

Prof. Dr. Peter Paul Schnierer

"What do I have to do to register for exams?"

"Can you announce our event in your lectures?"

"I need a letter of reference."

"What do I do if I cannot ever make your office hours?"

You may find some of the answers in here. Please feel free to take a copy of these

Frequently Asked Questions

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Of course, I am always available in person during my *Sprechstunden*, upon individual appointment and whenever my door is open.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I. CONTACT & COMMUNICATION

How can I talk to you?

My contact hours are posted outside my office; there is at least one "official" hour per week. The same applies to recess times, unless I am actually away on business or holidays. You may also drop in any time the door is open. If you have difficulties with that or require a longer talk, there is always the possibility of making an individual appointment. My office phone number is given above; that of my secretary is 06221-542819. In an emergency (please interpret this narrowly) you may reach me at home: 06221-589500.

Where can I leave messages, essays etc.?

There are five possibilities:

- drop them in my pigeon hole downstairs at the *Glaskasten* (the preferred method),
- leave them with Frau Florschütz in room 219,
- mail them to me at the address above,
- fax them to the number above or
- e-mail them to me (see below).

Do not push things under the door; they may get cleared away.

Can I send messages by e-mail?

Yes: pps@urz.uni-heidelberg.de. Include your message in the body of your mail or make sure that any attached files are in a widely readable format such as *.odt, PDF or *.rtf. Do not zip or otherwise compress files. In the case of seminar papers, please let me have a printed copy, too: you need to sign, by hand, the anti-plagiarism declaration anyway.

Can I expect an answer to my message?

That depends. I do not send a reply if you simply tell me something, and I do not usually acknowledge the receipt of a document either. A request, no matter how trivial, will receive an answer, and you can help me by providing an e-mail address, a postal address and a phone number. There are exceptions: I will not repeat announcements I have made in class or in a lecture for the benefit of those who were absent for whatever reasons. Please ask your fellow students.

II. SEMINARS & LECTURES

How do I register for your classes?

By following the steps announced in the course description (*Kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis*) that is available online. If demand for places exceeds availability preference will be given to students who need the credits.

Do I have to register for lectures?

Not if you just wish to listen to me. But you need to sign up if there is an exam you have to take, or if you need the credit points.

What are the formal requirements for a *Schein*?

That depends on the type of seminar or module; there is always the basic set of regular attendance, active participation, sometimes an additional oral presentation and written work. The latter may be replaced by an oral exam in circumstances where this seems reasonable, typically if you have already demonstrated your ability to write an essay.

What are the formal requirements for written work?

Unless there are specifications in individual modules or module components, the following may serve as a guide: Written work in English can take the form of a standard essay on paper, a hypertext or any other format you can think of, including a test, as long as we agree on that before you start. There is a maximum essay length of 10 pages (PS I), 15 pages (PS II), 20 pages (HS). This includes title page, table of contents and one page of sources. If your bibliography exceeds one page, you may add the additional pages to the admissible maximum. I recommend margins of an inch (2,54 cms) left, right, top and bottom; you may also stick to the ones suggested by the *Studienführer*.

The only font I accept is not the one used in this FAQ but the one in line with the requirements of the *Modern Language Association* style sheet and which is common to all computer systems and typewriters: Courier or Courier New, 12 pt, 10 cpi, 1,5-spaced, as in this paragraph.

The above is not negotiable: I shall return, unmarked, print-outs in other fonts and work that exceeds the limits set out above.

How do you determine marks?

The mark for your written work (or its equivalent) determines the one on your *Schein*, with some adjustment for seminar performance. Your way of presenting an oral report will not be marked, but the matter you speak of will be.

In general terms, an average and therefore perfectly acceptable performance will earn you a "3". You need to do more than can be reasonably expected to gain a "2", and perform exceptionally in order to achieve the top mark of "1". Conversely, work that is below the average of any given class but is still broadly acceptable will result in a "4". Major problems or deficits will warrant a "5" or fail grade. There is no hierarchy of failure, hence no "6", unless... but that is already another question:

What happens if I plagiarize?

Then you steal somebody else's ideas, somebody else's intellectual property, her or his copyright. Since we all are humanities scholars and cannot usually market our ideas profitably, copyright is all we have. Plagiarism is the one unforgivable sin, and yet it is easily committed. Therefore: document your sources, give your references, and acknowledge your inspirations. It is honourable, not shameful, to admit to your intellectual debts. So, to answer the question above: Nothing, if I do not notice; a "6", and good-bye to any chance of examination, if I do.

III. EXAMS (Staatsexamen, B.A., M.aster, Ph.D./ Dr. phil.)

Can I register for my exams?

Yes, any time, provided

- you have all your credits or are about to complete the set,
- I still have free slots and
- you have successfully attended one of my classes.

