conclusion, drawing your arguments together and stating your final point of view. Your conclusion should conclude the essay, NOT open up new questions or speculate on matters which are not part of the essay. It must answer the question posed at the beginning.

Do not embark on a series of rhetorical flourishes concerned with the function of astrology, the nature of the cosmos or the future of humanity: one of the most common failings of essay writing is to use the conclusion to make predictions about the future, policy statements or comments on the world in general. DON'T! A conclusion should conclude on the basis of the evidence and arguments you have presented: it should answer the question posed in your title.

Critical and Literature Reviews

This might sound obvious, but ideally a review should begin with an introduction of the paper being reviewed, which states where it was published and in what type of publication, even when this is in the heading.

For example:

James Brown's paper 'One Summer in Somerset', dealing with the soul in modern cosmology, was first published in The Journal for Peripatetic Paradigms in Spring 2002.

Separate guidelines for Critical and Literature Reviews are posted on Moodle.

Word length

Try to stick the prescribed word length. However, we can accept a margin of 5%.

Bibliographies and footnotes are not included in the word length (you MUST, though, submit your bibliography in the same file as your essay).

Please note: You must include a bibliography but it should include ONLY works cited in your text.

Sources

Referencing your sources is extremely important.

All academic arguments must be based on evidence, and the evidence is usually provided by references. Evidence can come in different forms but the major form we will be dealing with is textual, or literary. Such sources can be classified in different ways.

1. Primary sources are the original source material. In a literary subject like history they are mainly the written archives from the past and, in the history of astrology, then they are mainly the texts written by astrologers, including everything from Babylonian clay tablets to medieval texts and modern books and magazines. In archaeology the primary sources are usually material artefacts from the past, or evidence in the landscape.

But the nature of the primary source changes depending on the context and topic of investigation. If you are writing about Babylonian astrology you will have no use for modern astrological websites, which may be positively misleading, But, if your investigation actually concerns the use of astrology on the web, then such sites become your primary material.

When web sites are utilised as sources some statement should be given as to what they are and why they are considered reputable (also see below).

Follow this rule: if you can't support academic information with academic sources then leave it out.

As primary sources are the main source of evidence, it is good to consult as many as you can, given the time constraints you will be under, and quote from them.

When you learn the techniques in the Research Methods module, you will begin to create your own primary source material, based in data you acquire through interviews or questionnaires.

2. Secondary sources are usually the scholarly and academic texts, which analyse and comment on the primary source material. In history the primary sources are the history books written by academic historians. In anthropology, they are the anthropology books written by academic anthropologists. As a student, you place the

information and evidence gleaned from the primary source material in the context of ideas and theoretical frameworks gleaned from the secondary material.

The secondary sources act as organising frameworks for you to assess the meaning and relevance of the primary sources, but the primary sources in turn help you judge whether the arguments presented by the secondary sources are reasonable: can you support them or should they be criticised? In other words, Curry, as a secondary source, uses Weber's theory of enchantment to explain the appeal and nature of astrology. As a student, you would use the primary data (books and statements by, and behaviour of, astrologers), to investigate whether Curry's theory can be supported or criticised.

3. Tertiary sources are those which quote sources which cite the original evidence. Many history books do this when the author was unable or unprepared to check the original primary source. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias are tertiary sources. If you want to cite a work in a reference which you have found cited in a tertiary source then you must include the full information - the work being cited and the work in which it is cited.

Lectures and notes provided in the course material are tertiary sources and should NEVER be cited in your student essays.

Extracts from published works which are given out as handouts as part of your course may be cited.

Always use primary sources where you can, especially when they are easily available - such as Plato, Aristotle and Jung. If you quote a secondary source, (for example, assuming that what Brown says Jung said, Jung really did say), you are quoting somebody else's possibly misleading conclusion. Besides, you need to go to the primary source and form your own opinion.

You will enjoy your work much more if you go to primary sources. You may also produce work which is original.

Be critical of secondary sources. Do not use such sources just to build a case without considering whether they might be wrong or contain partial truths. Even if perfectly fair, you might still disagree. If you quote Brown, who is hostile to astrology, as saying that there is no scientific evidence for astrology, stop and consider whether this statement is true. Does the author cite any evidence? Does he or she have a bias or ideological position? Is the statement worth anymore than a record of Brown's opinion? Similarly, if Green claims that astrology is divination, don't just reproduce this: ask whether it is true or not. Is Green's evidence convincing, and is the argument flawed?

