

Definition of an abstract

The abstract is a brief overview of your selected type of work. It is typically a **condensed** version of a longer piece of writing that **highlights** the major points covered, while concisely describing the content and scope of the work.

Possible Content for your abstract:

1. *Motivation*: What was the purpose of your research? Why should be reader be interested?
2. *Mission*: What does current research say about your topic? Which position are you engaging or challenging or extending?
3. *Methodology*: How do you approach your task at hand?
4. *Results*: What conclusions are reached?
5. *Implications*: How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic? What new ideas or perceptions emerged?

Language:

1. Formal diction, no casual or colloquial phrasing
2. Avoid using too much jargon
3. Do not use contractions (couldn't, didn't, etc.)
4. Do not include personal narrative, opinion or commentary
5. Do not go into great details concerning your argument. Be concise.

Other Considerations

An abstract must be a fully self-contained, capsule description of the paper. It must make sense all by itself. Some points to consider include:

- Meet the word count limitation. 200 words or so is common practice.
- Any major restrictions or limitations on the results of your research should be stated, if only by using "weasel-words" such as "might", "could", "may", and "seem".
- Think of a half-dozen search phrases and keywords that people looking for your work might use. Be sure that those exact phrases appear in your abstract, so that they will turn up at the top of a search result listing.
- Be sure to include the domain or topic area that your paper is really applicable to.
- Some publications request "keywords". These have two purposes. They are used to facilitate keyword index searches. However, they are also used to assign papers to

review committees or editors. So make sure that the keywords you pick make assigning your paper to a review category obvious.

Examples

“‘Freedom is a constant struggle’: The dynamics and consequences of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1984”

This dissertation examines the impacts of social movements through a multi-layered study of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement from its peak in the early 1960s through the early 1980s. Some view federal agencies, courts, political parties, or economic elites as the agents driving institutional change, but typically these groups acted in response to the leverage brought to bear by the civil rights movement. This dissertation thus challenges the argument that movements are inconsequential. The Mississippi movement attempted to forge independent structures for sustaining challenges to local inequities and injustices. By propelling change in an array of local institutions, movement infrastructures had an enduring legacy in Mississippi. By examining this historically important case, I clarify the process by which movements transform social structures and the constraints movements face when they try to do so.

Jasmine Angelini-Knoll, “Memoirs of Genocide: From Poland to Sudan”

This project looks at several different memoirs rooted in experiences of mass violence undergone by children and youth. Parallels are drawn between memoirs of youthful survivors who lived through the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, and the “Lost Boys,” who survived recent violent conflict in Sudan. My sample of memoirs includes works in French by Polish Jewish boys who survived the Holocaust in ghettos and work camps, finally winding up in Buchenwald. The Sudanese memoirs, written in English and often involving the collaboration of American authors, trace the paths of boys as they fled from destroyed homes to refugee camps. The exploration of these works urges broader questions about memories of horrific violence. How is memory presented and organized in memoirs? What are the motivations for speaking as witnesses of horror and survivors of violence? What are the implications of personal memoir for the larger task of preventing violence and genocide? These stories are diverse—they take place in worlds and times apart, yet they are also connected, involving experiences by youth of mass violence, survival, and finally efforts to represent memory years later as warning, as remembrance, and as an effort to help others understand.

Erica Miller, “When All Signs Have Been Erased: Memory and Belief in Sergio Chejfec's *Los planetas*”

The case of individuals who disappeared during Argentina's "Dirty War" represents a trauma marked especially by the sudden, unexplained absence of those people, and uncertainty and lack of closure for the ones who knew them. A legacy of silences about the State-sponsored violence (despite many people's efforts) and the apparently incomplete collective mourning call into

question the efficacy of discourses of memory. In a postmodern era, skeptical of any claims to truth in a discursive representation, one may wonder: can literature contribute to the 'memory work'? In *Los planetas* (1999), Argentinean writer Sergio Chejfec explores questions of subjectivity and memory through the lens of absence. Specifically, I will argue that this novel represents an attempt to translate the destabilizing effects of loss in lived experience into terms of the tensions of absences intrinsic to subjectivity, identity, memory, and narration. In this novel, memories, as well as the physical tokens associated with them, are valued for the emotional investment but mistrusted if considered potential links to or proof of what has been lost. Chejfec's novel thus presents an imperative to narrate in the face of loss and incomplete mourning; this process in turn sets up a space of sustained tensions as a productive form of 'memory work.'

