

ANALYSING AN ESSAY QUESTION

1. Introduction

Common criteria of undergraduate essay writing focus on the following requirements:

- students need to be analytical and critical in their response
- students need to structure their writing logically
- students need to be persuasive writers

students need to answer the question

This booklet looks at, how to **analyse your essay question**. Other Learning Centre booklets in this series deal with the other aspects:

- Analytical Writing deals with the difference between analytical and descriptive writing
- Planning and Structuring an Essay deals with logical structures
- Developing and Supporting an Argument deals with persuasion

Expectations of student assignments

One of the difficulties experienced by students, particularly in first year, is understanding what standard is expected in essays at tertiary level. As well as this, each subject discipline has its own ways of doing things and its own conventions about essay structure and writing style. For instance, in some subjects it is acceptable to write very personally and put forward your own opinions and feelings on a topic and in others such a personal response would not be appropriate. You need to find out the expectations and conventions of your subjects so that you can write essays that are valued within the context of your discipline. You may be lucky enough to have information and support provided by individual subject teachers e.g. model essays, assessment criteria sheets.

You can help yourself by

- reading Faculty handbooks, which will often give information about the disciplinary expectations. Some Faculties have provided special publications to help first year students with writing their essays.
- reading in the subject as much as possible, which will help you understand the technical language and the style conventions of the particular subject area.

Aims and Objectives

This booklet will help you develop useful strategies for analysing essay questions. In particular, it aims

- to explore the functions of different sections of the question
- to analyse the instructions of the question
- to look at the relationship between instructions and structure of a response

2. Essay Questions

Essay topics are usually set by subject teachers in first year. Although many topics are not phrased as questions we will use the term 'essay question'. Later you may have an essay where you are required to develop your own question, which is much more difficult than it sounds. Set questions are usually written in order to judge your ability to **understand** a topic or theme, and to **relate** general ideas to specific applications (or vice versa). In order to demonstrate that you can do these things you must be able to

- correctly identify the **focus** of the question
- deal with it consistently and within the terms of the essay and discipline

That is, **you must answer the set question.**

⌘ Exercise 1

First year students were asked to write an essay on the following question:

"The science of ergonomics is central to good modern design." Discuss this statement.

About half of the group wrote essays that answered this question appropriately. The other half wrote essays which really answered other questions. Read the essay extracts below and match each essay extract with the question it appears to be answering. Write the letters a) - d) in the boxes.

Essay extracts:

- Ergonomics is important in design as it can cut down workloads and the energy needed to perform a task.
- During the industrial revolution, the word "ergonomics" had a rather negative implication about it. However, the word has taken on a different meaning through time.
- Whilst the statement seems straight forward enough I take issue with the words "modern" and "good".
- If we were to design a chair we should have an understanding of the purpose of the chair - will it be used for work or just to sit on and eat.

Essay questions:

- [] Discuss the wording of this question.
- [] Why is ergonomics important?
- [] Describe an ergonomically designed object.
- [] What is ergonomics?

Check your answer in the Key, page 15.

Elements of these responses are of course relevant to the original question, but these students incorrectly identified the **main focus** required, which was to take a position on the statement and discuss evidence to support the position taken.

Possible positions that may be taken on the above statement are:

that the science of ergonomics [is] central to good modern design
[is not]
[may be]

2.1 Essay processes and types

Some disciplines set essay questions requiring **descriptive** responses. For example,

Outline the characteristics and behavioural significance of European Upper Palaeolithic art.
(Archeology)

There may also be some sections of your essay where you will write descriptively. However, most disciplines, especially in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, will set essay questions that involve the process of **analysis**.

Analysis is the process of

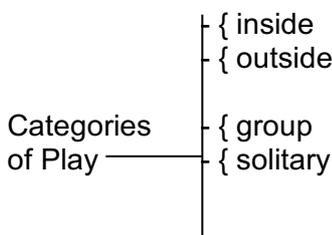
- breaking down a topic/concept/group of facts into components or categories
- looking for relationships between them
- understanding how each component contributes to the whole picture
- drawing conclusions about their significance

For example, an essay question such as

How does play contribute to the development of the primary school-aged child? (Education)

requires you to

- understand what is meant by the two key concepts of **play** and **development**
- identify different types of **play**, for example, board games, group games, solitary play, imaginative play, ...
- organise these different types of **play** into logical groupings or categories for your discussion, for example, inside versus outside play, group versus solitary play, organised versus spontaneous play and so on
- identify different areas of **development**, for example, social, cognitive, emotional, physical, language and psychological development and so on
- then by referring to the research literature show how (= in what ways) the different categories of play contribute to different areas of development.