When citing secondary sources, there is a right way and a wrong way:

Wrong: 'Jung said synchronicity is meaningful coincidence'.^[3]

Right: 'According to Main, Jung said that synchronicity is meaningful coincidence'.^[4]

Main may be important to your argument but he may have misread Jung, so you do not want to tie yourself to his conclusion. (Actually, Main is a very good source, but the principle holds).

In the wrong version you are assuming that Main is right, when he may be wrong. In the right version you are reporting Main's view, which you may then go on to discuss, without tying yourself to his opinion.

In general do not use tertiary sources, to make authoritative statements. All such references show is the opinion of the writer. If you are looking at such opinions this is relevant, if not - then not. A tertiary reference would be one which cites secondary references. A secondary reference is one which works from the primary sources.

However, note that Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries are also tertiary sources. It helps to use Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions (after all, we recommend the on-line version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, available through the University's electronic resources), but don't rely on them. It is better to look for definitions given in the academic texts and then discuss and use them to further your investigation.

Use appropriate texts for authoritative statements.

In other words, use history books for statements about history. Use anthropology books for statements about anthropology, astronomy books for astronomy and astrology books for astrology.

On the other hand, if you are discussing people's opinions, you may want to consider what anthropologists say about astrology, or astrologers say about history, or what astronomers say about astrology.

Always be careful with websites. For example, an astrological website provides evidence only of what that particular website is saying, and perhaps of what astrologers in general are saying.

Use of multiple sources.

The reason for using multiple sources is not to impress the person marking your essay. It is so that you become aware of different points of view and to demonstrate this to your marker.

The Web.

Material published in the web often looks authoritative precisely because any material which is well laid out and published imitates authoritative work. However, much material on the web which poses as academic is in fact of an extremely poor quality: it is increasingly common for students, including undergraduates to post their student essays on their web sites. This material may be inaccurate, poorly thought out and contain errors: you may cite material which has failed.

Therefore, the first consideration when using any material from the web is to consider the nature of the site:

Is it an official site? Such as '.gov'?

Is it an academic site? Such as '.edu' or '.ac.uk'?

Is it an academic journal?

Does the material have adequate sources?

If not, be suspicious. Sites that are none of the above should only be counted as evidence of themselves. For example, a poor undergraduate essay on the web is an example only of the opinions of the author - and of the posting of undergraduate essays on the web.

NOTE:

when citing JSTOR articles, treat them as print articles. There is no need to give the URL.

when citing books on Google Books, treat them as print books. There is no need to give the URL.

Wikipedia can be a useful source for links, but should NEVER be cited (unless as an example of the kind of information one finds on Wikipedia). Anyone can edit Wikipedia articles and the information you cite may have been uploaded by someone with no knowledge of the material, or edited by people with an overly hostile or sympathetic attitude to the material.

Style tips

Follow these hints:

Make sure that your paragraphs are arranged in a logical sequence, avoiding scattering the same sort of information throughout the essay.

A good method to follow is to include in each paragraph an argument together with some relevant facts and a quotation or two from another author.

If you are studying history, pay attention to chronology, and make sure that you keep your information roughly in chronological order. This is not absolutely necessary, and sometimes can't be done, but it's useful.

The first time you mention a major historical character, give their dates and introduce them e.g. 'the Greek philosopher Plato (c.428-348 BC)'. This is important if you are discussing their ideas.

HOWEVER, avoid doing this with everyone you cite, as the result is to skew the impression of their work. For example, if you write 'Astrologer Rob Hand' and 'Science historian Alan Chapman', you may give the reader a different impression than if you write 'Historian of ideas Rob Hand' and 'Church of England member, Alan Chapman'. Therefore, with most sources that you cite, give the name of the author, but do not describe them further unless it is absolutely essential to your argument.

Avoid repeating the same word too often - try to find similes. E.g. 'important' could become 'significant', 'principal' or 'paramount', depending on the context.

