



Faculty of Humanities and the Performing Arts

**Sophia Centre
for the Study of Cosmology in Culture**

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

**MA ESSAY WRITING HANDBOOK
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MA WRITING (AND READING) GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

These guidelines emerge out of our 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 if you 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.

A huge number of errors in essays result from not reading these guidelines! My advice is print them, sit down with a yellow (or colour of your choice) highlighter pen and coffee (or tea...water....), and read them carefully.

Below I have used **bold**, **capitals** and **underlining** to draw attention to areas which I have found to be widely ignored! And please read right through to the Appendix on Plagiarism.

This handbook is designed to be as clear and helpful as possible!

You will also find hints at

<http://www.waylink-english.co.uk/?page=60000>

One important point which we always stress: learning should be a pleasure and the results fulfilling. Acquiring and improving academic writing requires that certain precise rules are followed, but this is exactly as it is when learning any other skill, such as a language or an artistic skill. It is our intention, as your academic staff, that the MA should be a pleasure.

WRITING

We can all write. We write e mails, shopping lists and some of us write for our jobs. But there are different styles of writing. There is poetry and there is prose. And then there is fiction and non-fiction. Non-fiction may include technical reports or historical biography. In the Humanities we use a particular style, which we will be teaching you. Look at this as the same as learning a style of art: you may be a potter or a painter and, if you are a painter, you may work with oils or watercolours, or may be abstract or figurative. If you are a dancer you may do the samba or the tango. In every case there are particular skills to learn and a different mode of expression. And so it is with writing: our aim is to enable you to use the precise skills of academic writing to convey a message which anyone else across the academic world, in any discipline in any country, can appreciate.

SUBMISSION OF ESSAYS

Uploading your essay

On the page for each course on the University's on-line Learning Zone, you will find instructions to 'Upload your 1000 Word Essay here' or 'Upload your 4000 Word Essay here'. Simply follow the instructions. If, by any chance, the upload is not available or you get an error message, e mail your essay to Nick Campion.

Format

You **MUST** submit your essay in a form in which we can read it - i.e. Word. Don't use alternative formats, such as PDFs. The reason is that markers sometimes insert comments in essays to return them, and we cannot do that with PDFs. Thus your essays must be in either .doc or .docx format

Line Spacing

It is acceptable to single-space your essays. In the past, when all essays were submitted, marked and returned in hard-copy it was essential to submit double-spaced copy. Now that work is submitted and returned electronically, this is no longer necessary. Besides, single spacing saves paper if we print essays out, so conforms to the University's 'sustainability' agenda.

But please note: **Dissertations** are submitted in hard-copy as well as electronically and therefore have to be double spaced.

Cover Sheet

You should fix to the front of your essay a cover sheet, which you will find on the MA CAA Homepage on Moodle. Essay and coversheet should be submitted in the same document, not separately.

Checking List before Uploading

Before you upload your essay:

Step 1 -On the front of your essay paste in the Essay Cover Sheet and complete the required information.

Step 2 -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.

Step 3 - Insert a header which includes your name and student number and a page number: you can either simply insert a page number or use 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:

Step 4 - Below the title, write the word count. For example:

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

(some students create a template in their first essay which they can then use throughout the MA).

Step 5-Naming of the document you upload

You should name your word document

First Name - Last Name – Module Code – Assignment

For example

Nick Campion – AHAN7003 – Essay 2

Please do not write your full essay title. First it's not necessary and, second, long titles can make it difficult to transfer essays between different folders.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the use of other people's words without attribution. It is the most serious offence but is easily avoided by sufficient referencing and paraphrasing in your own words. See Appendix 1.

WORD LENGTH

Stick to the prescribed word length. You should not write less than the required amount. However, you can write 5% over. If you exceed that length, we may not read it! Writing to a required length is universal – all authors and journalists have word limits, so this is not unusual.

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

You can count the number of words using MS Word by going to Review-Word Count and following the instructions. If you get stuck, please ask.

Writing to a prescribed length is normal in almost all writing, whether academic or journalistic, and all published commissions are set to an exact length, so this is part of the normal discipline.

REFERENCING

References are absolutely essential. This is explained in the MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology referencing guide for History and Medieval Studies which is posted on the MA CAA Homepage on Moodle.

Bibliography

You must include a bibliography of works used. Don't include works you haven't used. If you find any course documentation that says you don't need a bibliography, ignore it: it is left over from former times! The required format is set out in the School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology referencing guidelines.

