

# MASTER Research Seminar

Be All You Want to Be – Diversity and Identity in North American Literature and Culture

**Time:** Wednesday, 11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. · **First session:** 10 March 2021

**Lecturer:** Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan Brandt · **Course number:** 512.343

**Office hours:** Thursdays, 4-6 p.m. (digital office hours) · **Email:** [stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at](mailto:stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at)

**Course tutor:** Lisa Buchegger ([lisa.buchegger@uni-graz.at](mailto:lisa.buchegger@uni-graz.at))

**Location:** <https://unimeet.uni-graz.at/b/bra-w8m-o40-8au> (UniMeet)

## **Description:**

This Master Research Seminar offers a forum for candidates writing their Master's theses and preparing for their final exams. The course will convey the basic techniques of writing a thesis (organization, research, structure, time management). In addition, participants will be prepared for the oral exam, including the opportunity of taking a mock exam. B.A. students are also welcome to participate in the course.

**Teaching and Learning Method:** This is an interactive course. Participation in group discussions will be part of the final grade.

**Materials:** Handouts and relevant texts will be made available as printouts and/or on **Moodle**.

**Aims:** Familiarizing students with the main tenets of writing a master's/diploma thesis and preparing for an oral exam; giving detailed feedback on current projects.

**Deadline for 'Thesis in a Nutshell':** **Mon, 19 July, 2021** (Upload your paper as Word document and on Google docs – Note: Make sure the Google document can be opened and edited!)

# Syllabus

## GUIDELINES AND UNIMEET ETIQUETTE

### ***Set your screen name***

Make sure to set your screen name to the name you want to be addressed by, typically your first and last name, so that your instructor and your fellow students can refer to you by your proper name in discussions. If you want to, you can also add your preferred pronouns (he/she/they) in parenthesis so others know how to refer to you.

### ***Use your webcam***

All of us constantly communicate via facial expressions. Being able to communicate with one another is an important aspect of your online learning experience. A puzzled look tells your instructor to spend more time explaining a particular point; nodding can move the discussion to the next issue. In order to have a functioning and communicative seminar atmosphere, participants will thus be expected to have their webcams on.

If in any given week you cannot switch your camera on for technical reasons (such as limited bandwidth), make sure you tell your fellow students and your instructor why they can't see you.

### ***Mute your microphone (when not in use)***

Switch your microphone to mute whenever you don't talk – especially if you are in a noisy environment or if you are working in a particularly large group. If everybody does so, the background noise of the digital classroom will be drastically reduced.

### ***Presenting your Project***

As a presenter you will gain full rights to moderate the session and share your screen. On UniMeet, you can share video clips externally (e.g., via YouTube).

### ***Indicate questions in the chatroom***

Indicate questions in the chat forum (as a participant). The course instructor and/or the presenter can then ask you to step in and formulate your question with your audio on.

## ASSESSMENT:

**A.) Regular attendance** (*no more than 2 absences!*) and **active participation** (1/3);

**B.) Presentation** (incl. uploading of material onto Moodle course site) (1/3);

**C.) 2-page research proposal** plus **8-page thesis in a nutshell** (including title page, table of contents, and bibliography). Please use templates on Moodle! You need to pass each section to pass the whole course (1/3).

# Syllabus

## A.) REGULAR ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

**Regular attendance** and **active participation** in the discussion sessions are crucial to the success of the course.

You are expected to be present in our digital meeting not only having read the assigned material, but also prepared to fully engage with the material, ask questions about it, offer perceptive interpretations, and even argue for your way of reading the text at hand.

Note: There might be **pop quizzes** (i.e., unannounced online tests at the beginning of a session) to check whether you have read the materials.

Although the primary responsibility for each session will rest with the instructor, all students share the responsibility for contributing to the discussion.

**Absences** from class must be explained in writing, preferably prior to class. No more than two absences are allowed.

## B. PRESENTATION

Prepare a 20- to 30-minute presentation of your thesis (PowerPoint or Prezi). Make sure you upload additional materials on your topic on Moodle. (This could include scholarly articles, clips, and other useful documents, etc.). These materials can be uploaded *before* the session to give students the chance to prepare for your topic (please announce this in advance whether one or two shorter texts should be read by all participants) or *after* the session. You also need to upload your Presentation in the respective section on Moodle.

## C. RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND FINAL PAPER

A **research proposal** (2 pages) is due around mid-term. Look for the exact dates in the course agenda below. The form for the research proposal is available on Moodle. Follow the instructions in the document.

The **final paper** (ca. 8 pages, including title page, table of contents, and bibliography, 2,500 – 3,000 words) should be typed (1.5-spaced, using one side of the sheet only, pages numbered). The paper should show your name, your student email address, the course title, the instructor's name, the date of submission, and the number of words. Primary and secondary sources need to be cited according to the Uni Graz guidelines for style and format.

The **deadline** for submission of the final paper is Monday, July 19, 2021. There is **no extension** of this deadline. Keep in mind: A good paper is a finished paper.

# Syllabus

10 March | Introduction

17 March | Literary and Cultural Studies – An Introduction

24 March | How to Develop a Research Project (General Procedure, Time Management, Proposal)

14 April | Academic Research (Steps of Research, Consulting Libraries & Online Databases)

21 April | Structure of a Final Paper  
(The Golden Rules of Academic Writing).

28 April | The Cardinal Sins of Paper Writing (What you should avoid)  
Presentation of Student Project

5 May | Literary and Cultural Theories  
Presentation of Student Project

12 May | Independent Study Unit  
No class! Complete a 2-page research proposal for your final paper (see Moodle).

19 May | Close Readings  
Presentation of Student Project

DUE DATE  
RESEARCH  
PROPOSAL

26 May | Question Time (Note down questions that have popped up so far and bring them up.)  
Presentation of Student Project

2 June | Reference Citation (MLA, Chicago, Graz), Plagiarism  
Presentation of Student Project

9 June | Grading (Models for Paper Assessments)  
Presentation of Student Project

16 June | Talk by Hannah Spahn (University of Potsdam)

Title: "Extremely difficult to identify me": Pedagogies of Character in Samuel Ringgold Ward's *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro*

BRING  
TWO  
BOOKS

23 June | Oral Exam (Methods, Procedure, Preparation)  
Presentation of Student Project

30 June | Oral Exam (Mock Exams)  
Presentation of Student Project

DEADLINE FINAL PAPER: MONDAY, 19 JULY 2021