When you use the word 'this' to refer to a statement in a previous sentence please make sure that you have made it clear to what 'this' refers.

For example:

'Plato's insistence on reincarnation was rejected by Zeno, who believed that nature is all there is, and has had a huge impact on modern technology. This was adopted by Plotinus'

This is a common mistake, but there is no clear indication as to what 'this' refers.

Make sure your division into paragraphs is logical and do not use paragraphs which are too short. Paragraphs which consist of one, two or three sentences are too short. A paragraph of one sentence should never be allowed.

If your sentences are too short your essay will read like a list. If they're too long the reader will be lost by the time they reach the end.

Do not ask direct questions, such as 'Why?' in your text.

Avoid colloquialisms: e.g. 'Brown's work was a waste of space', or 'astrology is the other side of the coin'.

You may be tempted to make personal comments, perhaps about astrology. Don't - unless they are relevant to the question under discussion and you can support them with evidence.

In fact, avoid personal comments altogether. To write basic academic essays you need to be able to 'objectify' the information, which means standing back and putting yourself outside the frame. As examples:

Don't write 'It is my opinion that.....'. Do write 'The evidence suggests that...' (and then cite the evidence).

Don't write 'I believe that...'. Do write 'It can be argued that'.

Quite simply, NEVER make statements that begin 'I...'. (EXCEPT in circumstances which will be explained when the situation arises).

Neither should you use 'we'. This always begs the question - who is 'we' and, even if 'we' knew who 'we' were, how could you speak on behalf of 'we'.

Don't use 'you' either. (Think: who is 'you'?)

One very important point on writing style - please avoid the use of 'us' as well as 'we'. The effect is to make it seem that you are making statements on behalf of the reader. I know it's common writing device to use 'us' and 'we' to draw the reader in to the writer's argument, but it's not good practice in academic writing, in which clarity is required. By writing 'we think this' or 'we separate human and world psyche in our astrological thinking' - the reader is entitled to ask, who is 'we' and 'whose' astrological thinking? 'Certainly not mine', they might answer and your argument immediately fails.

Don't write 'it is interesting to note that' (of course it is: otherwise it wouldn't be in your essay).

For the same reason, do not use phrases such as 'it is worthy of note that'. What are you implying?: that the rest of the essay is not worthy of note?

Never use 'contractions': you must write 'for example' and not 'e.g.'. Don't use 'i.e.' and never use 'etc.'

Explain technical terms. For example, if you write 'divinatory techniques', 'psychological astrology', 'animus' or 'anima' with no further explanation, the reader will not know what you are talking about.

The definite and indefinite articles: this is very important if English is not your first language. Most non-English speakers have difficulty with the ways in which the words 'the', 'an' and 'a' are used in English. Many use 'the' when it is not required and omit it when it is required. The rules are given on-line at the way-link English site <http://www.waylink-english.co.uk/?page=31420>

As an example, note the profound differences between these two sentences:

1. 'astrology and alchemy were once the cornerstones of the west's world view'
2. 'astrology and alchemy were once cornerstones of the west's world view'

Examples of bad practice:

ALWAYS AVOID UNSUPPORTED GENERALISATIONS, ASSERTED AS IF THEY ARE TRUE WITH NO SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Never make assertions which cannot be supported by evidence, not even general assertions about what astrology is or does. Do not say 'astrology is such-and-such' or 'astrologers do this and that', unless you can back such claims with some evidence. It is not enough to make such generalised statements from your own personal opinion. You might think you are right, but who is to say that anyone else agrees with you? These are examples from past student work:

Jehovah's Witnesses are viewed as a dangerous cult
The discovery of Neolithic cultures which revered the feminine is synchronous with the rise of modern women
Sceptics and critics of astrology have rarely studied it.
Some commentators have described Plato as a mystic.
Astrology is a valuable tool for psychological growth
Today's leaders need greater skills and resilience than ever before
.....in today's increasingly violent society....
It cannot be denied...
Ptolemy is guilty of turning astrology into a science
Psychological astrology is essentially secular.....
Astrologers think that.....
Everyone knows a superstition

Many cultures, even today, retain folk memories of the past.
Durkheim's ideas do not bear scrutiny'
Eliade makes a fundamental mistake as he fails to distinguish between...'