This last requirement is not compulsory, but will decide precedence if there are more candidates than I can reasonably take.

What are your requirements for exam theses?

Please refer to the *Studienordnungen* first; I naturally abide by those rules. There are two points that need to be stressed, one of encouragement and one *caveat*:

- Please be prepared to deal with interesting and original fields of research. There are so many authors, so many texts, so many curious problems to be addressed; we do not really need another exam thesis on Othello's idea of love or narrative problems in *Heart of Darkness*.

- I will not ratify theses that are practically finished by the time they are registered. You may make a suggestion as to your preferred field of research (see above), but the exact topic will be a matter of negotiation between us, and the registration of that topic will have to follow immediately. You have nine weeks to complete a B.A. thesis, four months to complete a State examination thesis and six to complete an M.A. thesis: if you need more than that there is something wrong with either your topic or your scholarly practice.

The formal requirements for written seminar work apply (see above); the maximum lengths are 40 pages for a B.A. thesis, 60 pages for a *Zulassungsarbeit* and 80 pages for an M.A. thesis respectively.

How many subjects do I have to prepare for my exams, and what do they have to cover?

Staatsexamen Two for the oral exam, plus the "overview". You need to include the age of Shakespeare somewhere, you have to have an American component (not necessarily an entire subject), and the overview has to consist of about six major works that fill the chronological gaps left by your choice of subjects. Four to six major texts per main subject. Between them, they have to cover the Renaissance, the 20th or 21st century, one other period, drama, prose, poetry and at least one individual author. This is less complicated than it sounds. "T.S. Eliot", for example, already covers most of these.

Master: Typically, and for a literature-only exam, two subjects analogous to main Staatsexamen subjects, with similar conditions.

B.A.: One subject analogous to main Staatsexamen subjects.

Disputatio: Talk to me. Typically, a free critical debate after the defence of your thesis.

Can I avoid poetry in my exams?

No.

How do you examine?

While this is really a frequently asked question, it is also almost impossible to answer. I think I ask open questions, take what you offer me and make you give your best. What others think is best researched in the exam logs the Fachschaft keep.

Are there any other useful hints for my exam preparation?

Bear in mind that methods are important, more so even than facts, and that texts have contexts. There is little to be gained from an intense preparation of key passages in the hope that these will be presented; a sensible approach practices methods of analysis and interpretation that can be used upon previously unfamiliar passages. Similarly, it is more useful to be able to place a passage in the context of its time than to be able to locate it in a text. Examiners presuppose an intimate knowledge of texts you have chosen yourself, but that knowledge itself is not the subject for examination - what counts is what you as literary critics can do with that knowledge.

Can I write a doctoral dissertation under your supervision?

Yes, but that is strictly a matter of individual agreement. If you have demonstrated (or are confident you are about to demonstrate) very good scholarly abilities in your exam and if your research project makes sense and fits in at least tenuously with my areas of specialization we shall certainly come to an agreement.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

I need a letter of reference.

You can get one within a week if I have any basis for writing one (usually a seminar attended successfully) and if you let me have details of your application (what for, when, where to, why), your *curriculum vitae*, the official forms (if any), plus any additional information that might be useful in such a letter (previous teaching experience? creative talents? jobs as a journalist? ever been a ski instructor? organized a girl scout outing? - that sort of thing.)

I am an exchange student, and the Heidelberg system does not tally with the requirements of my home university.

You are the norm, not the exception: talk to me, and we will find a way out.

Can you announce our event in your lectures?

Yes, as long as there is some link to English studies or people studying at our department.

May we use your lectures and seminars to address political issues or make our grievances known?

Yes, unconditionally, if you are a member of one of my seminars. The intellectual community constituted there actually requires explicit discussion, and I shall certainly not inhibit or censor any statement. Conditionally, the same applies to lectures: As I always invite comments and questions, you have the opportunity to make your voice heard, and you may furthermore announce whatever is on your mind. As a matter of courtesy, I would like to ask you to do this before I start the lecture proper.

I don't know what to read.

The cheap answer: Read what's on the department's reading list. A better answer: Start with the poems of W.H. Auden, the novels of the Brontë sisters and the plays of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Read Terry Pratchett for comic relief. Don't read Shakespeare (see the plays first). And the best answer I have: Come and talk to me. If you tell me what you like, I can tell you what you might like, too.

I wish to complain about something you did.

Ideally, you ought to talk to me first. Mere misunderstandings can be resolved that way. Your next contact is the head of department, the "Geschäftsführende/r Direktor/in des Anglistischen Seminars". Beyond the seminar level complaints should be lodged with my immediate superior, the Dean (Dekan der Neuphilologischen Fakultät).