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How to write an Essay?

Essays are a short format, in which a thesis/argument is to be presented and made plausible. An essay is neither a summary of the relevant literature nor a short term paper, in which a thesis or an argument is to be proved and documented at length. Your own voice should come through in the essay! That means, the essay is to be written using the first person perspective: my argument is; my thesis is...

If the essay is based on literature from the seminar, then there are various possibilities for choosing a topic:

1. The consistency and plausibility of a thesis/finding can be (critically) discussed, whereby the use of secondary literature will be expected.
2. Theses/findings from different texts can be compared; in this case, the author should weigh the pro and contra and come to his or her own conclusion.
3. Inspired from the texts, a question which reaches beyond the immediate topic can be posed. In such a case, the following questions are to be considered: what opinions are there on the topic? What are the arguments? Which arguments are convincing, and which are less convincing, which are not at all and why? What is my position?

Structure

A table of contents is not needed. A cover page and a rough outline are sufficient. Further formal guidelines will be discussed in the seminar.

An essay also does not need an elaborate introduction or conclusion (see the guidelines for the term papers and final papers). The basic structure - introduction - body - and conclusion - should still be observed. You are free to choose the headings; they should, however, be used sparingly; if the essay's structure is clear and the essay short, then they can be dispensed with altogether. In any case, it should be clear to the reader after the second paragraph how the remainder of the essay is structured.

An essay begins with a question or a problem, which must fundamentally differ from the questions and problems dealt with in the texts. Begin with an attention grabber, which can be a piece of startling information or a surprising finding (in the texts or in reality); or a current question, which is of interest and relevant to society. The first two paragraphs of an essay should present both the question which is to be investigated, along with the central argument to be discussed.

The body should contain relatively few concise examples, findings and quotes; try to argue as stringently as possible! Use precise phrasing, avoid improper generalizations along with undefined, problematic terms. Please, no digressions! Include in your essay only that which you need to make your argument plausible.

The conclusion can be very pointed. However, it must be related to the question and the essay's argument. Think of the essay as a circle. The conclusion connects back to the beginning! Please choose your final sentence carefully!

These simple steps will guide you through the essay writing process:

- Decide on your topic.
- Prepare an outline or diagram of your ideas.
- Write your thesis statement: What is your argument, what is your position!
- Write the body.
 - Write the main points.
 - Write the subpoints.
 - Elaborate on the subpoints.
- Write the introduction.
- Write the conclusion.
- Add the finishing touches
- Write the references you refer to.