And don't write

'The ancients...' (who were they?)
'Over the centuries...' (when exactly?)
'Over the ages...' (when was this?)

Instead you could write

'In the ancient near east', or 'In classical Greece', or
'From the fifth to second centuries BCE'
'From the fifteen to seventeenth centuries'

Please don't provide a list followed by 'to name but a few'. What are the others and why aren't you mentioning them?

Do not ask rhetorical questions, such as: 'Can anyone disagree that astrology is divination?' (Yes of course they can!)

Do not instruct the reader to do things, such as 'Compare Plato's argument with Aristotle's' (it is your job to do this, not the reader's).

Do not write, 'in this all too brief study...space forbids', 'unfortunately, in this brief essay...', or 'it is outside the scope of this essay' in order to excuse the exclusion of material. Don't blame your content on the word length: everyone else is writing to the same length as you.

Avoid sweeping statements:

Sweeping statements which make huge comments about the nature of history, society or the cosmos may look fine when you write them, and may seem to be useful ways of linking one part of an essay to another. But AVOID THEM. They will open far more questions than they solve. Here's an example:

'As the Renaissance dawns, a shift in thinking occurs, from a prevailing mystical and symbolic world view to a concern for the wonders of Nature, and reverence for humanity's role within that.'

This might, at first glance, look like a wonderfully convincing piece of prose. But I would ask:

When did the Renaissance dawn?

What country are we talking about?

How do you know there was a shift in thinking?

Who was involved in this shift? Men? Women? Slaves? Priests? The Irish?

What is a mystical and symbolic world view?

Did it really prevail before the Renaissance dawned? And amongst whom?

And did nobody marvel at nature before the Renaissance?

Other examples include:

'in the last few hundred years, collectively, contemporary Westerners have become increasingly culturally biased towards the empirical sciences.'

(How do we know this? Contemporary westerners live now, so what were they doing a few hundred years ago? Who are contemporary westerners anyway? And what is the evidence?)

Figures of speech

Avoid figures of speech.

For example, to talk of a movement hitting 'critical mass' or 'coming of age' may make sense in an impressionistic sense but do not help your case if you are striving for clarity. If you say that something is 'the other side of the coin' what exactly do you mean? What is a 'smoking gun'?

Describing well-known people

Sometimes it helps to describe the individuals you are talking about, sometimes it doesn't.

For example, if you write 'astrologer Rob Hand', what are you saying? That Rob Hand can speak as an astrologer but not as a historian? That what Rob Hand says is constrained by his being an astrologer?

Also, when you add adjectives to your labels, think about what you are saying. For example, if you write, 'Franz Cumont, the distinguished historian', what are you saying by the use of the word 'distinguished'?

Often it is not necessary to describe an individual when you are quoting from their work as the context is given by the title and publication details of their work.

Punctuation

Pay extremely careful attention to punctuation. Wrong use of it can completely change your meaning.

Examples of missing or misplaced punctuation:

George W. Bush on apocalyptic Christians in the White House:

'First, I heard of that'
edited on White House web site to
'First I heard of that'.

Or Hollywood actress overheard:

'Those things over there are my husband's'
'Those things over there are my husbands'

Direct quotations

Direct quotations can be included in the overall word length but should comprise no more than 10% of the total wordage.

Quotations of under 50 words should be in the main body of the text enclosed between single quotation marks.

Always use single quotation marks for short quotations

Use double quotation marks for quotations within quotations.

For example, 'In Campion's view Marx's notion of history as "farce" is unsustainable'.

Quotations of over 50 words should be separated from the main body of the text by one line space above and below, without quotation marks and indented. (Always indent the left-hand margin. Indent the right hand margin if you consider it necessary for clarity).

Quotes should not be italicised.

If a quote is relatively long in relation to the overall length of the essay, paraphrase it in your own words.