LATE SUBMISSION

Good time management is considered an important part of being a student. The ability to both conduct and complete research is essential to scholarship. For example, if you are submitting an article or book for publication, you are expected to work to deadlines. If you are a journalist and your work is late, you lose your job.

University deadlines are strict but the university is also extremely sympathetic to students who get into difficulties or experience unexpected problems.

Planning your time

If you anticipate submission dates and plan your work, you will be able to submit essays on time. If, for example, English is your second language, you should work out a schedule which takes this into account. We realise that everyone works at different speeds, for we are all individuals, which is precisely why careful planning is vital!

Penalty for late submission

If you submit an essay after the submission deadline, your essay fails. When you submit we then mark it as usual, but your mark is recorded as the pass mark of 50%. If you get into difficulties you can either **apply for extenuating circumstances**. This requires a formal application to the University.

You will find the form here

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/appendices-and-forms/>

Scroll down to chapter 13 and choose the form GA1.

THE MA LEVEL ESSAY: CONTENT

Analysis and discussion

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. Do not devote part of your essay to writing a 'brief overview'.**

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 just an uncritical list of information, no matter how well supported from the scholarly literature.

The listing of information takes place at 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.

If you are studying history, pay careful attention to chronology. However, if you write an essay as a chronological list of information your essay will be descriptive rather than analytical. It is therefore very important to think about organising your essay thematically.

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.

Communication

Your task is to communicate your ideas to your reader. For that reason clarity of expression is vital. Keep your language simple and direct. 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.

Structure

You should have a clear essay structure which allows your reader to follow investigation clearly.

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

A useful exercise:

Choose an academic paper that you have found clear and informative and thus useful for your work. Look at this paper as a good example of what you are aiming for and thus deconstruct it. Look at its introduction, what themes it developed, and pay attention to its conclusion to see how it relates to these themes. Also consider the length of the paragraphs and how the author has used their paragraphs to help carry their argument through their paper.

MARKING YOUR ESSAY

The following are amongst the criteria on which your work is judged. All these are explained below.

- Clear structure
- Clear writing

- Clear introduction
- A critical attitude
- Use of primary source material - i.e. raw evidence
- Use of secondary material - i.e., scholarly literature
- A clear and balanced conclusion
- Clear and adequate referencing

It is also good to be familiar with the latest scholarship.

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

A Note on Marks

A feature of the UK marking system is that the 'Distinction' is set at 70%. Distinction work is generally considered of the highest quality and the effect of setting the barrier at 70% is to keep marks lower than is often the case in other systems. Few students obtain marks above 70%, and the highest mark ever given in the MA CAA is 78%.

This means that a mark in the 60s, which constitutes a 'Merit', is very respectable. If you are marked in the 50s, there is improvement to be made, and in the low 50s there is considerable scope for improvement. 50% is the lowest pass mark.

Our job as Tutors is to get you to improve. Each student, though, is different. I have known some students receive in the upper 60s for every piece of work, always doing good work but never improving, while others move from border-line pass to distinction.

Being Critical

Being critical does not mean being negative. It means being analytical, analysing texts and theories for their strengths and weaknesses. The word 'critique' has a more neutral sense, which is why we talking about critiquing a text.

Keeping an Open Mind

Remember, your essay is an open minded examination of a question. It is inevitable that you will start with preconceptions, but try to put these aside and allow yourself to change your mind during the writing of the essay. When you reach your conclusion it should be based on the arguments and evidence you have presented.

Clarity

Academic essay writing is designed to reveal the structure of your thought. The use of metaphor, allegory, imagery, jargon 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.

The essence of academic writing is to be spare and clear – which means cutting out unnecessary adjectives, figures of speech and unsupported assertions. The point is to make one's meaning absolutely clear – or as clear as possible.

The reason why 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.

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'?

Also, avoid all slang

Punctuation

Good punctuation is essential. The use of full stops and commas can completely change your meaning.

The following are examples of missing or misplaced punctuation:

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

The statement 'First, I heard of that'
Was edited on a White House web site to
'First I heard of that'.

As you see, removing the comma completely changes the sense.

The Hollywood actress Zsa Zsa Gabor was overheard to say:

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

As you can see, the meanings change completely when one punctuation mark is changed.

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

Using colons and semi-colons⁹

The colon is :

The semi-colon is ;

Both the colon and semi-colon are extremely useful for breaking up long sentences.

