THE ACADEMIC ESSAY – Guidelines

OBJECTIVES

The assignment to write an academic essay during this semester has the following complementary objectives:

- Teach you to analyse and understand the chosen topic;
- Research the topic, formulate theses and plan the overall structure of your essay;
- Find more information and use a variety of sources;
- Process the information and organise it in clear paragraphs;
- Organise your paragraphs in a logical and coherent text;
- Use adequate and accurate English;
- Avoid plagiarism;
- Improve and redraft your essay;
- Edit and proofread.

GUIDELINES

1. Start by analysing the essay topic: this will tell you what type of essay you will be writing, e.g. descriptive, argumentative, expository, personal experience essay, or indeed you may choose to use a mixture of different approaches and types.
2. Whatever the type of the essay it always has the following overarching elements: introduction, body and conclusion.
3. A good introduction should both adequately introduce the topic and encourage the reader's interest in the work. It should also contain a thesis statement which shows how you intend to discuss and develop the topic.
4. The body of the essay should present your ideas in a clear and structured way, through logical and meaningful paragraphs, which contain well-developed arguments and discussions supported by relevant evidence and credible information. Depending on the type of your essay the body may use different organisational patterns, e.g. reasons for and reasons against, causes followed by effects, problems followed by solutions. Each paragraph should be well-organised and well-developed. The cohesion between paragraphs should be enhanced by the use of linking words or phrases.
5. The main function of the conclusion is to demonstrate to the reader that you have managed to address the topic successfully, therefore it should link to the thesis statement in your introduction without, of course, simply repeating it or repeating the arguments presented in the body of the essay. Importantly, the conclusion should not contain any new information or new developments of the topic.
6. All parts of the essay should be both cohesive and coherent. A text is cohesive if its elements are linked together – it is coherent if it makes sense.
7. More information on the features of the academic essay can be found both in TASK Module 8 on Essay Writing and online at: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/
8. An important criterion for assessing your work will be the quality of the research you have done for your essay, so basically the more and more credible sources you use the better. It is however equally important how you use your sources! You are free to use all kinds of sources, e.g. books, the Web, interviews, etc. as long as you honestly and accurately reference them. Generally, there are two ways of avoiding plagiarism: citing (reporting ideas and data using your own words) and quoting (using verbatim the words of your source). In both cases this must be accurately indicated in the paper both by an in-text citation and an entry in the Works Cited section, in the form

prescribed by the MLA Formatting and Style Guide:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

9. The MLA Formatting and Style Guide should also be followed in relation to all aspects of your work concerning the formatting and layout of your paper.
10. When editing and redrafting essays you should use a clear system of reviewing your work according to 5 criteria: relevance to the topic, support and development of ideas, organisation and logical structure, academic style, adequacy and accuracy of the language (register, syntax, grammar, lexis, spelling). Your essay will be evaluated by the instructor based on the same criteria.

LENGTH

The length of the essay should be between 1000 and 1500 words.

ESSAY TOPICS

Your topics will be based on your respective extensive reading books and will be formulated in class.

DEADLINES

The first draft of each essay must be submitted by 12 December 2014 via Moodle. Essays will be then allocated for peer editing. Peer edited essays will be forwarded to both the author and the instructor by 19 December 2014. The second draft of the essay, taking into consideration peers' comments, must be submitted by 5 January 2015 via Moodle. Instructor will provide feedback on the second draft by 16 January 2015. The portfolio containing a third draft of the essay, taking into consideration both peers' and instructor's comments, plus the two edited drafts must be printed, bound and submitted to the instructor before or on the day of the final exam.

EVALUATION

Each essay will award a maximum of 100 points = 20 for relevance to the topic, 20 for support and development of ideas, 20 for organisation and logical structure, 20 for academic style (adherence to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide), 20 for adequacy and accuracy of the language. If an essay scores 0 points by any of these criteria, the final cumulative score will not be awarded and the assignment will be considered failed.

PEER EDITING INSTRUCTIONS

Peer editors will review the essay allocated to them on the basis of five criteria: a) relevance to the topic (Is the topic well understood? Do all paragraphs address the topic?); b) support and development of ideas (Is the information contained in the essay well-researched? Has the author used convincing and sufficient sources?); c) organisation and logical structure (Are the paragraphs well-organised, e.g. topic sentence, supporting information, concluding sentence? Are the paragraphs organised in a clear logical structure? Is the whole text cohesive and coherent? Are the introduction and the conclusion

written in accordance with academic standards?); d) academic style (adherence to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide); e) adequacy and accuracy of the language. Peer editors will correct / suggest improvements to the text. IMPORTANT: All changes and additions to the paper must be tracked:

MS Office http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/track-changes-HA102840151.aspx?CTT=1, OpenOffice:

https://wiki.openoffice.org/wiki/Documentation/OOoAuthors_User_Manual/Writer_Guide/Tracking_changes_to_a_document

Peer edited essays must be uploaded here: http://elearn.uni-sofia.bg/mod/assign/view.php?id=46150 by 12 January 2014.