Example:

Knight, for whom Turner worked in 1808, was deeply anti-religious but the orientalist William Jones, who greatly influenced Turner, was both a devout Christian and respectful of Hinduism. Jones' work on oriental languages which spanned the years 1770-94 stated that there must be a relationship between the Hindu and classical Greek Pantheons, and that both were fundamentally expressions of the sun. He concluded,

It seems a well-founded opinion that the whole crowd of gods and goddesses in ancient Rome and modern Varanes [Varanasi], mean only the powers of nature, and principally those of the SUN, expressed in a variety of ways, and by a multitude of fanciful names.[5]

From Turner's statement, 'the Sun is God' I propose the use of the phrase the 'sun-as-god', to describe the theory that all major male deities originated as solar gods.

Quotations should never be italicised.

Always introduce quotations. Do not just break your text and insert a quotation. Begin with 'As Smith and Jones claimed....', 'In Smith and Jones' opinion', 'As Smith and Jones argued in their 1953 analysis of the topic...'. This is not just a matter of style and readability. If you do not introduce a quotation then it may not be clear who is speaking.

Do not introduce a quote with a colon. For example, 'Thorndike argued: astronomy played a vital part in history'.

If you insert a direct quote in the essay with no introduction you will be marked down on the grounds that you have inserted information with no attempt to explain why it helps answer the question.

Citing the author in the text.

It is also necessary to be clear when you are repeating other authors' opinions and arguments, rather than facts. Hence quotes, or references to other people's arguments need introducing as, for example, 'Curry believed that...but Campion disagreed'.

To make the point, if we write 'Some scholars argue that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival'[6] , then which of the following is correct?:

1. Campion is an example of a scholar who argues that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival

or

2. Campion is reporting that various scholars argue that the Renaissance saw a pagan revival.

Further, if (2) is correct, what is Campion's attitude? Does he think those scholars were mistaken?

In other words, always help the reader understand your evidence as much as you can. It therefore helps to cite an author's name in the actual text, rather than just in the reference.

References

References are not just essential; they are very useful and you must use them in your essays. They allow the reader to pursue their own ideas, starting with your work, and show your supervisor that you have done the reading.

Some students think that referencing everything obscures their original voice. The opposite is true. Most students who write essays without citations and references are saying nothing original, merely repeating their own or others' assumptions. Learning to write academically is like learning a losing musical instrument: playing notes aimlessly is not 'creative' – creativity comes when one has learnt technique. So, with academic writing, students learn the skills of using evidence to build up your own argument, and reach an original conclusion. The art is to avoid writing a list of other people's opinions, but instead to use the evidence you find in the literature to reach your own reasoned position.

When to Use References

You should ALWAYS use references when you are quoting directly from any other book or article. It is also necessary to use one when you are mentioning a controversial fact or summarising an argument from another author.

Quite simply, references enable the reader to pick up your research and take it further. They can go to the books you cite and then pursue their own research. This is good academic practice and is part of being a community of scholars who share information. In a student essay it enables your adviser to know what reading you

have done and to check your references. Also, if you do not quote your sources, you may be plagiarising.

Do not be tempted to include information which is interesting or useful, but not part of the general flow of your essay, in a footnote. If material is relevant it should be in your main text. If not, it shouldn't be included at all.

You should use a reference

1. When you include a direct quotation (at the end of the sentence containing the quotation)
2. When you include an item of factual information which may not be general knowledge. 'The second world war ended in 1945' does not need a reference but 'Sales of astrological almanacs in 1945 reached 350,000' does.
3. If you are paraphrasing someone else's opinions.

One weakness of past students with a background in astrology has been to take astrological claims for granted, as if they are common knowledge. They are not. Astrology evolves and astrologers disagree. However, if you write statements about astrology such as 'Venus is a feminine planet' or 'Uranus is a revolutionary', you absolutely **MUST** cite a source, whether it's Ptolemy, Gadbury, Leo or Parker – or anyone else. You must not take such things for granted.

When in doubt use a reference. Too many is not a problem. Too few is a problem.

For example, the following sentence is making a claim which requires a reference: 'The wisdom of Plato (C428 – 348BC) supports the evolution of the Greek philosophy that underpins western thought existing today in twenty – first century Western Europe'.

Citing references: you must cite the edition used but often it is necessary or useful (if the first publication was a considerable time before the edition quoted) to cite the date of the first edition, which should be placed in square brackets after the main reference in the bibliography.

Adorno, Theodor, *The Stars Down to Earth*, London: Routledge 1994 [1953].