- { organised
- { spontaneous
- {language
- {psychological

[For more practice in setting up analytical categories and in understanding the difference between descriptive and analytical writing– see the Learning Centre Booklet, *Analytical Writing*].
 The demands of the essay questions usually involve other processes as well, sometimes argumentation to support a position, often evaluation. There may be a controversy involved where there is no one right answer. Thus there are a number of processes that may overlap according to the requirements of the essay question.

Essay questions requiring analysis may also involve some (or all) of the following processes.

PROCESS/TYPE	PURPOSE
EXPLANATION	to offer explanation on why things happen
INTERPRETATION	to look at assumptions/ information in terms of key/ model/ framework
EVALUATION	to present and justify a value judgement about certain information
ARGUMENTATION	to take and justify a position on some issue/ debate

(Adapted from Martin, J. R. & Peters, P. [1985] "On the analysis of exposition" in Hasan, R. (Ed) *Discourse on Discourse*, ALAA Occasional Papers, No. 7, p. 88.)

Let's look at some examples of each of the above.

<p>EXPLANATION</p> <p>Why was the early 19th century so important for the development of archaeology? (Archaeology)</p> <p>This essay question assumes that the 19th century was very important in the development of archaeology and is asking you to explain why it was so important, and to give your reasons for each of the points made or issues raised.</p>
<p>INTERPRETATION</p> <p>'Jemma (aged 14 years) fights a lot with her parents but not with her friends. She used to be a keen student but now seems to have lost interest in both her school studies (she wants to leave school next year) and outside school activities. She does however take a passionate interest in the environment and in boys.'</p> <p>Interpret these behaviours in the light of Erikson's stage theory on adolescence. (Education)</p> <p>This essay question is asking you to interpret particular behaviours in a brief case study of an adolescent in terms of Erikson's theory on adolescence.</p>
<p>EVALUATION</p>

Evaluate the role of J.S.Mills in the transition from Classical, Political Economy to Modern Economics, with particular reference to value and distribution. (Economics)

This essay question is asking you to **make a judgement** on the contribution made by J.S.Mills **giving the reasons** for your judgement. By making a judgement you are also **taking a position** - that he played a major role or a minor one.

ARGUMENTATION

Nursing practice has been crucial in preventing the spread of disease. Do you agree? (Nursing)

This essay question is asking you to discuss the relationship between nursing practice and the prevention of the spread of disease. You would **select and show** how different examples of nursing practices have prevented the spread of disease/s and you would **take a position** on this relationship, i.e. that nursing practice has been crucial or has not been crucial in preventing the spread of disease.

In the above examples, brief descriptions have been provided to **guide you** on what would be a possible response to each of the essay questions.

This booklet cannot provide you with definitive answers for all the different kinds of essay questions that may be set. In the above examples, there may be **other possible responses**. In addition, your task of answering an essay question may be made more difficult by being set an essay question which is stated in such a way that it is not clear what the requirements are.

If you are in doubt about your interpretation of an essay question please check with your tutor or lecturer.

The type of response required can be changed by making fairly small changes to the wording of a question.

For example, let's look at the first essay question above.

Why was the early 19th century so important for the development of archaeology?

By rewording this question it could be changed from an essay requiring explanation to:

- one requiring evaluation where you are asked to make a judgement on the importance of the early 19th century and possibly to take a position.

How important was the early 19th century for the development of archaeology?

- one requiring an argument where you are asked to take a position, such as (a) it was very important or (b) it was not very important or (c) it was very important in some ways and not in other ways.

The early 19th century was very important for the development of archaeology. Discuss.

⌘ Exercise 2

Below is one of the essay questions you have already looked at. In its present form it requires a response of argumentation. Write two new essay questions by changing the requirement of argumentation to ones that primarily require

- a response of explanation
- a response of evaluation

Nursing practice has been crucial in preventing the spread of disease. Do you agree?
(Nursing)

Check your answer in the Key, page 15.

Other considerations

a) Responding to disciplinary demands

A highly valued response to these essay questions requires other considerations. As mentioned earlier each discipline has its own way of seeing the world. This means that each discipline differs in the way it organises knowledge, in the theoretical perspectives and models it develops, the problems it identifies as significant, the research methodologies it uses and so on.

It is part of your task to understand and learn these 'rules' and respond in ways that are highly valued by your discipline. So, in a persuasive essay you want to convince your reader that the argument you develop (and the evidence you provide to support your argument) are valid and significant within your field of study.

b) Challenging assumptions

You can also challenge / question the assumptions in an essay question **if there is evidence to support your challenge**. For example in the essay question below you can challenge (if you have the evidence to support the challenge) the assumption that the early 19th century is so important and argue that it was of no greater importance (or of lesser importance) than other periods.

