



# MNSES 9100: Essay Writing

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# Essay Writing

6-8 pages; line spacing 1.5; cpi 12

English or Scandinavian

Use of diagrams and figures is permitted



# Referencing and citations

- 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).
- If you haven't read the original reference yourself make that clear (Feyerabend, 1974, cited by Chalmers, 1992)
- Extensive literature reviews are not expected, but some source material should be cited

# 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



# Seminar and Deadlines

## Seminar (30th Oct-10th Nov)

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: one day before your seminar group

Submission of essay: 21st December

Email submission; word or pdf file to your Group Leader



# Grading

Feedback if revisions needed by end  
January.

Students will be given 2 weeks to  
revise/rewrite

Final (official) grades should be available  
from the faculty by the end of February



# 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
- 6-10 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 – a paradigm shift?
- The origin of life – outside the realms of science
- Computer crime – the case of Norway
- 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?
- 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



# Example Titles – cont.

- The impact of the Haber-Bosch process on the last century
- Pregnancy conservation or induction in brain-dead humans. An ethical analysis.
- On ethical considerations in treating patients with “unethically” and “illegally” generated knowledge
- Open access – kan vi endre måten vi publiserer på?
- Ethical challenges in the recycling of mobile phones in Ghana
- Ethical challenges in modern financial markets – a mathematician’s perspective
- Double moral standards in society regarding animal cruelty and animal testing
- Safety in artificial intelligence
- Er det frie universitetet og grunnforskninga i ferd med å forsvinne?»
- Trophy hunting in Africa: Conservation reasons vs. Ethical concerns
- Obligatoriness of vaccination: always a good idea?

# Famous Plagiarists

- Vijay Soman, an assistant professor at Yale, was asked to peer review a paper by Helena Wachslicht-Rodbard. He sent back a negative review, delaying publication, then turned around and submitted the same paper to another journal.
- Guess who got the paper to review?