Phill Penix-Tadsen, "The Emergent Paradigm of Textual Circuitry: Epistemological Reprocessing in Digital Society"

A broad paradigmatic transformation has begun as the digital citizenry has grown and been continually affected by the Internet as a conceptual force. This being so, each component in the circuit of textual development--from the author and the reader to the editor, the publisher, and the critic--plays a part in defining this revolution even while they are altered by it themselves. Along this circuit, there exists a paradigmatic interpenetration that ultimately enables a broad alteration of the literary experience as such. As individual conduits, we participate in a network of social beliefs and experiences informed by the digital revolution. We thus form a circuitry of reception, creation, and interpretation that allows for the rearticulation of textuality and of the relationships between the "real world" of lived occurrences and the "virtual worlds" of the Internet and literature. It is this collective dynamic that has brought about a period of epistemological reprocessing, revealing the substructure of connection between the destabilized individual nodes that are joined in the assemblage of digital society. Ultimately, I wish to suggest that this anti-structure of correlation is, as we speak, rising to occupy the void of systematic theorization that has occurred in the wake of post-structuralism.

Giovanna Faleschini Lerner, "The Magic of Painting in Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*"

In his memoir, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, the painter Carlo Levi gives a personal account of the year he spent in a remote village of Southern Italy, to which he had been exiled by a Fascist tribunal. The book describes his encounter with the culture of the agrarian South in terms of a clash between two different systems of belief. His trust in human rationality and its capacity to shape the future collides with the peasants' mythical imagination, linked to the eternal repetition of a seasonal temporality. Their existence is situated outside of history, and is dominated by a profound sense of the magical power of nature. In this paper I argue that, in Levi's book, painting represents a mediating force between rational philosophy and the magical dimension that the peasants inhabit. Through painting, Levi is able to suspend his disbelief in magic and myth, and to enter the world of enchantments in which the people of Lucania live. Painting is thus revealed to be an essential epistemological tool, which, by allowing Levi to embrace the marginal culture of the Southern

peasantry, also manifests its subversive power to challenge hegemonic intellectual (and political) systems.

J Melvin, "Belief, Experience, and Religious History's "Mystical Turn": Classifying the Writings of St. John of Avila"

Saint John of Avila was one of the most influential writers during the Catholic Reformation, yet today he remains unknown outside the most specialized scholarly circles. In this paper I examine Avila's writings and their treatment of the spiritual life to call attention to a current plague on religious studies: the assertion of "mystical experience" as empirical data. This notion developed during religious studies' "mystical turn," whereby scholars such as William James attempted to defend religious belief from the positivist attack by asserting that a mystical core, encountered by great spiritual figures, underlay all world religions. Not only has this move fallen prey to the positivism against which it reacted, it has diminished our appreciation of the cultural and intellectual traditions within spiritual traditions by excluding figures such as Avila, who do not claim to be describing their own experiences. This case shows that scholars should turn their attention back to the significance of figures like Avila in the history of spiritual practice and writing, rather than defending the existence of religion by assessing the depth of their spiritual experiences and attempting to compare their descriptions of the same with those from other traditions.

Melina Bell, "Perpetuating Patriarchy: The Public Promotion of Marriage"

Children are conditioned from an early age to accept gender roles as proper and natural. Hierarchies based on sex and sexual orientation are still often regarded as appropriate in some forms. For example, the average citizen does not find it alarming that most child rearing and domestic work are still performed primarily by women. Pervasive discrimination against gay men, lesbians, and their families openly continues and arguably is escalating. By the time we reach adulthood, most of us have assimilated the values that sustain gender-based hierarchies so well that the hierarchies become nearly or entirely invisible to us. I argue that the institution of civil marriage, as a heterosexual, ideally permanent union of two people, should not, as such, receive government support, since it is the foundation of gender hierarchy. A legally supported child-rearing unit should protect children's interests by securing the support of adults who have formally expressed their commitment to rearing children. It should not, however, prescribe the exact number or sexes of the heads of family, or require or presume any sexual relationship or ideally permanent union between adult family members. Family might then be understood as an intimate group of people who live together and love each other, rather than as a sexually involved male-female pair and their biological and adopted children.

Kathryn O'Rourke, "Modern Beliefs: Cathedrals, Catholics, and Capitalists in Late 20th-Century Nicaragua"

Ricardo Legoretta's Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua, was one of the last major cathedrals built in the twentieth century. Completed in 1993 on the site of the colonial-era cathedral destroyed in a 1972 earthquake,

Legoretta's building was intended as the principle place of worship for 100,000 Catholic Nicaraguans. In its program, design and site, the church joined nearly 2000 year-old beliefs and traditions with the local needs and memory of the western hemisphere's second poorest nation. In its patronage the cathedral engaged another belief system, though this one having to do with matters economic instead of ecclesiastical. The church's principle financial backer was U.S. entrepreneur and ardent Catholic, Thomas Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza. This paper will explore the international intersection of different kinds of beliefs, and how architecture at the end of the twentieth century struggled not only to make a place for the practice of belief, but to find an architectural language capable of reconciling unstable notions of the sacred and divine while addressing multiple audiences at once.