Referencing Styles

There are two main styles of referencing, the 'Footnote/Endnote' or 'Documentary' or 'Documentary-Note Style'. This is generally used in the humanities and uses a number in the text, usually in superscript, with a footnote (at the bottom of the page) or an endnote (at the end of the chapter or book). MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Students **MUST** use this system.

The other system is the so-called 'Harvard' style, which is generally used in the sciences and social sciences. Our department guidelines dictate that students should be aware of both systems. If you are taking a MA in Archaeology or Anthropology you should use the Harvard system.

MA CAA students should see the separate guidelines posted on the 'Footnote/Endnote' or 'Documentary' under MA CAA Referencing Guidelines.

For full instructions on the web see:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

NB. References are cited in slightly different forms in footnotes and in bibliographies.

The relevant examples are:

N = the way a source is cited in a footnote

B = the way a source is cited in a bibliography

The examples listed as T and R are not relevant. These relate to the Harvard system

Websites

Citing from websites is a new problem. However, the same principle applies as with print texts: give the information as fully as possible. Some information may be missing, such as page numbers, but there is extra information that you must give, including the complete URL, the date it was last updated (if known – it may not be) and the date you consulted it.

It is not necessary to give the URL for JSTOR references, or other digitised academic papers: treat them as print sources.

Referencing Material from Non-English language sources

This particularly concerns students from outside the English speaking world: if you wish to cite material from your own language, then:

1. translate the passage into English
2. put the English translation in the text of the essay
3. put the original language text in a footnote.

Reading

We can all read - otherwise we wouldn't be involved in a university. However, it is easy to become seriously bogged down in academic reading and spend so long staring at the printed page that there's no time left to do anything else. This is a university degree so a substantial time commitment is required. However, we have attempted to simplify your task by giving specific readings and page references in many cases.

If you have a sound grounding in a particular topic area practice scanning the additional material. Some people are able to turn over pages at speed looking for words or phrases of special interest. Or you can tackle specific chapters first, leaving others until later. There are no hard and fast rules and we all have to find the way to work which suits us.

Doing Research.

Many people highlight important passages in books when reading. This is useful but makes it difficult to organise essays because you're constantly looking back through various books to find the relevant texts. The result is that information throughout the essay can be disorganised.

It is essential for most people to keep their own notes (in addition to highlighting texts if that's what you do). Some people keep them on record cards. I use sheets of essay. A good way to do this is to make a note of important themes while you're reading. You can then keep separate notes on 'the origins of Greek astrology', or 'Christian opposition to astrology', or any other idea which strikes you as important. The notes don't have to be long - you can restrict yourself to headlines with page references if that's all you need. But do make a note of factual evidence, major themes and the main arguments put forward by the authors you are reading.

As you make notes make sure that you include page references back to the original source.

Good Writing Practice in History

Adapted from Theron F. Schlabach, Prof. of History, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana (1996).

With thanks to Elaine Chalus, Bath Spa University

Thou shalt begin with an outline that buildeth thy entire paper around thy central ideas.

§ An outline built around a THESIS AND SUBTHESES is much better than one that only categorizes information or puts it into chronological order — although topical analysis and narrative also have their uses. No matter how you organize your writing, though, your central task is to ask penetrating, interpretive questions of your sources. In order to do this, structure your outline so that it emphasizes what answers those questions. Use incidental facts merely as supporting evidence.

§ Facts and details should always — and clearly — support the main ideas.

§ Do not relegate the real point (or points) of the paper to the conclusion.

II. Thou shalt avoid self-conscious discussion of thy intended purposes, thy strategy, thy sources, and thy research methodology.

§ Draw your reader's attention to the points you are making, not to yourself and/or to your research/writing process (unless the misery and sweat of your process of research and writing is part of your argument). Keep the focus on what you have to say, not on the question of how you hope to develop and say it. Do not parade around in your mental underwear.

§ Discuss methodology and sources, when necessary, simply and directly, usually at the beginning of the essay.

§ Avoid use of the first person.

§ Avoid slang.

§ Avoid contractions.

§ Avoid self-conscious-sounding phrases such as: 'now let us turn to'; 'I will demonstrate that'; 'now we see that'; even 'I think that'; especially (even worse), avoid using, 'I feel that'.

