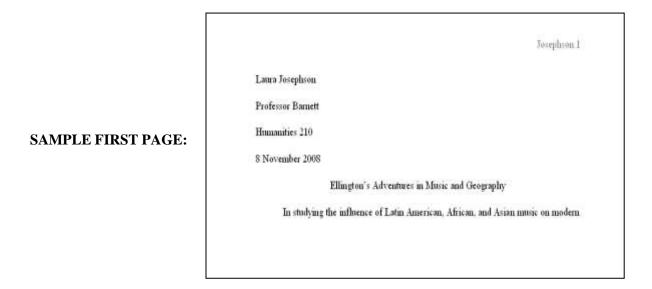# WHAT IS "MLA STYLE" FORMAT?

This handout provides a quick reference to the basics of using MLA style. For complete guidelines, consult the MLA Style guide website: https://style.mla.org/

WHAT IS MLA?

- The Modern Language Association (MLA) is an organization responsible for developing MLA format, often called MLA style.
- MLA format was developed as a way for researchers, students, and scholars in the literature and language fields to use a <u>uniform way to format their papers and assignments</u>.
- This uniform, or consistent, method to developing an MLA paper or assignment allows for easy reading.
- Today, MLA is not only used in literature and language subject areas; many others have adopted it as well.

Formatting Basics

- Plain 12-point font (Times New Roman)
- Double space throughout paper, with no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Top, bottom, and side margins should be one inch.
- Indent the first word of each paragraph by ½ inch or 5 spaces.
- Do not use a title page for the research paper: instead simply type your name, instructor's name, course number, and date. This should be flush with the left margin.
- Center the title of the paper. Do not <u>underline</u> the title, or put in "quotation marks," or set in ALL CAPITALS.
- Number all pages consecutively in a header in the upper right corner, ½ inch from the top and flush with right margin. Type your last name before the page number, and do not use "p." before the number.

SAMPLE FIRST PAGE:

Josephson 1

Laura Josephson

Professor Barnett

Humanities 210

8 November 2008

Ellington's Adventures in Music and Geography

In studying the influence of Latin American, African, and Asian music on modern

In-Text or Parenthetical Citations

- The basic format for in-text citations is **(author's last name and page #)**.
- No comma is necessary to separate these two pieces of information. You will only need a space.
- Consider the following example:

  Research suggests that "communism is a red herring" (Jones 117).
- If the author's name is already included in the text, only the page number is needed in the citation: (117).

  According to Jones, "communism is a red herring" (117).
- Citations should appear at the conclusion of the sentence that contains the quote. The final quotation mark and the first parenthesis should have one space between them. The period should appear after the second parenthesis.
- If you're citing more than one source by the same author, you will need to differentiate the in-text citations by including additional information, such as the title of the work, in the parenthetical.

  (Brusatte, "A Mesozoic Aviary" 791) and (Brusatte, "Evolution: When Dinosaurs" 1190).
- Remember that if you have more than three authors, you will need to use et al. to indicate this to your reader.

  (Harris et al. 369) or Harris et al. strongly disagreed with the assertion cats make good pets (369).

Works Cited Page

MLA style requires that the list of Works Cited start on a new page at the end of your paper. Formatting rules include:

- Continue page numbering from the body of your paper.
- Center the title "Works Cited," one inch from the top.
- Alphabetize entries by the author's last name. If no author, alphabetize by the title (ignore A, An, The).
- Use a **hanging indent** (first line is flush with margin, second line indents in 1 tab space (see example below.

In the 8th Edition of MLA, you include the "core elements" of the sources. Core elements are those basic pieces of information that should be common to all sources, from books to articles, from lectures to tweets. The MLA core elements (with the punctuation that should follow each element) are as follows:

1. **Author**. (Last Name, First Name; online nicknames and handles are now acceptable if real name isn't known)
2. Title of **source**.
3. Title of **container** (i.e., website, journal, book or magazine name)
4. Other **contributors**, (State specific role, followed by the word "by" and then first and last name)
5. **Version**, (Abbreviate ed. for Edition and rev. for Revised)
6. **Number**, (Use vol. for Volume and no. for number, with commas in between)
7. **Publisher**, (Include only name of publisher, not business words like LLC; use UP for University Press)
8. **Publication Date**,
9. Location. (**Page Numbers** (use p. for one page, pp. for page range), URL (Permalink, omit the http://) or DOI. For online journals, DOI is preferred over URL.

A basic citation format should look like this: (You would omit elements that don't exist or are unnecessary)

Author. Title. Title of Container. Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher's name, Date of Publication, Location.

Examples of Citation Format for Works Cited Page

Book with one author:
Jacobs, Alan. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Online database journal article:
Hannah, Daniel K. "The Private Life, the Public Stage: Henry James in Recent Fiction." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol.30, no. 3, 2007, pp. 70-94. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.uwf.edu/stable/30053134.

Website:
"Woman Gives Birth to Grandchild." *CNN.com*, 15 Oct. 2006, www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/10/15/japan.granny.reut/index.html.