**Analysing the essay question**

**All assignment titles contain a central question that must be answered in your essay. Your task is to apply what you know to a particular problem. It is important to be clear in your approach to the task, and to analyse the essay question thoroughly before researching and writing.**

**Carefully analyse the question in two ways:**

* For structure: The structure will indicate the approach or style expected for the piece of writing. For example, the title may ask you to discuss, compare, consider, evaluate, examine or contrast.
* For content. Underline the words in the question which will guide you on the subject matter of the assignment. Ask yourself- what information do I need to answer the question, where can I find this information, and do I have opinion on this topic?

**Paraphrase the question in your own words. What are the central questions?**

**How many sections are there in the essay question or title? Break it down into smaller parts. You will need to address each of them.**

**How does the essay question relate to what you have heard during your lectures or read for the course? Review your lecture notes and peruse your reading list for the course. What else does it ask that you need to learn about and research?**

* Why this question was asked in the context of your course. Is there a topical controversy you need to be aware of? What are the important issues to include? Describe your interpretation of the title by paraphrasing it. This way if you misinterpret the title at least the reader will be aware of this.
* Keep focussed on the title, and keep it in a place where you can easily see it. Keep checking the exact wording of it- this will prevent going off on an interesting tangent.
* Make notes in your own words as to exactly what the title question requires. These notes may be helpful in writing your introduction. Your *Introduction* should refer to the title to focus your reader. Reflect on the title and jot down your opinions. Can you back up your opinion with evidence? Are there aspects of the question that you will have to research? Where can you find out more?

**You are expected to:**

* **Use source materials- course readings, lecture notes and other sources for evidence**
* **Compare and contrast- pose differing opinions and weigh them against one another**
* **Evaluate evidence- use expert opinions, current sources, up-to-date statistics**
* **Be aware of the topic’s context and complexities-acknowledge weaknesses in arguments, state difficulties in forming an opinion**
* **Make a logical argument- use a clear line of reasoning to provide a readable flow**
* **Provide a final analysis- point out which side/s of the argument are best, and make a decision based on the evidence**
* **Organise your writing- group similar points of information by paragraph or section**
* **Link your paragraphs with discursive sentences to devise a guided line of reasoning**

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