§ Similarly, avoid phrases that tell your reader explicitly what you intend to do or to do next, or that tell explicitly where to see emphasis. They are clunky and awkward and unsophisticated. Look at how published authors of good journal articles shift from one point to another — mine the articles you read for techniques and tips on transitions and emphasis. Try similar strategies for yourself. Be aware that it takes time and practice to develop a smooth style; don't be afraid to work towards it.

§ Offer your reader cues and clues about the essay's structure and direction in the opening paragraph or two. Here you can be more explicit in order to lay out the essential question(s) you will address and to hint at the answers you may find. Strive to be subtle — even artistic.

III. Thou mayest covet other writers' ideas but thou shalt not steal them.

§ Rule of thumb: when in doubt, footnote.

§ Document EVERY quotation, paraphrase, or crucial idea that you borrow from a source.

§ Document those facts (statistics, dates, events, etc.) which you cannot consider common textbook knowledge — especially those which could be controversial or which are vital to the development of your argument, analysis, or narrative.

§ You may, if referencing heavily, combine footnotes or endnotes so that one note lists, in order, all of the references that you have made in a given paragraph. Never make one footnote or endnote cover material in more than one paragraph.

IV. Thou shalt strive to be clear, not cute. Do not use jargon when ordinary English will do; do not use abstract terms where a vivid one is possible.

§ Learn first of all to write lean, tough, logical, precise prose. After you have learned how to do that, then experiment with metaphors, allusions and fancily turned phrases. Use these sparingly — and only if they add to communication and understanding.

§ Never use more words than necessary.

§ Do not try to impress your reader with obscure vocabulary or unnecessary use of foreign or specialized terms. Avoid being pretentious or pompous — or incomprehensible!

§ Use active verbs wherever possible. Avoid changing verbs into abstract nouns, usually with 'tion' endings: e.g., 'She helped organize...', not, 'She helped in the organization of...'; 'He used Marx's ideas...', not, 'He participated in the utilization of the ideas of Marx.'

V. Honour the paragraph. Remember that one paragraph should express one significant idea. Do not break your discussion into short paragraphs that each cover only fragments of an idea.

§ The paragraph should have a recognizable idea, usually expressed as a topic sentence.

§ You are not a journalist; you should not write in soundbites. Your reader has an attention span significantly longer than that of the average gnat (or reader of tabloids). Three sentences are usually the minimum for a paragraph; most need more. Short paragraphs seldom develop ideas and they are too brief to be subtle; neither can they provide sophisticated analyses.

§ The maximum length for a good paragraph is roughly one typed, double-spaced page. A good length for most is 1/2 to 3/4 page.

§ You can violate the one-sentence-paragraph rule occasionally — to make a succinct statement stand out sharply for emphasis, or, to make a transition to a new section of the paper.

VI. Thou shalt write for the educated, non-specialist reader: i.e., as if the reader is intelligent, but uninformed on your particular subject. You will, as a result, identify all

persons, organizations, etc., that are not common knowledge, and make your paper a self-sufficient unit.

§ Avoid temptation — do not plunge into a subject without adequately establishing it in time, place and context; do not refer to authors and/or (obscure) historical events as if everyone knew of them.

§ In the first reference to a person, organization, event or thing, give the complete name (not only initials). Thereafter, you may shorten the reference. Refer to a person only by his/her last name, or by his/her title if there is one. Avoid the familiarity of using only the first name. If you are using titles, check to make sure that you are using them correctly. In the case of an organization, if you wish to use an acronym after the first reference, include the acronym in brackets after the first full reference: e.g., Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

VII. Thou shalt use quotations sparingly and judiciously — to provide example, colour and clarity. Quotations should highlight your argument and/or add piquancy. The surrounding text must clear who is being quoted and why.

§ Do NOT quote just to up your word count! Do NOT use longer quotations than necessary.

§ Effective quotation is a literary device dependent upon careful selection; it is not a way to transfer unprocessed and undigested information from your sources to your reader. Your bibliography should direct the reader to the source, if s/he wants to read it; your quotation should only include what you need to make your point.

