

Helpful Hints for a successful course of study at Department 03:

Essay

1. Introductory remarks

Below, you will find some useful information on how to write essays, which may be useful for a successful semester at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy. Before you start writing, please review the requirements for the essay as an examination format. In addition, please speak with your examiners and request additional guidelines.

The essay is an appropriate form of scientific work when no verified knowledge is available concerning a research subject, or if a new phenomenon or a particularly original topic is to be examined. The essay is suitable for discussing a specific problem or a selected focal point, or for an intellectually stimulating analysis of different positions including your own views. In contrast to term/seminar papers, the essay relies less on available research results. Instead, the essay calls on you to outline your own strong argument in a tightly organized structural outline. In contrast to a term/seminar paper, the essay permits more intellectual freedom, but at the same time it places higher demands on the quality of the student's arguments.

2. Formal aspects

Please observe the following formal requirements.

Length: 7 to 10 pages

Cover sheet: List your name and contact information, your degree program, the title of the essay, semester, course name, and the name of the instructor,

Table of Content: Number the headings, include page numbers,

Text: Font size 12 pt, 1.5-spaced

Indent longer quotations (more than two lines), use footnotes or endnotes,

Bibliography/reference list: provide complete information on the author, title, place and year, use uniform citations.

3. Content

An essay is a well-argued discussion and reflection on an open-ended and/or controversial problem and should include the development of the author's position. Just like in a term or seminar paper, you may be expected to position what you have read about the contemporary, biographical background of the author, outline an explicit relationship to the topic of the seminar and its overriding theme. The essay is intended to provide added content-specific value in contrast to the source material. The purpose of an essay is, moreover, to motivate the reader to keep pursuing the topic after reading the essay.

The essay must be written in scientific language, but can be supplemented with direct quotes that, when used as a style vehicle, may give the essay a more "literary" quality. You can develop and outline your own opinion based on the arguments that you present and based on a factual discussion of the different positions.

Start your essay by introducing your topic. For example, refer to current social events, take up an argument from class or mention other “hooks” for your topic. Develop your arguments by building on the introduction. Because of the limited length of an essay, it is important that you precisely define your topic and strictly adhere to the limitations you set for yourself. The essay format offers even less space than a term or seminar paper for lengthy academic excursions on research questions. Focus your arguments instead on answering the initial question. End your essay by offering an outlook on possible issues that may evolve during a continued probing of the question.

Essays are graded based on these factors:

- Level of difficulty of the independent achievement;
- Structure/argumentation;
- Factual accuracy;
- Level of methodological competence;
- Language,
- Formal criteria

4. Citation rules and plagiarism

All source materials that were used to write the essay must be included in the list of references/bibliography at the end of the essay. Other persons’/authors’ ideas, arguments or thoughts (including online sources) must be referenced as sources.

For example,

Voell, Stéphane (2015) Moral Breakdown among the Georgian Svans: a Car Accident Mediated between Traditional and State Law, in: Voell, Stéphane; Kaliszewska, Iwona (Ed.) State and Legal Practice in the Caucasus: Anthropological Perspectives on Law and Politics, Farnham: Ashgate. 95 – 111.

Merkel, Ina (2012) Imagined Families in Mobile Worlds, Special Issue Ethnologia Europaea Vol. 42:2, Copenhagen 2012, with Karen Körber as editor,
<http://oapen.org/search?identifier=610152>

We also urge you to consult our “Helpful Hints” on how to handle source materials!

The following signed statement must be added to the essay:

I assure that I have written this paper independently and without outside assistance. I have clearly identified any sources that I extracted from other works, either verbatim or by paraphrasing. This paper was not used in any other course in fulfillment of a testing requirement, and it has not been published.