

Essay Guidance
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Essay questions are not necessarily straightforward. To avoid misunderstandings, review the key aspects of the question.

Essay structure

- Make sure you have a clear argument/thesis statement/claim that is clearly stated in the introduction
- There should be approximately 3-4 distinct points in a 2000-word essay
- Each paragraph/part should be a self-contained point. Paragraphs can take many forms, but a general method of constructing a paragraph/point can be:
 - Start with a topic sentence
 - Develop your point
 - Provide evidence
 - Evaluate the evidence
 - Summarise
 - Sometimes, in complex essays, you may not always start with a topic sentence, or have a concluding point. You may have a larger idea broken down into four paragraphs/points in a longer essay. The purpose of the paragraph in more complex writing is still to divide up ideas for the reader, to construct your overall argument, leading to your conclusion.
- Paragraphs/points should build on each other but they should be somewhat distinct. Avoid going back and forth throughout your essay to make the same point, this confuses the reader.
- An effective strategy is often to include one paragraph of counter-argument. Consider what a fair critic could argue against your points. You should then refute the point. This provides complexity and nuance in your essay. If your argument is nuanced from the beginning, this may not be needed.
- Essay introductions establish and detail the parameters of the discussion. You should include the following points in your introduction:
 - Explicitly state your overall argument. E.g., ‘I argue race is central in understanding gendered power dynamics’.
 - Detail the points/arguments you will use to support your overall argument. When doing this, ensure you also signpost the broad organisational structure of the essay. E.g., ‘To demonstrate the relevance of race in understanding gendered power dynamics, I will argue/demonstrate point 1, point 2, point 3. The essay is structured accordingly’. Or ‘this essay is structured in four parts. In the first part, I will argue...’
 - Exploring the relevant background and context and defining the scope of the discussion. So, consider why your essay question is relevant/important.
 - Highlighting key concepts or ideas for the reader. E.g., what is gender?
- The essay should end with a short conclusion reiterating your main argument and supporting points.
 - No new evidence should be introduced in the conclusion
 - You may, however, reference the implications of your argument for future policy, practice, or likely outcomes, etc.

General advice/best practices

- Keep in mind an effective argument is one where the reader could reasonably disagree with you.
- If you're drawing extensively on a particular article/scholar; contextualise it/them. So, detailing what is the overall argument and why. This can be somewhat brief, you do not need to go in-depth into the source but you need to provide relevant information to the reader, keeping in mind you should assume the reader is not familiar with the sources and ideas you're discussing.
- Remember that empirical examples need to be briefly explained to show how they connect to/demonstrate your argument
- Define the concepts used. E.g., orientalism, intersectionality.
- In general, academic writing avoids contraction: they don't (do not), they aren't (are not).
- Avoid grand generalisation (e.g., 'everyone knows that', 'no one wants war', etc.): academic writing and thinking requires nuance and subtleties.
- Be specific. Avoid vague statements such as 'many people, people, for a long time, throughout history, throughout the world'. Good academic writing is specific so instead consider which people you're referencing, where exactly in the world are you referencing etc.
- When planning and writing each of your distinct points, consider whether it is directly related to the essay question overall. Doing this will ensure you write a direct and concise essay.