§ Quoting does NOT add authority, unless you have already established that the source carries authority. Even then, paraphrasing may well be more appropriate (and less jarring). It is your words and your thoughts that the tutor wants to read, after all!

§ With short quotations (under 50 words), try to avoid quoting whole sentences. Your language will flow better, and you will avoid strange sentence structure and abrupt shifts in style. Excerpt the key, pithy phrase that illustrates your point and integrate it into your own sentence.

VIII. Thou shalt not relegate essential information to thy footnotes

§ Keep discursive footnotes to a minimum. If the information is important enough to print, get it into the text; if not, save the paper.

IX. Thou shalt write consistently in one tense — usually the past tense. Keep your reader firmly anchored in time.

§ The 'historical present' causes more confusion than it is worth. Having a strong and unconfused sense of time and context is essential for good historical writing. Using the present tense to write about the past suggests that the author lacks appreciation for historical setting.

§ Historical essays and book reviews present special problems; however, the author's act of writing a book took place in the past, even if only a year or two ago. Thus, 'Hofstadter ARGUED', not 'argues', in his Age of Reform. On the other hand, the book, if it is the subject of the verb, always makes the same point: thus, the present tense is fine, i.e., Hofstadter's Age of Reform 'argues', not 'argued'.

§ Use time phrases, as necessary, to avoid confusion: e.g., 'in 1907', 'two years later', and so on. If the date is important, include it; if the amount of time that has

elapsed is important, use a phrase that indicates the passage of time, such as 'two years later'.

§ Perfect tense is very helpful, indeed often necessary, for keeping the timeline clear — especially when you shift or flash forward or backward from some reference point in time : 'In August, 1893 Smith met Jones at the World's Exhibition in Chicago. Three years earlier they had met in London. Now they met as old friends.' Note the 'had met'.

X. Thou shalt not use the passive voice.

§ The passive voice — i.e., 'the order was given', as opposed to the active voice, 'The duke gave the order' — destroys clarity because it often obscures who was doing/directing the action. either the passive voice provides incomplete information, or it distances the reader from the action by presenting it at one remove (basically back-end-forward). Complete, but in the passive voice: 'the order to charge was given by the duke of Wellington'; complete but in the active voice: 'the duke of Wellington gave the order to charge'.

§ Writing that is predominantly in the passive voice is often abstract and colourless. The passive voice does NOT give what you are saying more authority, neither does it makes your writing more scholarly. It is often the refuge of the insecure. For a strong, vigorous, convincing style write in the active voice.

FINALLY: CHECK LIST BEFORE SENDING ESSAYS

BEFORE YOU UPLOAD YOUR ESSAYS, CHECK THE FOLLOWING?

Have I written the title exactly as specified in the assessment criteria, or agreed with my tutor?

Have I included a proper introduction?

Have I read through to check that there are no passages which don't make sense?

Do my references and bibliography conform to the required method?

For example, have I included page numbers in the references, and place of publication in the bibliography?

And have I referenced the author's name in the text where it helps make more sense?

And are all quotations introduced?

Have I deleted all reference to 'we', 'our' or 'us'?

Have I included a proper conclusion, based on the material I have presented in the essay, and avoiding recommendations for the future?

Have I inserted page numbers and a header and footer?

IF NOT, DO NOT UPLOAD YOUR ESSAY

AND READ THE WRITING GUIDELINES ON MOODLE AGAIN

[1] Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, Oxford: Berg, 2004, pp. 1-3.

[2] Nicholas Campion, *What do Astrologers Believe?*, Oxford: Granta, 2006, p. 22; Robert Hand 'Introduction to the Liber Hermetis', in *Hermes, Liber Hermetis, Part I*, trans. Robert Zoller, Project Hindsight Latin Track Vol. II, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia: Golden Hind Press 1993, pp. iii-iv.

[3] Roderick Main, *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, London: Routledge 1997, p. 242.

[4] Roderick Main, *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, London: Routledge 1997, p. 242.

[5] William Jones, *Hyperbole*, London 1807, vol. 3, pp. 385-6, cited in John Gage, *Illusions*, Oxford 1989, p. 42).

[6] Nicholas Campion, *What do Astrologers Believe?*, Oxford: Granta, 2006, p. 46.