Why was the early 19th century so important for the development of archaeology?
(Archaeology)

⌘ Exercise 3

Examine an essay question set in one of your courses and decide which of the above processes are involved and what other considerations might be involved.

Remember: if you are currently working on an essay and you are unsure if you have correctly identified the processes involved, check with your tutor or lecturer.

2.2 Breaking down the essay question.

Many questions are framed as statements, rather than questions. Some are quite straightforward, others are very complex.

Consider the following essay question from the field of Education.

It has been cited with alarm that modern children spend more hours in front of television than they spend at school. Is this necessarily cause for alarm? By examining the relevant research literature, critically discuss the effects of television on children with respect to at least one of the following:

- a) the development of aggression
- b) educational television
- c) the development of fantasy and imagination
- d) the development of sex-role stereotypes

Below is the break down of this question - the wording falls into 4 sections, each with a different function:

SECTION	FUNCTION
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1. It has been cited with alarm that modern children spend more hours in front of television than they spend at school.	orientation to topic
2. Is this necessarily cause for alarm?	proposition
3. By examining the relevant research literature, critically discuss the effects of television on children	instruction
4. with respect to at least one of the following: a) the development of aggression b) educational television c) the development of fantasy and imagination d) the development of sex-role stereotypes	scope

This essay question is asking you to present and justify a value judgement and to take a position on the proposition such as (a) yes, it is cause for alarm **or** (b) no, it is not cause for alarm **or** (c) maybe - sometimes it is / sometimes it is not

The position you take will depend upon the support for it in the research literature. It is sometimes harder to argue and support an extreme position, especially when research reports mixed and inconsistent results and when areas generate controversial debates in the literature. In these situations it may be more valid to take a middle position. In the above example your discussion on the effects of television on children and the position you take will also depend upon your selection of the type of television programme (scope). Below are some examples of how scope may influence position.

SCOPE	POSITION TAKEN
The effects of violence on television on the development of aggression	It is cause for alarm
The effects of educational programmes on the development of prosocial behaviours	It is not cause for alarm
The effects of both violent and educational television programmes	Sometimes it is / sometimes it is not - depending upon television programme

The essay question can also suggest the structure of the answer.

The structure of the above essay might look like this:

Introduction: State topic, proposition and scope

Body: Reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc to support your position
Dismiss counter positions using reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc
[If you select more than one area, you will have to do this for each].

Conclusion: Sum up, restate proposition

⌘ Exercise 4

Break down the following questions into sections, and decide the function of each.

a) (Architecture)

FUNCTION

Selecting either post and lintel or arcuated structural systems, and taking examples from three historical periods, discuss similarities and differences in the architectural use of that particular structural system

How does the question influence the structure of the answer?

b) (History)

FUNCTION

Do historians working on the witchcraft phenomenon as it appeared in different areas of Europe come to the same conclusions as to its nature and causes? Use the documents and two historians, one from any two of the three areas grouped in the reading list.

How does the question influence the structure of the answer?

c) (Anthropology)

FUNCTION

Using the Andean region as your ethnographic focus, explore the relation between our categories of nature and culture as they seem to be understood in their belief system(s). You should concentrate on one kind of animal, plant, geographical / astronomical feature: or perhaps examine metaphor of the body or the constitution of gender. In your discussion draw on articles, films and lectures from class, as well as the readings below, and be sensitive to variations in belief between different Andean communities and to questions of time (e.g. colonial vs contemporary). Conclude by comparing / contrasting the ideas about nature / culture with our own, especially with reference to anthropological thinking on these issues.

How does the question influence the structure of the answer?

Check your answer in the Key, pages 16-17.

Remember: there is not one correct approach to questions such as these. There are often several structures which could adequately address the different parts of the

question.

2.3 The focus of the question

We are going to look more closely at what the assignment requires you to do. It can be seen by the above examples that there may be more than one set of instructions. It is important when you are answering the question to make sure you address all instructions.

Generally there are several elements that can help you:

- **Instruction** words: e.g. discuss, compare and contrast, evaluate, explain
 Note:
 - a) sometimes the instruction is not stated but implied,
 - e.g. What is the importance of research into the linguistic capabilities of apes? = **explain the importance.**
 - e.g. How skillfully does Dante portray the acting of Francesca da Rimini? = **evaluate the extent of his skill.**
 - b) an instruction can be affected by the content of the question, e.g. 'discuss', can cover a variety of meanings from a factual 'describe' to 'evaluate'.

- **Content** words: key terms
 e.g. our categories of 'nature' and 'culture', architectural use, witchcraft phenomenon, effects of television on children
 Note: these terms usually need to be defined.

