



# MNSES 9100: Essay Writing

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# Essay Writing

6-9 pages; line spacing 1.5; cpi 12

English or Scandinavian

Proper referencing and citations

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- Websites and newspapers are OK (but give the date, title and author where possible)
- If copying actual text, use quotation marks to make it clear the text has been copied:

Feyerabend claims that: "*The progress of science, of good science, depends on novel ideas and on intellectual freedom*" (Feyerabend, 1974).

NOT Feyerabend claims that the progress of science, of good science, depends on novel ideas and on intellectual freedom (Feyerabend, 1974).

- Use of diagrams and figures is permitted

# Essay topics

- Philosophical/Methodological – What is science? How does your research field fit with theories of science/technology? Critical analysis of methods used in your research.
  - Can have starting points in a branch of science or technology; a specific experiment, hypothesis, or methodology; or scientific developments in a field, ...
- Ethical/Social/Political – how science impacts on society (and vice versa)
  - Ethics, many possible approaches: compare two cases and highlight differences; evaluate case(s) against ethical theories; evaluate case(s) against ethical guidelines, ...

# General Tips

- Use of a case is recommended (particularly from own research area or project)
- Having a specific point of view, hypothesis or claim to argue for/against makes life simpler
- Having some notion of why the issue is relevant can make the essay more interesting
- The use of "I" is fine. Try to use active rather than passive tense: "*Singer claims that...*" rather than "*It was claimed...*"
- Try to find the best arguments against your claims!



## Tips cont.

- Break up the essay with sub-headings. This will help you to structure your arguments.
- Pure background material of “factual” or technological description of your case should not exceed 2 pages.
- Make your opinion clear – even if you are unsure. If you think that there is a real ethical dilemma as to whether a particular technology should be permitted, it is OK to say so. But you could also consider under what conditions you would consider the technology acceptable/not acceptable.



# Four Examples of Approaches

- A. Defend or oppose a position or point of view (e.g., X represents a satisfactory definition of science; X is/is not a good example of a paradigm shift; Y is/is not acceptable; Z hinders the progress of science)
- B. Compare two cases and examine the philosophical, ethical, and/or social differences.
- C. Evaluate the philosophical, ethical, and/or social issues associated with a particular case or application of science or technology.

# Four Examples of Approaches

- D: Use science fiction to illustrate some of the ethical dilemmas with a particular technological application (e.g. the “Futures” section in Nature)







# Pitfalls

- Subject too broad
- Purely descriptive, no analysis or critical assessment
- No relevance to science or technology or mathematics or research ...
- Poor reference and citation





# Essay Seminar and Deadlines

## Seminar (23th Nov – 8th Dec)

Attend **one** half-day seminar

Presentation of outlines/drafts in groups

Give feedback on other students ideas

Receive feedback and literature suggestions from group leader

Submission of outline: **the latest** one day before seminar group – **even if you cannot attend the seminar you need to submit an outline to your group leader**

Submission of essay: 20th December

Email submission; word or pdf file to your Group Leader



# Grades

- Pass/Fail
- Drafts can be submitted before the 20<sup>th</sup> December (agree on deadline with group leader)
- Students needing to make revisions/re-write will be advised at the latest four weeks after submission and given 2 weeks to rewrite.
- Grades officially available end January



# Outlines (Minimum)

- General title
- Question you want to examine or the claim you want to defend
- Background or introduction to the case or example
- Three sub-titles
- 10 minutes per person
- Overhead projector, power point will be available.



# Example Titles – previous years

- Image editing or image manipulation - A thin line
  - Alfred Wegener and the Origin of Continents and Oceans – aspects of a scientific revolution?
  - The origin of life – outside the realms of science
  - Computer crime – the case of Norway
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- Parapsychology in relation to science
  - Patents with R-groups and other variables in organic chemistry
  - The role of thought experiments in development of scientific theory
  - Do scientists have a duty to popularise their research?
  - Should fish come under the regulations for animal experiments?
  - Aloa vera research: biopiracy or co-benefits?
  - The financial crisis and mathematics
  - Is the killing and collection of insects for scientific purpose morally defensible?
  - Is evolutionary psychology a threat to achieving gender equality in society?
  - Object Oriented Design and Development - Paradigm shift in Software Science