Useful information is here:

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/colons.htm>

ESSAY PLANNING

A clear structure is essential

Plan your essay

It is very useful to write out paragraph headings (for your own convenience) and summarise the information you're going to put in each one.

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 do this the flow of your essay breaks up and you are no longer communicating effectively. Once again go back and look at some of the papers you have been reading and see how they use paragraphs.

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. In this sense a paragraph is like a mini essay in itself, with introduction, content and conclusion.

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.

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.

Mind-mapping

Relies on the useful flow charts to organise and plan material. 'Inspiration' software is used by many universities as an electronic aide:

<http://www.inspiration.com/>

<http://www.inspiration.com/visual-learning/mind-mapping>

Headings in Word

Most word processors will allow you to use headers, these are most useful to help you with the structure of your paper as you can begin your work by writing a series of headings such as:

Introduction

First argument theme

Second argument theme

Third argument theme (etc.)

Conclusion

Then as you research your paper you can add notes under the different headings in your draft paper. Word will also allow you to see your paper just in this outline view where you can change the order of the headings, and thereby move whole sections of text easily around your paper. You can then, if you wish, remove the headings from your paper before submitting. This is your choice.

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)

This is not entirely frivolous

Another way to think about it is that you

- Introduce the question
- Debate and discuss the evidence
- Reach a 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

Read your essay through when you've finished. Then read it again. If necessary leave it overnight 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.

Introduction

You need a good introduction. **Introduce the question - don't assume the reader knows what it is.** Give For example, if your essay title is 'Did the Greeks invent astrology?' you might simply write, 'This essay explores the question whether the Greeks invented astrology'. Or you might try working the question into a sentence such as 'The belief that the Greeks invented astrology is supported by many historians, such as Jim Tester', or 'The argument that the Greeks invented astrology has recently come under serious scrutiny. For example, Nicholas Campion has recently questioned it'. You can then examine the basis for the question.

Sometimes academics begin with a quote from an scholarly source which creates the rationale for the paper. an essay with a quote from a scholarly source, such as 'and so, as John Smith said 'medieval astrology was a system of mapping the cosmos''. Or

(this is an actual example, 'The Qur'ānic verse, 'And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darknesses of the land and sea,' clearly encourages one to utilise celestial phenomena for guidance.

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, relying on testimony from astrologers.

While you need to begin your essay by drafting an introduction, many scholars would complete an introduction having written the rest of the essay. It is only having finished an essay that you can see its complete shape.

These are points to avoid in your Introduction:

- 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:
- Avoid this very common pitfall: do NOT state your conclusion in the introduction. So, **do not** write, 'this essay will argue that the Moon is made of cheese', 'or 'this essay will show that aliens come from Mars', or 'this essay will demonstrate that astrologers...'. The moon may well be made of cheese, and aliens might come from Mars, but you cannot say that until you have investigated all the evidence and allowed it to lead you to your conclusion.
- **Do not** begin your essay with a journalistic flourish, a nice story, a beautiful myth, or a piece of grand scene setting about the historical era in which your essay is set. 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. (Academic writing needs to be understood clearly, so figures of speech and metaphors will obscure your point)

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.

- And please insert an unexplained quotation above your text, no matter how poetic or imaginative. This may work well in a book, but you are writing an academic essay and you need to explain everything you write.

The difference between an Introduction and an Abstract

Most published academic articles include an abstract. This is a separate paragraph which appears at the beginning of the article which summarises the entire article including the conclusion. In an abstract it is also common to set out a point of view followed by the writer, such as 'this paper will argue that Einstein's theory of relativity has had a significant impact on modern culture' or 'this paper will argue that sacred space is a human construct' or 'this essay will show' or 'the essay will conclude that'.

However, you do not need an Abstract in a MA essay, only in your Dissertation, which we will deal with separately.

Therefore in your introduction to an essay there is no need to state your conclusion. In fact, you should not do so!

The body of your essay

Having introduced the question, you consider it in relation to the evidence. Keep these points in mind:

- **Use of primary sources** (see below for more information). Use these at every stage of your essay
- **Contrary evidence**: 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.
- **Relevance**: 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.

Conclusion

You need a good conclusion, drawing your arguments together and stating your final point of view. The conclusion is your answer to the title question, thus either a full or partial agreement, or a full or partial disagreement on the basis of the evidence presented and discussed.

Sometimes it seems good to end an essay with a quote from a scholarly source. This is not necessarily bad practice in academic writing, but it is much better to end with your own conclusion in your own words, as a quote by someone else always requires your interpretation.