- **Value-laden** words:
 - e.g. words implying negative or positive emphasis:
 "This dead **butcher**..." do you agree with Malcolm's description of Macbeth?
 (English Literature)
 - e.g. words implying a scale of degree or importance:
 "The science of ergonomics is **central** to good modern design." Discuss this statement.
 (Architecture)
 - Note: these words usually indicate that an evaluative or argumentative stance is required.

⌘ Exercise 5

Answer these questions in the space provided next to the 5 essay questions below.

- a) what are the instruction words or implied instructions and the content words?
- b) do any of the terms need to be defined?
- c) are there any value-laden words?
- d) what are the implications for the structure of the response?

<p>1. Is dreaming a biological necessity? Discuss the view that dreaming is a neurophysiologically / neurochemically distinct state of consciousness.</p>	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p>
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<p>(Psychology)</p>	<p>c) d)</p>
<p>2. Critically evaluate the statement that 'inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon.' (Economics)</p>	<p>a) b) c) d)</p>
<p>3. What are the main differences between pluralist and elitist analyses of power distribution in liberal democracies? (Politics)</p>	<p>a) b) c) d)</p>
<p>4. Explain why property is so important in the formation of class. Explain two theories about class formation, referring to Australian society. (Sociology)</p>	<p>a) b) c) d)</p>
<p>5. How are national stereotypes formed? Is there any truth in them? Can they be changed? (Social Psychology)</p>	<p>a) b) c) d)</p>

Check your answer in the Key, pages 17-20.

⌘ Exercise 6

Below are a number of essay questions and extracts from students' essays. Identify whether each response is "answering" or "not answering" the set question. Give your reasons.

Question 1 (Education)

Design the ideal school, ideal curriculum and ideal teacher for adolescents, justifying yourself each step of the way by argument and reference to research.

Essay extract (the introduction)

Before designing the ideal school, ideal curriculum and ideal teacher for adolescents, it must be realized that such a school as a whole has to exist and function in society as it is today. Therefore instead of using ideas which could be deemed to be too idealistic to succeed, I have chosen designs which I feel could operate successfully in society and benefit everyone as a unit, not just selected individuals.

The extract is answering / not answering the question (circle the appropriate one)

Reason(s)

Question 2 (Government)

What are the main differences between pluralist and elitist analyses of power distribution in liberal democracies?

Essay extract (the conclusion)

The pluralist and elitist approach to politics support contrasting theories. They differ in many ways: about how power is distributed, who holds power, who holds resources of politics (potential power), who successfully uses these resources, who tries to protect the existing system of government, the role of government in society and in the economy, even their views of human nature are distinctively different. On one aspect that they do agree is that in modern liberal democracies there exists great inequality in the distribution of power, and that real politics is not what the classical definition of democracy sets it out to be.

The extract is answering / not answering the question (circle the appropriate one)

Reason(s)

Question 3 (History)

The unification of Italy owed more to Cavour than Garibaldi. Discuss.

Essay extract (the introduction)

The fate of unifying Italy lay on the shoulders of the two greatest figures in Italian history, namely Count Camillo de Cavour and Giuseppe Garibaldi. Yet the question to consider is who contributed more to the unification. Was it Cavour's diplomatic and political skills that made him so influential in the process of unification by achieving the development of a strongly founded government and monarch? Or was it Garibaldi's initiative that brought North and South together through his military conquests and development of Italian patriotism?

The essay will argue that both great figures had an equal influence upon the unification process.

The extract is answering / not answering the question (circle the appropriate one)

Reason(s)

Question 4 (Sociology)

What can the concept 'culture' contribute to our understanding of society?

Essay extract (the introduction)

The concept of culture can contribute to our understanding of how social order is maintained in a society. With the concept of culture one can better understand that the behaviour of a society is learned. It can give insight into why there are so many different societies operating in different ways, or on the other hand, why societies are so similar. The concept of culture can help one to comprehend why a society may disintegrate.

The extract is answering / not answering the question (circle the appropriate one)

Reason(s)

Check your answer in the Key, pages 20-21.

How can the information in this booklet help you?

We assume that you have a writing assignment in progress. Below is a checklist of questions to help you apply what you have learned here to your own work.

- What are the expectations and conventions for essay writing in your faculty? If you do not know, how can you find out? What sort of writing is highly valued? (If you have no feedback on your own writing, think about the reading you have done in the subject.) Are you responding to disciplinary demands?
- Do you have any information about the appropriate format and assessment criteria for this essay (e.g. an assessment sheet)? If not, who can you ask?
- How many sections are there in the essay question?
- What is the function of each section?
- What will be the focus of your essay? Look at the wording of the question.
 - What are the instruction words? If there are no instruction words, what instructions are implied?
 - What are the content words?
 - Are there any value-laden words?
- If there is more than one set of instruction, what is the connection between them?
- Are you required to write descriptively and / or analytically in order to respond adequately? Are you being asked for an explanation, an interpretation, an evaluation and / or argumentation in your response to the essay question?
- What can you predict about the essay structure from this analysis?
- Are assumptions made in the essay question? Do you have evidence that allows you to challenge any assumptions made?

