ESSAY GUIDELINES

WHAT SHOULD YOUR ESSAY LOOK LIKE?

- Your essay should be an analytical paper written by you on a topic of your choice. It can be related to your other academic or personal interests (e.g. your Bachelor/Master thesis or a paper/project you work on in another course). However, be aware that even though there can be overlaps with your other texts submitted in other courses, you may not submit the same (or almost the same) paper twice! Such behaviour will most likely lead to you failing the course and possibly other disciplinary punishments. For topic ideas check the course plan in SIS. If you are lost, do not hesitate to ask.

- It can be theoretical or empirical. It can be a comparative analysis, a discussion of a concept, analysis of secondary/primary data, or even an analysis of your own original empirical research (e.g. if you have done some for your thesis).

- Most importantly it should show your ability to work with academic and research literature, including literature written in English, your ability to distinguish relevant sources from irrelevant ones, good quality texts from low quality ones, objective texts from biased ones. Apart from presenting, summarizing and comparing information from various sources, it should include a discussion of your findings, which would show your ability to think analytically and critically about them and draw conclusions for yourself.

- A minimum of 4 “serious” academic/research sources should be used, at least 2 of them in English. Note that this does not include newspaper articles, news sites, blogs, texts published in the social media, encyclopaedias, dictionaries etc.!

- Length: 1,300 – 2,000 words (without the reference list)

- Format: Microsoft Word document (doc or docx), Arial, size 10, 1.5 spacing (this applies to all your submissions, not just the final one)

- Referencing: Choose one reference style (see below) and use it consistently.

- Structure:
  1) Introduction
  2) Method and methodology, overview of sources used and their critical evaluation, possibly an overview of data used
  3) Analysis (of concepts/data, of the relevant literature and of their mutual relationships)
  4) Discussion (your own critical evaluation of the findings presented)
  5) Conclusion (summary, but also an overall evaluation of the findings you made and/or could not make, how the results depend on the quality and relevance of the sources used, an outlook for analyses that could build up on your own findings)
  6) Reference list (a consistent list of sources used, prepared according to the guidelines of the referencing style you use in your paper)

- Do not forget to write your name on top of the first page or in the header.

- Please put your name and the (shortened) title/topic of your essay into the name of the Word file when saving an electronic version for submission.

- Please include page numbers.
SUBMISSION DATES:
1) Essay topic, research question and chosen method – 23/10/2019 (you will fill these in a shared Google table)
2) Rough proposal (This should include at least: the preliminary title and research question/problem, the expected structure of the paper, including an overview of the sources you aim to use, their critical evaluation and possibly a beginning of the analysis. Try to „fill up“ your structure with ideas, main arguments and counter-arguments and/or the first comparisons. “Nail down” the main issue you wish to discuss. The more you write, the better!) – 06/11/2019
3) Draft (a work-in-progress form of the paper, including some of the main parts of the paper named above; should provide a general idea of how you have worked with your sources, where your analysis is heading and what your findings are/will be. Again, the more you write, the better.) – 08/12/2019
4) Presentation at the miniconference (see above) – 08/01/2020
5) Final paper (a finalized version of the paper fulfilling all the requirements stated in the “ESSAY GUIDELINES”) – 12/01/2020

In case the teachers do not find your final version of the paper sufficient, they may ask you to correct and re-submit it (only one re-submission of the final paper is possible).

It is your responsibility to do your submissions on time and to be present at feedback sessions which take place in class shortly after the submission deadlines (see SIS).

Your submissions have to be done via e-mail to your tutor. By seminar 4 (30/10/2019) at the latest you will be informed which one of the teachers it is. Your essay tutor is the person who will read all the submitted working versions of your essay, discuss your further progress with you during feedback sessions or when asked for and help out if needed.

Teachers’/tutors’ e-mail addresses:
Lenka: lenka.pavelkova@natur.cuni.cz
Kristýna: kristyna.janurova@natur.cuni.cz

HOW SHOULD YOU WRITE? WHAT MISTAKES SHOULD YOU AVOID?

