

Review of Scholarship Essay

This exercise is an important preparatory step in the formulation and development of your dissertation research. You should discuss the focus and scope of the review at your initial meeting with your supervisor and plan your work to ensure that a completed draft is given to your supervisor by **Friday 18 November**, to enable you to get feedback and to revise and correct your work before the submission date of **Friday 2 December**.

The Review of Scholarship should be in the form of an essay not exceeding 5,000 words in length (including footnotes but excluding bibliography). Its purpose is to demonstrate your familiarity with published scholarship in the area of your dissertation topic and to situate your own research in relation to existing knowledge and debates. As to structure and format, no single template fits all topics; the precise form of the review will vary, as regards what period it covers, how broadly it ranges across disciplines, whether or not it should review scholarship by strict chronology or perhaps by theme, whether or not it is best divided into sub-sections and so on. Similarly, the relationship of the review to the dissertation you submit in the summer will vary from case to case. In general terms the review should be regarded as a separate item of assessed work and should not be substantially re-used in your dissertation (extensive verbatim repetition will not be rewarded by examiners), but it is expected to form a foundation for your research towards that dissertation. It may be helpful to think of the Review of Scholarship as a kind of introduction to the dissertation itself, both pieces being self-contained in their exposition of the topic, but the review serving as a description of the existing terrain which justifies the need for particular aspects or issues to be explored in the dissertation. On the whole you should be aiming to describe and evaluate existing scholarship rather than embarking on your own full and detailed discussion of the topic itself, which you will want, of course, to save for the dissertation. That said, much of the material set out in your Review of Scholarship may well be revisited in your dissertation, but in the latter it will be in the context of the new insights which you have gained through your own research. The ability to progress from a Review of Scholarship to the well-founded critical position that will emerge in a dissertation is an important skill to be acquired by all research students, and one which will be of value in a host of other situations. In considering the ways in which your review relates to the contents and structure of your dissertation, you are advised to consult your supervisor.

Clarity of expression and accuracy in referencing are regarded by the Department as essential qualities in the written work of all graduate students, and this exercise will also serve to alert you to the standard expected. As is the case for all MPhil written work, you are free to choose between the ASNC Style-sheet (available from the departmental website), the style-guide of the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA), and the style-guide of the Modern Language Association (MLA). You must indicate which style you are following and ensure that you are consistent in your referencing and punctuation; in particulars not documented in the style-guide which you have chosen you should try to develop a consistent practice, footnoting if necessary the reasons for your decisions. Remember, too, to number the pages of your review and to proof-read it carefully before submission.

The first page of your Review of Scholarship should indicate your MPhil candidate number (and NOT your name), your dissertation topic, the word count, and the style-guide you have used. Two copies of the review should be submitted to the Degree Committee Office in the English Faculty, 9 West Road, **by 4.00pm on 2 December, 2011**. All written work towards the MPhil is assessed by two examiners, and you will be given your mark and feedback on this essay early in Lent term. The Review of Scholarship is worth 10% of the final overall mark for the MPhil.