Reference list for further reading

Clanchy, J. & Ballard, B. (1991) *Essay Writing for Students: a practical guide*. Longman Cheshire.

KEY TO EXERCISES

⌘ Exercise 1

“The science of ergonomics is central to good modern design.” Discuss this statement.

Read the essay extracts below and match each extract with the question.

Extracts	Questions
Ergonomics is important in design as it can cut down workloads and the energy needed to perform a task.	Why is ergonomics important? (i.e. some students gave reasons why ergonomics is important.)
During the industrial revolution, the word "ergonomics" had a rather negative implication about it. However, the word has taken on a different meaning through time.	What is ergonomics? (i.e. some students defined the term.)
Whilst the statement seems straight forward enough I take issue with the words "modern" and "good".	Discuss the wording of this question. (i.e. some students criticised the wording of the question.)
If we were to design a chair we should have an understanding of the purpose of the chair - will it be used for work or just to sit on and eat.	Describe an ergonomically designed object. (i.e. some students described an ergonomic object - usually a chair.)

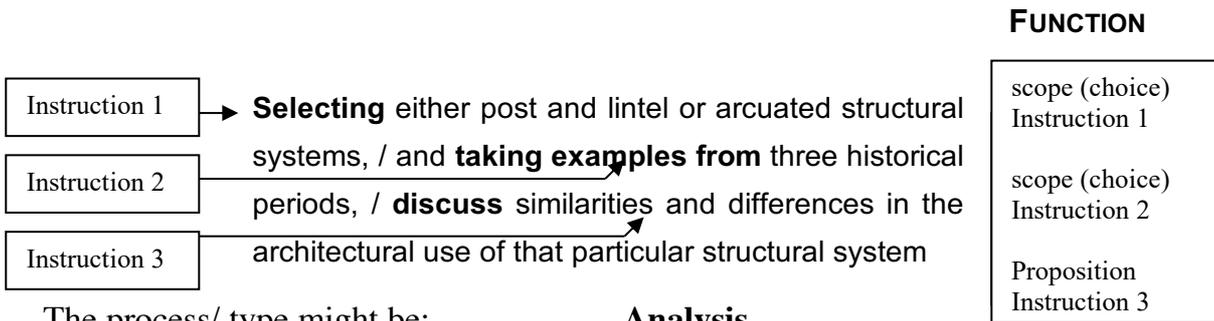
⌘ Exercise 2

Nursing practice has been crucial in preventing the spread of disease. Do you agree?
(Nursing)

- a) A question requiring a response of explanation might be:
- Why has nursing practice been so crucial in preventing the spread of disease?
- b) Possible questions requiring a response of evaluation might be:
- Evaluate the role played by nursing practice in preventing the spread of disease.
or
How crucial has nursing practice been in preventing the spread of disease?

⌘ Exercise 4

a) (Architecture)



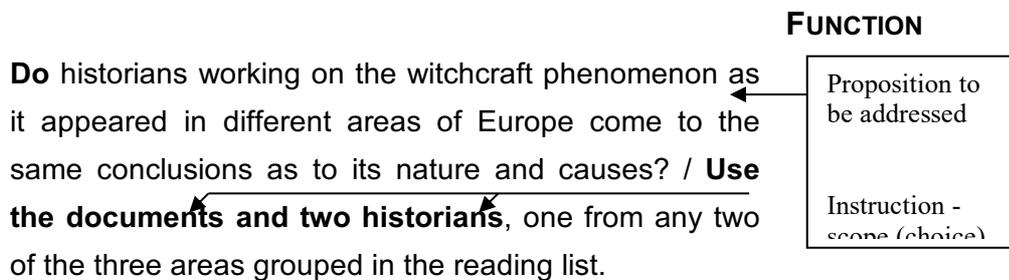
The process/ type might be: **Analysis**

In this essay you would **select** and **reorganise** information on the architectural use of decoration in the structural system/s you have chosen showing the similarities and differences using examples from 3 historical periods.

