Practical points

Essays will be marked by other students in the group, with paper copies distributed within the fourth meeting. Each student will mark one essay, and return general feedback and a mark together with an explanation of how the mark matches the criteria discussed below. An assessment sheet is attached and will be explained later.

When you mark you should annotate the essay. I suggest you use the following style for consistency:

1. Use a pen that is not black, so that your markings stand out from the type.
2. Use straight underlining with a tick in the margin to indicate a part you like.
3. Use wavy underlining to mark any point that you do not understand, with a short comment in the margin (such as “why?”, or “not clear”).
4. Circle anything you think is wrong, including spelling and typing errors, but also factual errors. For points that need comment, add these in the margin.
5. If you have any questions or comments for the author, write them in the margin or at the top or bottom of the page.

Assessment criteria

You should assess against the following criteria

1. Is the essay constructed in a logical way that tells a story?
2. Were the points made clearly, or were things explained insufficiently well?
3. Is the English of a suitable quality (excluding minor spelling and typographical errors)?
4. Did you enjoy reading the essay?
5. Did you learn something from the essay?
6. Did the essay properly address the theme implied in the title?
7. Does the author present a reasonable critical analysis, or does the essay just contain a set of facts that are not justified or explained?
8. Are terms and concepts properly and adequately defined or explained?
9. Was the level of assumed knowledge appropriate for a first year undergraduate student as the reader?
10. Are the sources properly cited and acknowledged, and were there enough references?
11. Is the essay of correct and appropriate length?

Grading

Each essay should be graded with one of the following marks
α The essay meets most of the assessment criteria, it was a good, interesting and enjoyable read, and you felt you learned something from the essay. Criticisms are relatively minor. If the essay is really good, you can consider awarding it an α* mark. This mark will correspond to exam marks A–B.

β The essay meets some of the assessment criteria. Parts of the essay are good and interesting, but overall it led to some frustration for the reader with regard to style and/or content. For example, some concepts and terms are not properly explained, or there is not a clear story, or the style is weak in places. This mark will correspond to exam marks C–E.

γ The essay contains too many flaws and fails to meet many of the assessment criteria. For example, it may just be a loose collection of facts that do not particularly support the main theme of the essay, or too little is explained. This mark will constitute a failure.

In order to justify your grade, please fill in the attached sheet when marking (note that academic staff do something similar when marking student work such as project reports). Put a tick in each Match box where you feel the assessment criterion has been broadly met (note that we are not judging against perfection!). Always write a comment to explain why you feel any criterion has not been met. You may wish to give a positive comment of praise when a criterion has been met, but you do not need to do so.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Match</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>✗</td>
<td>Yes, it was quite good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn something from the essay?</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Actually I really did! Well done.</td>
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<td>Are terms and concepts properly and adequately defined or explained?</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>A couple of the acronyms and terms were not defined, and I did not know what they meant</td>
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<td>Was the level of assumed knowledge appropriate for a first year undergraduate student as the reader?</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>The essay covered physics topics that we have not yet been taught and I got a bit lost once or twice</td>
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<td>Are the sources properly cited and acknowledged, and were there enough references?</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>The list of sources was quite impressive, and I was able to find and read some for myself</td>
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<td>✗</td>
<td>The essay had fewer words than the requirement</td>
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