Once again take out five academic papers and read their conclusions, this will show you the value of a well-constructed conclusion.

Remember, 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. 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.

THE EVIDENCE: SOURCES

All academic arguments must be based on evidence, and the evidence is usually provided by references – bibliographical citations. Evidence can come in different forms but the major form we will be dealing with is textual, or literary. (In the Research Methods module you will learn how to collect your own primary data). Such sources can be classified in different ways.

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.

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.

1. Primary sources

Primary sources are the original source material produced by the people or things we are studying.

In a literary subject like history the primary sources are mainly the written accounts of ideas, beliefs and events by the people who created ideas or lived through the events you are discussing.

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, magazines and websites. Artefacts and works of art are also primary sources in history. For example, a historian of timekeeping will examine sundials or clocks, and a historian of art may investigate paintings and sculptures. A

historian of music will explore musical scores or instruments, as well as sound. In archaeology the primary sources are usually material artefacts from the past, or evidence in the landscape.

For botanists the primary sources are plants, for geologists they are rocks and so for us in cultural astronomy, the sky is also a primary source.

The nature of the primary source changes depending on the context and topic of investigation. For example, 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, or what modern astrological websites say about Babylonian astrology, 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).

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

Follow this rule: **you must 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.

One of the most familiar student mistakes is to write an essay, for example, discussing Plato, with no use of Plato's works at all.

In the longer essays the use of primary sources **is always necessary**.

If you write an essay based entirely on an excellent analysis of secondary sources, you would be unlikely to achieve a mark above 60%.

As an example, of you are writing an essay about classical astrology, you must use texts in classical astrology as raw data, or your mark may be no higher than 60%.

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

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

Primary sources should NEVER be used as an authoritative statement of fact at any level. For example, modern astrological works provide evidence of what modern astrologers believe, but nothing else.

When a secondary source (see next section) is a primary source

What actually constitutes a primary source may vary, especially in the short essays. For example, if you are asked to critique a piece of academic writing, as you are in the Introduction module, for example, this then becomes the primary source. However, in all normal circumstances an academic source is not a primary source. We will be clear about this but, **if in doubt, ask.**

2. Secondary sources

These are usually the **scholarly and academic texts**, which analyse and comment on the primary source material.

In history the secondary 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.

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

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.

Be critical of secondary sources. Remember, secondary sources may be written by scholars who have spent years studying the evidence. But this does not mean they are right. In all academic disciplines, theories are constantly changing or being challenged, so there is never a set of facts, only a consensus. In the final analysis any scholar is setting out their opinions.

Therefore 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?

You can only assess the secondary sources by going back yourself to examine the primary sources

The different between primary and secondary sources

A good distinction between primary and secondary sources is here:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html>

One way to summarise the difference is that primary sources are produce by the people we are studying, while secondary sources are the commentary on people we are studying.

Citing secondary sources

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

Secondary sources are records of other people's, usually scholars', opinions. Do not forget this! There is therefore a right and a wrong way to cite such sources in your text. For example, you read a statement about Jung by Roderick Main and decide to cite it.

This is the worse way: 'Jung said synchronicity is meaningful coincidence'.³

The reason it is the worse way is because you cite Main's opinion as if it was fact.

This is the better way:

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

In other words, do not state other people's opinions as facts, even when they are scholars.

3. Tertiary sources

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

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

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

then you must include the full information - the work being cited and the work in which it is cited.

In general do not use tertiary sources, to make authoritative statements. All such references show is the opinion of the writer. They are also heavily abbreviated. If you are looking at such opinions is this 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, it helps to use Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions, 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. Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions of terms such as 'divination' are interesting because they are part of the common currency of culture and it is fine to mention them. However, on most occasions in an essay, give an Encyclopaedia and Dictionary definitions only **after** giving one from a primary or secondary source.

Lectures and notes provided in the course material are tertiary sources and should NEVER be cited in your student essays. This include lecture notes posted by academics on other university websites.

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

4. Recent versus old sources

One word of caution concerning old material. Such material is part of the ongoing discourse and is essential to understand developments within our disciplines. But, when you are using authors from the early part of the twentieth century, be aware that their ideas may have been critiqued and superseded. This is no reason not to use them, but it is reason to be cautious, place them in context and show that you are aware of more recent material. Official guidelines state that students should be aware of recent scholarship.

7. 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.