The structure of the answer might be:

Introduction:	State choices of structural system and 3 historical periods (scope),		
Body:	Use of decoration 1	{similarities	{in different periods
		{differences	
	Use of decoration 2	{similarities	{in different periods
	{differences	
Conclusion:	Sum up main similarities and differences		

b) (History)



The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, argumentation**

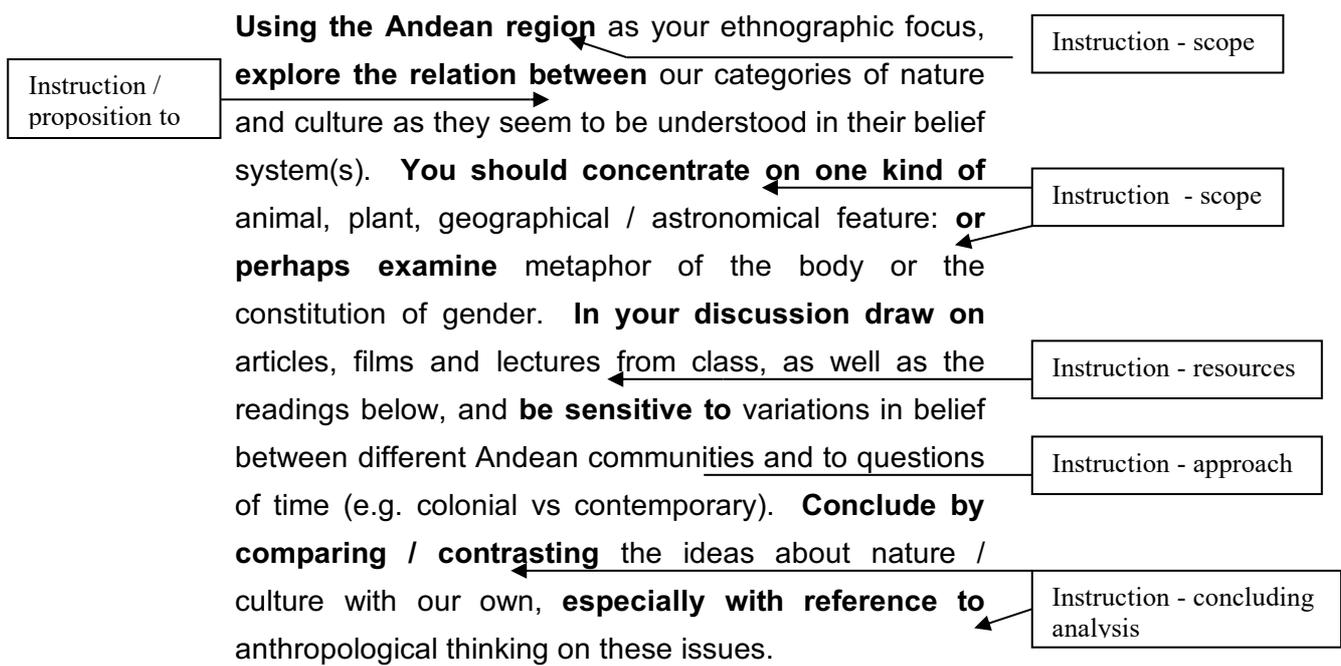
In this essay you would **select** and **reorganise** information about the nature and the causes of witchcraft in different parts of Europe and **compare** and **judge** the positions taken by historians. You will probably **take a position** such as (a) yes, they do, (b) no, they do not, or (c) maybe - some do, some do not, and give your reasons.

The structure of the answer might be:

Introduction	State topic and scope...
	Indicate your position on the matter
Body:	Reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc to support your position
	Dismiss counter positions using reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc
Conclusion:	Sum up and justify your position again

c) (Anthropology)

FUNCTION



The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, interpretation**

This essay question is asking you (a) to show how our categories of nature / culture would be interpreted within another framework, the belief system(s) of other peoples, and (b) to compare and contrast the two belief systems. In this essay you could **select** and **reorganise** information about the belief system/s of the peoples from the Andean region and relate these to our categories of nature / culture, then **compare** and **contrast** the two belief systems.

The structure of the answer might be:

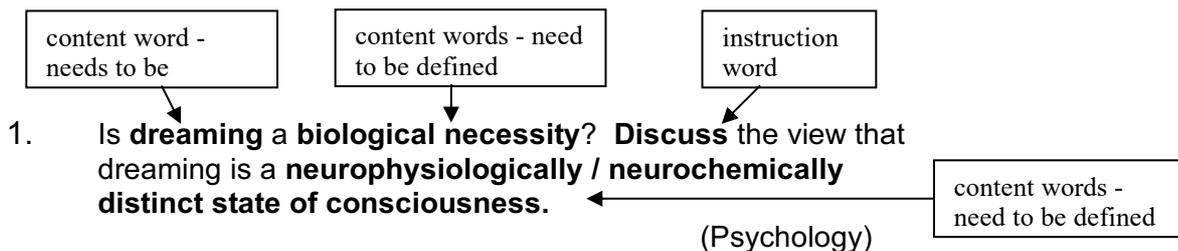
- Introduction: State topic, proposition and all your choices (scope)
- Body: Aspect 1, 2 .. of belief system/s related to our categories
Present similarities and differences between two systems
- Conclusion: Sum up main aspects

Remember: there is not one correct approach to questions such as these. There are often several structures which could adequately address the different parts of the question.