A general advice:
When writing, always think about:

1) who the reader will be (and therefore what needs to be explained for him/her),
2) what the general formal standards are for such a kind of paper,
but most importantly
3) what the paper is supposed to tell about you and your knowledge (for this reason it will very often be helpful to explain details which seem “silly” but prove your knowledge and understanding of a certain concept/theory/fact and possibly also any complexities/controversies attached to it).
Formal aspects:

- Do not forget to write your name on top of the first page.
- Please put your name and for example the (shortened) title/topic of your essay into the name of the file when you are saving an electronic version of it for submission. Having 25 or more files named "document 1", "draft", "final draft" takes a lot of our time and it is very annoying. And you do not want your teachers to be annoyed.
- Page numbers should be included in any formal text.
- It helps both you and the reader if the text is divided into chapters.
- Tables, graphs, figures and diagrams should be numbered, provided with a title, and any content which is not in English should be translated (at least by adding a footnote). Also, if using such visual material to illustrate your text, you should comment on it directly in your text and interpret its meaning for the reader. If you do not say anything about it, it makes no sense using it.
- Language: Most of you are not native speakers in English, so we do not expect the language to be perfect, but you should try to keep up to the standards of academic texts. When reading academic papers, reflect on the language used and try to compare it to your own writing. Perhaps you will learn some useful phrases/formulations you can use yourself. It is always good to exchange papers with a classmate/friend who can give you some feedback too (Are the sentences clear? Are words chosen correctly to express what you mean?).
- Differentiate between formal and informal speech – informal is not suitable for academic texts like this! (e. g using contractions like “isn’t”, “don’t”, using slang and informal terms and formulations, using formulations like “you can see”, “you would think” etc.)
- Using present tense – not suitable for most academic texts, sounds “journalistic”. Also, very often non-native speakers cannot work properly with tenses and randomly switch between them, making a mess in them. It is therefore advisable to use primarily past simple (he went), past perfect (he had gone) and present perfect (he has gone) in your essays and keep it simple!

Structure and discussion:

- Make sure your structure is clear and your argument is clear. Start with your main research question/problem, then introduce the main sides of the argument, then shortly explain the background, then describe the method (what data/materials you are analyzing), then analyse/compare the data/materials (this should be the biggest and most important part of your paper), then conclude.
- Keep focus! The paper is too short for you to digress to issues which are not relevant to the particular issue in question. Read every sentence you have written critically one-by-one to see whether it is really necessary and whether it is not taking space needed for the crucial parts of the argument.
Your opinions should be based on your own analysis of the information explicitly shown in the paper (evidence deriving from available data or someone else’s research findings) and should mostly be present in the conclusion, possibly introduction, not the core discussion.

Precautions:

• MAKE ABSOLUTELY SURE TO AVOID PLAGIARISM!
  - What is it? Check the explanation here. Read the article and watch the video here.
  - How to do it? Do not think your ideas are worse than someone else’s. We want to see your thinking.
  - Reference all parts of your essay taken from somewhere else to distinguish your work from the work of others (= use quotation marks and provide the sources).
  - Do not submit (almost) the same paper twice (in different courses)! Minor overlaps with your other texts are fine.
  - Plagiarism will most likely lead to you failing the course and possibly other disciplinary punishments.

• PROPER REFERENCING:
  - Check how to do in-text references and reference (bibliography) lists – use e. g. Harvard Referencing Style, APA, MLA style guidelines
  - Use one reference style consistently throughout the whole paper.
  - Learn from how experienced authors work with references while reading the obligatory course texts or even our class summaries.
  - Read our advice below to avoid common mistakes students do.
  - Check out the sample essay (uploaded in SIS) written by a student in our course in one of the previous semesters to see what a good essay should look like (structure, argumentation, language, referencing etc.).
  - All your submissions should be referenced properly, not just the final one. In the working stages of your essay writing, this allows us to see whether you have chosen suitable sources, and thus enables us to tell you early enough whether you are heading in the correct direction or not.