Secondary sources on the web

For secondary (academic) sources it is very important to only use reliable web sources. There are different kinds of academic sources on the web:

1. Digitised archives, such as JSTOR. These are actually counted as print sources, so there is no need to think of them as in the web, even if that is how we access them.
2. Online academic journals, such as the Journal of Cosmology. These are good secondary sources.
3. Academics' websites. Some academics post their own published articles on their websites. These are acceptable if they have been published elsewhere in academic journals.
4. University websites. These often include lecturer's teaching notes which are not legitimate secondary sources as they have not been through a publishing and editorial process. You can use these as short cuts to other sources or ideas, but you should not cite them any more than you should cite MA CAA teaching notes.
5. Academia.edu and Research Gate. Many academics upload their papers to these sites, but so do other people. Anyone can get an Academia.edu account and upload their work, including failed undergraduate essay. Only use material by academics you can trust.
6. Ordinary websites are never secondary sources.

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. Or they may be copying inaccurate material from elsewhere.

As an example, in 2005 since an Austrian student added the name "Friedrich" to Johannes Kepler's Wikipedia page, calling him "Friedrich Johannes Kepler"⁵. The error stayed until 2011, by which time it had entered German literature.

⁵History of Astronomy Discussion Group [mailto:HASTRO-L@listserv.wvu.edu] On Behalf Of dfischer@ASTRO.UNI-BONN.DE. Sent: 23 June 2011 23:31

Avoiding unsupported assertions and sweeping statements

The purpose of MA level work is to investigate questions and reach conclusions on the basis of the evidence.

Never make unsupported assertions or sweeping statements which cannot be justified 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...'

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?

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- 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?)

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’

WORKING WITH QUOTES

Direct quotations: quoting from sources

It is necessary to use direct quotes from sources so that your reader can read extracts from original documents. It also means that you must read the documents!

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

Format of Quotes

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

These 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).

You shouldn't really use quotes of over 100 words unless absolutely essential. Over 100 words you should paraphrase – repeat the information in your own words.

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.

This is an example from my own work which is part-paraphrase, part direct quote.

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.⁶

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.

In general, follow this guideline:

Direct quotations should not take up more than 10% of your text.

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 criticised on the grounds that you have inserted information with no attempt to explain why it helps answer the question.

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

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'⁷, 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.

STYLE: THE AUTHORIAL VOICE

Every piece of writing has a 'voice'. In fiction the narrator may be the central character ('I') or an invisible narrator. Until we have taught you the appropriate use of 'I' in academic literature, do not use the word.

In most circumstances, 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** 'The evidence suggests that...' (and then cite the evidence).

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'.

⁷ Nicholas Campion, *What do Astrologers Believe?*, Oxford: Granta, 2006, p. 46.

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.

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.

You will give your conclusions in the conclusion to your essay. They will, though, be based on your assessment of the evidence you have presented in your essay. Thus the appropriate wording is 'the evidence suggests that' – or similar, in your own words.

The use of the personal 'I' in Anthropology and Ethnography

There is a blurring of the boundaries between the injunctions against using 'I' and permission to use it. The MA is a hybrid of History and Anthropology. When you are dealing with the present in an anthropological or phenomenological manner you can get personal, but when you are being a historian, stick to the conventions and remain distance and objective. You will be taught how to use 'I' in the Research Methods module (which will be renamed Researching Contemporary Cosmologies). If you have not taken this module, you should not use it.

More Style Tips

Follow these hints:

Avoid repeating the same word too often - try to find synonyms. For example 'important' could become 'significant', 'principal' or 'paramount', depending on the context. English is such a diverse language, containing both Germanic and Latin/Romance roots, as well as many loan words from other languages, that it is usually not difficult to find alternatives.

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:

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'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. Does 'this' refer to 'Plato's insistence', 'reincarnation', 'nature' or 'modern technology'? Similar problems arise with the use of 'it'.

Things to avoid

Do not ask direct questions, such as 'Why?' in your text. Who is to answer?

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

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

Do not use slang terms.

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.

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

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?

Another weak phrase is 'it could be argued that', or 'it can be argued that' to which we can reply well, anything can be argued.

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', 'divintory astrology', 'psychological astrology', 'animus' or 'anima' with no further explanation, the reader will not know what you are talking about.

Tenses

In general write in the past tense, unless you are dealing with modern, ongoing phenomena.

The Historic Present Tense

The Historic Present Tense, is used to describe past events as ongoing in the present. Always avoid it in academic work as it causes confusion.

In the **past tense** we would write: 'In 1789 a French mob stormed the Bastille'.

