



Essay Guidelines

Essay

For your essay, pick one of the **posted topics**, read the text carefully, and formulate your own **thesis**, which should indicate either agreement or disagreement with the position of the author presented in the text. Clearly state your own **position**. At minimum, do you agree or disagree with the view stated in the text? It is also possible to advance a more complicated position. Do you think the author is partially correct, but missed an important point? Do you think the author is correct, but perhaps want to extend the statement to cover issues the author never considered? At minimum, you should *agree* or *disagree*.

Once, you have formulated your thesis, provide **arguments** to support your position. You can use both *historical* and *logical* arguments to back up your answer. If you feel that the thesis calls for a clarification, clarify it, but remember that the **key** ingredient of your essay is your arguments. The more convincing are the arguments the better. Whether you present a particular historical episode or discuss a highly abstract logical point, make sure that your line of reasoning actually supports your position. Obviously, the more original is the argument, the better. This is the best way to convince your reader that you have mastered the topic and have your own thoughts about it.

Peer Reviews

A good review will have both in-text comments and a helpful summary in the provided boxes. When reviewing your peers' essays, indicate what you liked and what you disliked in the essay. Try to answer the following questions: Is the **thesis** statement of the essay clearly formulated? Are the supporting **logical arguments** and **historical examples** valid and sound, i.e. do they support the thesis of the essay? Are there any **hidden premises** that the fellow student failed to state openly? What would you **change** in the essay?

Try to give useful advice. Avoid generic comments, such as "Good job. Great essay!" or "I disagree with everything you say". Instead, try to be *specific*. For instance: "Your second argument doesn't seem to support your conclusion, since statement *A* doesn't logically follow from statements *B* and *C*" or "The example in your first argument doesn't illustrate the point you are making".

Although you don't have to include spelling/grammar corrections in your peer reviews, it is always good form to point them out when you notice them.



Logistics

Stage 1: Submit the **draft** version of your essay to *peerScholar* at the Portal. Your essay draft will be reviewed by your peers only. It will **not** be graded. If the draft is submitted, you receive a 5% participation mark.

Stage 2: Review five randomly chosen essays of your peers and submit your reviews to *peerScholar*. Your reviews will be graded by the TAs and will count towards 10% of your final grade. **Note that you won't be allowed to peer-review if you have not submitted your draft essay.**

Stage 3: Prepare and submit the **final** version of your paper to *Turnitin.com* (an invitation email will be sent to you) by taking into consideration the reviews of your peers. The final version will be graded by the TAs and will count towards 20% of your final grade. **Note that your final essay will be accepted even if you haven't submitted a draft essay.**

Please, **do not** email your essays and **do not** submit hard copies. Submit your draft and peer reviews to *peerScholar* at the Portal, and your final essay to *Turnitin.com*. **Note that your final essay will only be graded if submitted to Turnitin.com.**

Assignment Schedule

Stage	Due Date	Peer-Reviewed	TA Graded	Worth
Draft Essay a short critical response to a chosen text <i>(400-800 words)</i>	Jul 25	Yes	No	5% (participation grade)
Peer Reviews of five randomly chosen draft essays <i>(min 1000 words in total)</i>	Aug 1	No	Yes	10%
Final Essay modified by taking into account the reviews <i>(600-1000 words)</i>	Aug 9	No	Yes	20%



Please note that only the **lower** word limits are strict. As for the upper limits, they are for your guidance only. ***There is no penalty for going over the limit.***

Normally, you will have to review five randomly chosen drafts, where the recommended minimum word count per one review is 200 words (5 essays x 200 words = 1000 words). It may happen that, for whatever reason, you receive fewer than five completed drafts to review. In this scenario, please keep in mind the overall minimum word count of the assignment (1000 words) and adjust accordingly. For example, if you receive only four viable draft essays, the recommended minimum word count per one review is 250 words (4 essays x 250 words = 1000 words). Again, it is the overall word count that matters. Also, remember that all minimum word counts include both comments written in text boxes ***and*** in-text comments.

Format, Bibliography, Citations, and Style

There are no restrictions as to what ***literature*** can be used, but minimal requirements. You are allowed to use required readings, supplementary readings, or other sources. The only requirement is that the material should be immediately related to the problem under scrutiny. Stay away from citing sources just for the sake of citing – more is not always better. A very good paper can have only one or two sources. Also, avoid paragraph-long quotations – try to say it in your own words (but don't forget to insert a reference – otherwise it would be ***plagiarism***). If you need to ***quote*** or ***cite*** something, do it. But keep in mind that the focus of your essay should be on ***your*** understanding of the topic. If you include too much quotation, you will crowd out your own ideas.

When citing something from the ***lectures***, no references are necessary unless you quote something word-by-word. In the latter case, make sure you mention the source which includes the name of the instructor, name of the course, year, and lecture number. The actual format will, of course, depend on the style you are using.

Any of the standard ***styles*** is acceptable (MLA, APA, etc.). The only requirement is consistency: once you have chosen a style, stick to it. See <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/documentation> for details. There are no formatting restrictions concerning ***drafts*** and ***peer reviews***.

Write and edit your essay in a proper text editor (MS Word, LaTeX, Google Docs, etc.) and do not rely on ***peerScholar's*** internal editor. When ready, just copy and paste the text into ***peerScholar's*** editor.

For word limits, see the table above.



Anonymity

To ensure anonymity of the peer-review process, please do **not** mention your name or student number anywhere in the text of your draft essay.

Importantly, this doesn't apply to the final version of your paper which is to be submitted to turnitin.com. The final version **must** include your name and your student number.

Please also include the topic number in both draft and final versions of your paper.

Late Policy and Extensions

Since the time gaps between successive deadlines are very short, late submissions will not be accepted except for the final version of the essay. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 2 marks per day. E.g. if a paper deserved a 16/20, and was handed in one day late, it will get a 14/20. **No final paper will be accepted more than a week after the deadline.**

Please note that you are responsible for ensuring that you maintain **regular backup copies** of your files, use antivirus software (if using your own computer), and schedule enough time when completing an assignment to allow for delays due to technical difficulties. Computer viruses, crashed hard drives, broken printers, lost or corrupted files, incompatible file formats, and similar mishaps are common issues when using technology, and are **not** acceptable grounds for a deadline extension.

A note from the UofT Medical Services confirming an extended period of illness can give you at most an extension of 5 business days. Again, this only applies to the final version of the essay. **No late drafts or peer reviews can be accepted for logistic reasons.**

Marking

To get a perfect mark for your **draft essay**, you need to make sure your essay is written on one of the assigned topics **and** meets the minimum word requirements.

The **peer reviews** and **essays** are marked using a few criteria, weighted differently: proper length, accuracy, attention to your peers' arguments, clarity & tone, and constructive criticism. Peer reviews and final essay are graded as most assignments are graded in the humanities; that is, an 85% is equivalent to a 4.0 GPA, so marks above an 80% are only given to exceptionally superb assignments and are very rare.

For all three stages of the assignment, there is a penalty for not meeting the minimum word count. There is **no** penalty for exceeding the word limits.