  - References and quotation marks are necessary when you are quoting someone else’s work. Even if you paraphrase (say the same or similar in different words), you should add a reference to show that the particular idea comes from someone else.
  - References in text and reference list at the end – use one standard style.
  - The more often you reference the better (it is usually not enough to put one reference at the end of a paragraph!). When giving factual information which is not general knowledge, you should show where you took this information from. If you are unsure, it is better to provide the source at the end of each or every other sentence, rather than at the end of each paragraph only.
    - If you are referencing the same source twice consecutively, it is enough to write (ibid.), which means “in the same place”, so you do not write the author’s name again and again. If you use the same source but a different page, write e.g. (ibid.: 35).
Of course, it does look strange if you refer to one source ten or twenty times in a row. Sometimes it is fine to take a longer set of information from one source, but if this happens more often in your paper, it should work as a sign that maybe you are using too few sources and should look for more to provide a more balanced picture of the issue you are writing about.

When mentioning the sources you have used or plan to use, please include as much of the necessary information about them as possible (author, year of publication, title, journal/book title etc.), not just a website link – this is crucial for your final essay where literature lists should be complete and consistent, but also in your proposals and drafts, as only this information will enable us to judge whether your sources are relevant (we do not have time to open all your links).

Do not violate source information! If not available, do not make it up!
e.g. if the source is “Migration Watch” or “Statista” (=an organization/institution or website) and no specific person’s name is given as author, do not make it up (e.g. by giving “Watch, M.” as author or looking in irrelevant parts of the website) – it is correct to either give the organization name in its proper form as author or not give it at all:


In text such sources are cited in the following way:

1. According to Migration Watch (2007)…
   The volume of immigration to the UK was not as significant until the 1950s (Migration Watch 2007).
2. The volume of immigration to the UK was not as significant until the 1950s (An overview of UK migration 2007).

e.g. if the publication year is not given, do not make it up – it is fine to state “n.d.” for “no date” – the information in the “references” section will look like this:


In text such sources are cited in the following way:

3. According to Statista (n.d.) the average annual salary in urban regions was…

When citing from websites, it is always recommended to provide the date you visited the website in the reference (esp. useful when the publication information is for any reasons incomplete):


However, if the author names are available, use them! – e.g. if you cite from a media server (Der Spiegel, BBC etc.), most times the author names are given – in that case, use these names in your reference list and when citing in the text, do not write the name of the server only.
• SOURCES:
  - Where to find suitable (academic/scientific) sources and data:
    o Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.se/schhp)
    o university library catalogues (Charles University: https://ckis.cuni.cz)
    o scientific databases (e.g. www.webofknowledge.com, login via Charles University)
    o academic social networks (Researchgate.net, Academia.edu)
    o websites of research institutions, government authorities, statistical offices, relevant NGOs
    o If you find a suitable source, but cannot access it or download it, we can help – let us know!
  - Do not use Wikipedia as a source. It is an open source which anyone can contribute to and thus can contain false information. Generally using Wikipedia as a source especially in an academic context is very much looked down upon. It is of course fine if you start your search for term meanings or summaries of historical events there, but always go deeper into the sources “in the background” or other, more academic/official sources, to get references for your paper (we recommend using Google Scholar to search for academic sources on topics of your interest).
  - Similarly, pay attention to data and information sources used in our presentations, class summaries and readings – usually they are “official” sources such as statistical offices, EU bodies, other academic texts, research reports etc. – not media articles! Those are usually biased, reducing or twisting the information. Try to use such sources too, and use media sources only when it is absolutely necessary (impossible to find the information elsewhere). In such cases, you need to think about and comment on the limitations of such sources. (Of course, if you choose to do a comparative content analysis of e.g. two types of media and their approach to a specific topic, then media articles serve as your study material – however, you should find other formal sources to provide a theoretical background anyway.)

• NUMBERS IN ENGLISH – are written differently from other languages, check it out:
  - e.g. dots x commas as in: “3.5 years” x “20.2%” x 2,000 migrants
  - 1st, 31st, 2nd, 52nd, 3rd, 103rd, but 4th, 5th, 11th, etc.
  - dates: “21st May 2006” (“of” as in “21st of May” is not included in the written form – it is just pronounced) OR “May 21, 2006”
  - 1990s 1980s...
• **OTHER TYPICAL ERRORS:**
  - **Names of days and months** are written with a **capital** letter (Monday, January…), most other nouns are not.
  - “politics” is not “politicians” – check out the difference and use the words correctly
  - “number of people” but “size of population” (not “number of population”)
  - “the number of migrants has been growing” not “migrants have been growing”