In the **historic present**, this would be '1789: a French mob storms the Bastille'.

The 'historic present' is commonly used in popular narratives, such as TV documentaries, because it conveys dramatic effect. For this very reason it should not be used in academic writing.

It should never be used in historical work, in which chronology is essential. By placing everything in an eternal present, the historic present tense undermines a sense that one event happened after another.

There was a public, friendly argument between two leading British journalists, John Humphrys and Melvyn Bragg, in 2014, which aired the issue:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/28/historic-present-tense-past-john-humphrys>

The use of the word 'the' in English

This is very important if English is not your first language. The English word 'the' is known as 'the definite article'. 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 waylink 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'

The use of 'This' and 'It'

When you use 'this' or 'it' in a sentence, referring to information in a previous sentence, make sure you know that your reader knows what 'this' and 'it' refer to, even when it is clear to you, and even at the risk of appearing to be too repetitive in your language.

Describing well-known people

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.

Often 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.

To summarise:

- Historical figures: put their dates in at first mention.
- Modern scholars; a matter of judgment, but in general put their dates in if they are both important and dead.
- Always put in the first name when you first mention someone.

IMAGES IN YOUR ESSAY

In general images should only be included where they are directly relevant to an essay. They are usually required in Skyscapes, sometimes in Sacred Geography, and generally in Heavenly Discourse but rarely in other essays.

You should be careful to reduce the size. Sometimes scanned images can be up to 14mb, but they can easily be reduced to below 1mb using free web sites. Two recommended sites are:

<http://www.imageoptimizer.net/Pages/Home.aspx>

<http://www.shrinkpictures.com/>

If you get stuck, search on Google for 'reducing image size'.

IF ENGLISH IS YOUR SECOND LANGUAGE

If English is your second language we will be aware that certain words might be used which are picked up from dictionaries, but which may not be the best usage. We understand this and may suggest better alternatives.

USING NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOURCES

If you have access to non-English language sources, we encourage you to use them.

If you quote from a non-English source you should

1. translate the original into English
2. write '(my translation)' after the translation
3. put the original text in a footnote

READING - Tips

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, scan 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 - Tips

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.

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 (Where I am quoting him or her, or where I am citing a claim by them) 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 in the header or footer?

IF NOT, DO NOT UPLOAD YOUR ESSAY

AND READ THE WRITING GUIDELINES ON MOODLE AGAIN

Appendix 1 – Plagiarism

Plagiarism

This material is quoted from the Oxford University Web site on Plagiarism
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1>
accessed 10 Feb, 2016.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.

The necessity to acknowledge others' work or ideas applies not only to text, but also to other media, such as computer code, illustrations, graphs etc. It applies equally to

published text and data drawn from books and journals, and to unpublished text and data, whether from lectures, theses or other students' essays. You must also attribute text, data, or other resources downloaded from websites.

The best way of avoiding plagiarism is to learn and employ the principles of good academic practice from the beginning of your university career. Avoiding plagiarism is not simply a matter of making sure your references are all correct, or changing enough words so the examiner will not notice your paraphrase; it is about deploying your academic skills to make your work as good as it can be.

Some Forms of plagiarism

Verbatim (word for word) quotation without clear acknowledgement

Quotations must always be identified as such by the use of either quotation marks or indentation, and with full referencing of the sources cited. It must always be apparent to the reader which parts are your own independent work and where you have drawn on someone else's ideas and language.

Cutting and pasting from the Internet without clear acknowledgement

Information derived from the Internet must be adequately referenced and included in the bibliography. It is important to evaluate carefully all material found on the Internet, as it is less likely to have been through the same process of scholarly peer review as published sources.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing the work of others by altering a few words and changing their order, or by closely following the structure of their argument, is plagiarism if you do not give due acknowledgement to the author whose work you are using.

A passing reference to the original author in your own text may not be enough; you must ensure that you do not create the misleading impression that the paraphrased wording or the sequence of ideas are entirely your own. It is better to write a brief summary of the author's overall argument in your own words, indicating that you are doing so, than to paraphrase particular sections of his or her writing. This will ensure you have a genuine grasp of the argument and will avoid the difficulty of paraphrasing without plagiarising. You must also properly attribute all material you derive from lectures.

Auto-plagiarism

You must not submit work for assessment that you have already submitted (partially or in full) to fulfil the requirements of another degree course or examination, unless this is specifically provided for in the special regulations for your course. Where earlier work by you is citable, i.e. it has already been published, you must reference it clearly.