Catherine Nicholson & Briallen Hopper, "Religious Belief and the Practice of Literary Criticism"

What is the role played by personal religious belief in the formation and practice of a literary critical approach? How might this role be examined, acknowledged, and even appreciated within the predominantly secular arena of the academic profession? What problems and possibilities would be disclosed by an approach to literary theory that admitted its own entanglement with a particular set of religious beliefs and practices? How can those of us whose thinking is deeply shaped both by religious commitments and by a commitment to the study of literary texts allow each set of ideas and practices to enrich and inform the other? Or, perhaps more honestly, since in our own experiences religious belief and literary criticism have always already been in dialogue with each other in our minds, how can we create a space for that dialogue within our own work and in the academy at large? These are questions that we (a Catholic and a Presbyterian, both members of English departments) will try to address as we grope for a shared theoretical vocabulary and a shared sense of the relevance of belief to modern experience, and take up the challenge of relating private religious belief with the practice of literary criticism.

Namrata Poddar, "The Oriental Discourse in Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*"

References to *The 1001 Nights* are all-pervasive in Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. The significance of this textually-pervasive element of inversion in *La Recherche* signifies not so much the assertion of any particular truth but a collapse of eternal, absolute truths. Initially suggestive of exoticism, sexual inversion, an enchanted world with supernatural figures, our study will show how the narrator is inverting or rather subverting a pre-existing Oriental discourse inspired by the 19th-century aesthetic tradition. Proust's Orient is not so much a static entity as much as a dynamic trope, a means through which he is inverting several discourses, most significantly that of a certain literary tradition associated with the West, thereby suggesting a new narrative discourse, a new aesthetic discourse, and consequently, a new Oriental discourse.

Kristina Baumli, "Belief, Whiteness, and Double Consciousness in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*"

Nahum Chandler asserts that W. E. B. Du Bois's famous concept, double consciousness, is not a singularly African American issue, but rather a more generalized phenomenon that warps reality for white Americans as well. The societal causes of double consciousness, the factors which contribute to the formation of a false subject identity, substantially deflect the trajectory of social imagination away from any ability in the collective subjectivity to reconcile the way one race sees itself (both in itself and for itself) with a more generalized notion of "nation." Double consciousness, then, as Chandler reads Du Bois, bifurcates any possible collective notion of "America." Thus, any sort of "national imaginary" or, to use Benedict Anderson's term, "imagined community" is defined in part by the problems of the color line. In the present paper, William Faulkner's 1929 novel, *The Sound and the Fury* will serve as a case study for the psychological consequences of the color line on the formation of a white national subjectivity.

Rika Saito, "Modern Myth of Language Use: Making Women in Japanese Society"

A long tradition of gentle, soft, and polite speech since the fourteenth century—this is a modern myth that perpetuates a category of Japanese women's speech which has been established as a strong social norm since modern, mid-nineteenth century Japan. Although certain forms and characteristics of Japanese have been thus recognized as "women's speech," recent feminist linguists show that Japanese women do not necessarily use what is called "women's speech" described as gentle, soft, and polite. They argue that Japanese women's speech is a norm that is socially constructed and expected to be used by women. This myth of women's speech began to be promoted after 1868 in Japan by the newly built nation-state government in order to control women. In this paper, I examine discourse of women's speech, foregrounding its imagined origin as a noble polite style. Moreover, I examine the relationship between women's speech and the state policy "good wife, wise mother" in the Meiji (1868-1912) period and argue that the expected role of "good wife" influenced Japanese women's language use more so than the role of "wise mother." I suggest that this myth of women's speech continues to hinder women's life in Japan today.

Liliana Milkova, "*Red Horizons: Soviet Ideology and the Sots Art of Erik Bulatov*"

This paper examines the non-conformist Pop-inspired Sots art movement, which, in the 1970s, offered a new generation of Soviet artists a chance to critique the Communist system despite severe restrictions on all artistic production. The paper explores the *Sots art* works of Erik Bulatov, a graphic designer by day and an underground *Sots* artist by night, in the context of the Soviet political poster, the doctrine of Socialist Realism, and the use of photography as a visual propaganda instrument. The paper argues that through his manipulation of artistic media and the ironic employment of specific political symbols, Bulatov "shuffles" the visual signs of ideology, exposing it as an artificial construction, as *hyperreal*. It is through photographic effects as well as the use of actual photographs as prototypes that Bulatov's oil paintings convey the attempts of Communist ideology to create a *hyperreality*. Furthermore, Bulatov's works mock the attempt of Socialist Realism to represent "realistically" Soviet existence and unveil the ideological production and control of Soviet history and historiography.

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