⌘ Exercise 5

Consider these questions in relation to the 5 essay questions below.

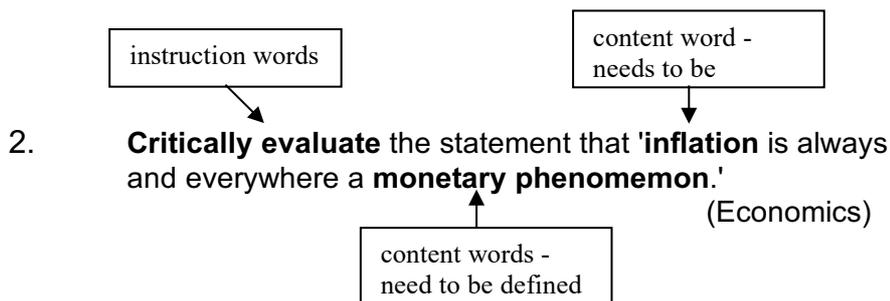
- a) what are the instruction words / implied instructions and the content words?
- b) do any of the terms need to be defined?
- c) are there any value-laden words?
- d) what are the implications for the structure of the response?



The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, argumentation**

The structure of the response might be:

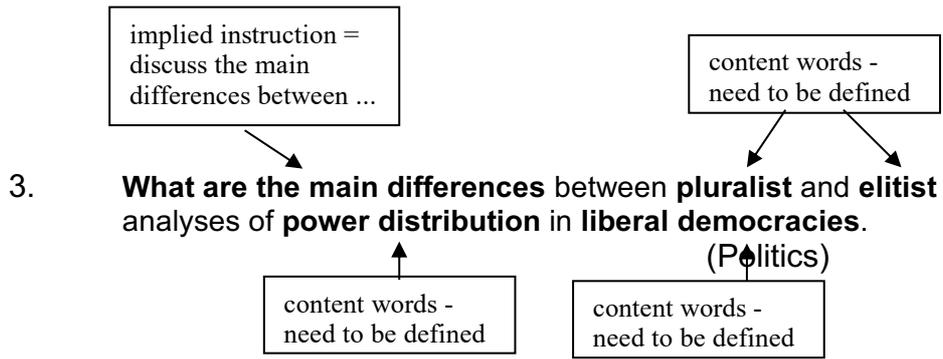
- Introduction: State your position on the issue
- Body: Reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc to support your position
Dismiss counter positions using reasons / evidence 1, 2 ...etc
- Conclusion: Sum up main points and restate your position



The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, evaluation, argumentation**

The structure of the response might be:

- Introduction: Define the nature /scope / limits of evaluation (ie how true is the statement?) in terms of the theories.
- Body: Evidence / reasons 1, 2 ...etc for evaluation
- Conclusion: Sum up and restate reasons for evaluation



The process/ type might be: **Analysis**

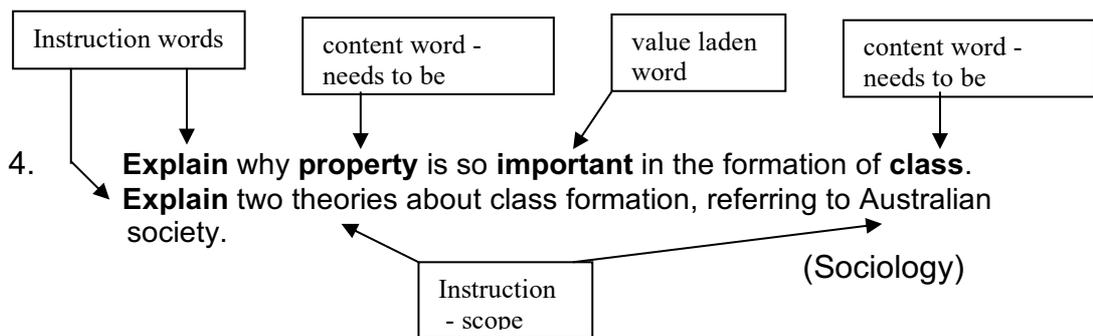
The structure of the response might be:

Introduction: State main categories of comparison and main differences between pluralist and elitist analyses of

Body:

Category 1	{pluralist	
	{elitist	
Category 2	{pluralist	
	{elitist	
Category 3	{pluralist	
	{elitist	etc

