

Essay guidelines in Gender Studies

What is an essay? An essay is a scholarly piece of writing on a particular research problem. It examines a specific topic in depth. The essay is based on a research question, to which the author aims to answer. The topic and the analytical perspective of the essay are clearly defined, that is, the essay has a clear focus. The arguments in the essay are presented in a structured and coherent manner. The essay demonstrates that the writer commands the subject area well.

The essay is based on scholarly literature, which is discussed and presented clearly and by use of own meta-textual analysis and writing. The meta-textual and critical scrutiny of the literature sources implies that the author understands the premises and the context of the sources and assesses the soundness of the arguments presented in them. When discussing the literature, the student's point of view and reflections are clearly distinguishable from the sources. All the arguments and conclusions presented in the essay are supported with sound evidence.

The essay is written well and structured properly. Arguments are presented clearly. The essay is based on academic sources, which are properly referenced. Plagiarising the essay or some parts of it will result in failing the course and other consequences according to the UH instructions (see <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/alakopsaa>).

Literature: A minimum of six scholarly sources should be used. Additionally, other non-scholarly sources may be used when relevant, but keeping a critical perspective regarding their origin.

Structure: The essay starts with an introduction where the analytical perspective, the research question(s) and the most relevant starting points of the essay are presented. This is followed by the body text where the topic of the essay is analysed and discussed. It may be helpful to divide the body text to different sections in order to present the line of argumentation in a structured manner. The essay ends with a conclusion where the student shortly summarises the main findings and reflects on their significance. In the concluding section, the author can also discuss further questions that emerge from the topic discussed in the essay.

Length, formatting and language: A Course essay is 4–5 pages long. An essay that completes 5 ECTS study unit is 8-10 pages. The list of references is not included in the essay length. The essay is written in Times New Roman, font size 12. The line spacing is 1.5. Page margins (top, bottom, left and right) are 2.5 cm. The essay has a cover page, which includes the title of the essay, your name, student number, the name and code of the study module as well as the names of the instructors. The essay has to include page numbers. The introduction starts from page number 1 (i.e. the cover page does not contain any page numbers). The cover page is not included in the essay length. The essay is written in Finnish or English. It is important that the language is as clear and as fluent as possible. In case Finnish or English is your second language, we do not expect your writing to be absolutely perfect, but please pay close attention to the language to the best of your abilities and return an essay in which all your sentences are understandable. The instructors may have to downgrade papers if the text is not understandable or if the meaning of the sentences is unclear.

Referencing: The essay is based on scholarly sources, which are referenced and cited correctly and consistently. Please follow Harvard reference system (see, for example, <https://library.aru.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>).

Selecting a topic for your essay

Please remember that the essay topic must be accepted by the responsible teacher of the study unit. Contact the teacher by email at least four weeks before you plan to submit the essay.

Choose a theme related to the study unit that interests you, and find academic literature related to it. You might think if the essay topic could also benefit your future MA or other thesis, and utilise the essay to rethink and develop the theoretical framework or methodology of your thesis.

Grading: The essay is graded on numerical scale (0-5).

The grading criteria of the essay:

5 Excellent: The research problem of the essay is presented clearly, it is well-argued and ambitious. The essay answers to the research problem in a logical and structured way. The analytical perspective of the essay is carefully selected. The topic is scrutinised in an insightful and original way from the specific analytical angle of the essay. The essay is based on an extensive list of scholarly literature. The student demonstrates excellent understanding of the subject area and the theoretical, methodological and historical starting points of the literature. Arguments and conclusions presented in the essay are supported with careful evidence. They are also connected to larger subject areas, scholarly discussion and/or societal context. The essay is written in excellent English. The sources are cited and referenced carefully. The essay demonstrates an outstanding quality of writing and is well-structured. The essay shows that the student masters in-depth the knowledge and literature of the study unit.

4 Very good: The essay has a clear research problem, and the essay answers to it logically and consistently. The essay approaches the topic from a specific analytical angle, which is well-argued. The essay discusses analytically and in a structured manner academic literature, which is relatively broad. The conclusions presented in the essay are linked to a broader scholarly discussion and/or societal context. The sources are cited and referenced well. The essay is written in good English, and it is well-structured. The essay shows that the student masters very well the knowledge and literature of the module.

3 Good: The essay has a clear research problem, which is dealt with logically and consistently. The essay attempts to approach the selected topic from a specific analytical angle and the student has made efforts to locate it to a larger context. The essay is based on academic literature, which is sufficient in terms of the topic of the essay. Scholarly literature is properly referenced. The essay is written in good English, and it has a good structure. The essay shows that the student commands the relevant knowledge and literature of the module.

2 Satisfactory: The essay demonstrates that the author has attempted to define a research problem for the essay and has made efforts to answer it consistently. The essay is based on a relatively narrow body of literature, and the text suggests a superficial understanding of the literature. The essay contains notable weaknesses regarding, for instance, the research problem, analytical perspective, structure, referencing and/or language. The essay shows that the student commands the literature and knowledge of the module in a satisfactory level.

1 Poor: The essay shows that the student has tried to follow the essay guidelines. However, the focus of the essay, its angle, research problem, structure and/or referencing system are

poorly presented. The essay is based on a narrow body of scholarly literature and/or the essay demonstrates a rather weak understanding of the literature. The essay shows significant weaknesses in the way in which the student commands the literature and the knowledge of the module.

0 Failed: The essay does not follow the essay guidelines or does not meet the assignment instructions. The essay shows that the student has not achieved the objectives of the study unit.