Conclusion: Sum up main differences



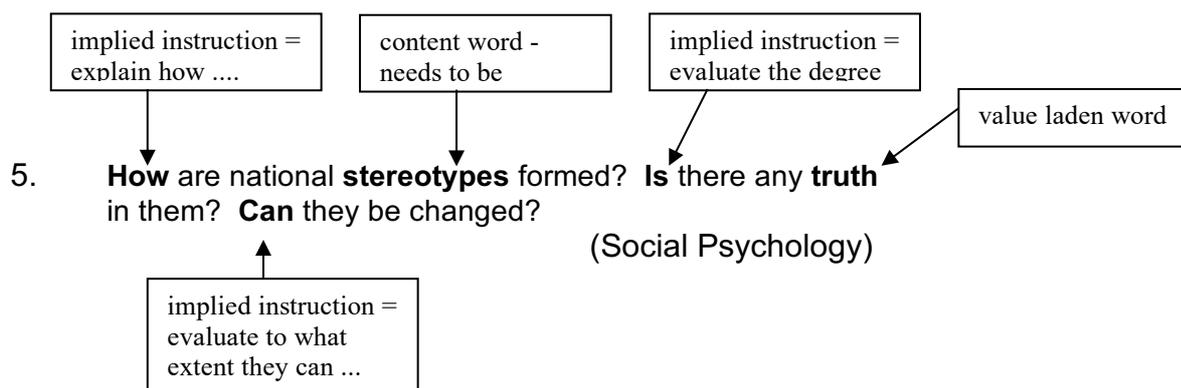
The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, explanation, evaluation, interpretation**

The structure of the response might be:

Introduction: State topic, evaluation, and two theories to be examined

Body: Reasons for 1, 2 ...etc; Reasons against 1, 2 ...etc
Evidence / reasons 1, 2 ...etc for evaluation

Conclusion: Restate evaluation and main reasons



The processes/ types might be: **Analysis, explanation, evaluation**

The structure of the response might be:

- Introduction: State topic, main reasons for formation of national stereotypes, state evaluation on degree of truth and changability
- Body: Reason 1, 2 ... for formation of national stereotypes
Examples of national stereotypes - evaluate and provide evidence for degree of truth and changability
- Conclusion: Sum up main reasons and restate evaluations

⌘ Exercise 6

Below are a number of essay questions and extracts from students' essays. Identify whether each response is "answering" or "not answering" their set question. Give your reasons.

Question 1 (Education)

Design the ideal school, ideal curriculum and ideal teacher for adolescents, justifying yourself each step of the way by argument and reference to research.

Essay extract (the introduction)

Before designing the ideal school, ideal curriculum and ideal teacher for adolescents, it must be realized that such a school as a whole has to exist and function in society as it is today. Therefore instead of using ideas which could be deemed to be too idealistic to succeed, I have chosen designs which I feel could operate successfully in society and benefit everyone as a unit, not just selected individuals.

Comment:

This introduction does not answer the set question. The marker's comments are; "The question asked for the ideal school. It is therefore hardly appropriate to begin by saying that you do not intend to specify an ideal school."

Question 2 (Government)

What are the main differences between pluralist and elitist analyses of power distribution in liberal democracies?

Essay extract (the conclusion)

The pluralist and elitist approach to politics support contrasting theories. They differ in many ways: about how power is distributed, who holds power, who holds resources of politics (potential power), who successfully uses these resources, who tries to protect the existing system of government, the role of government in society and in the economy, even their views of human nature are distinctively different. On one aspect that they do agree is that in modern liberal democracies there exists great inequality in the distribution of power, and that real politics is not what the classical definition of democracy sets it out to be.

Comment:

This extract answers the question set. It focuses on the main differences between the two analyses of power as well as dealing with similar aspects.

Question 3 (History)

The unification of Italy owed more to Cavour than Garibaldi. Discuss.

Essay extract (the introduction)

The fate of unifying Italy lay on the shoulders of the two greatest figures in Italian history, namely Count Camillo de Cavour and Giuseppe Garibaldi. Yet the question to consider is who contributed more to the unification. Was it Cavour's diplomatic and political skills that made him so influential in the process of unification by achieving the development of a strongly founded government and monarch? Or was it Garibaldi's initiative that brought North and South together through his military conquests and development of Italian patriotism?

The essay will argue that both great figures had an equal influence upon the unification process.

Comment:

This introduction deals with the main issue, that of discussing who of these two men contributed more to the unification of Italy. It is answering the question.

Question 4 (Sociology)

What can the concept 'culture' contribute to our understanding of society?

Essay extract (the introduction)

The concept of culture can contribute to our understanding of how social order is maintained in a society. With the concept of culture one can better understand that the behaviour of a society is learned. It can give insight into why there are so many different societies operating in different ways, or on the other hand, why societies are so similar. The concept of culture can help one to comprehend why a society may disintegrate.

Comment:

The extract is answering the question. It presents an overview of the many ways that the concept of culture contributes to our understanding of society. These are elaborated upon in the body of essay.

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