Examiner guidelines, SOS4150, Fall 2023

General information

The exam is a six-hour school exam on a computer. Students do not have access to any tools, except a dictionary. The exam is given in English. Students may answer in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English.

Grading

The exam consists of three parts. Each part should be graded separately and weighted equally. The final grade is the (rounded) mean of the three parts.

In practice, this means that after setting the grade for each part, you must calculate the final grade. This is easily done by treating the letter grades as corresponding to numbers:

Letter grade	F	E	D	C	B	A
Number	1	2	3	4	5	6

Here are some examples of grades to illustrate the procedure:

	Part 1		Part 2		Part 3		Final grade	
	Letter grade	Number	Letter grade	Number	Letter grade	Number	Mean of numbers	Letter grade
Student 1	A	6	C	4	A	6	5.33	B
Student 2	B	5	F	1	D	3	3.00	D
Student 3	B	5	C	4	B	5	4.67	B
Student 4	E	2	D	3	F	1	2.00	E
Student 5	F	1	F	1	E	2	1.33	F
Student 6	B	5	A	6	A	6	5.67	A

Part 1 – multiple choice

The first part of the exam intends to test broad knowledge and reasoning on core topics, concepts, theories, and findings.

Grading this part is fairly straightforward. There are 12 multiple choice questions. Each correct answer gives one point. There are no deductions for wrong answers. The corresponding letter grades are shown in the table below. The calculation of points should be done automatically in Inspera. Please note that we have previously experienced errors in multiple choice questions (for instance, if the person setting up the exam accidentally indicates the wrong correct answer), so please do a check to see if everything is in order (e.g. correct answers in the system correspond to the correct answers you will be given).

Letter grade	F	E	D	C	B	A
Correct answers	0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12

Part 2 – Concept definition and explanation

Students are presented with four key concepts from the course. They must choose two of them to define and explain. This is intended to test their understanding of core concepts.

General expectations

The central point is whether the student shows a solid understanding of the concepts.

We do not expect students to be able to reproduce definitions verbatim from syllabus texts (in fact, some definitions might vary from one text to another), but they should be able to give a reasonably accurate and well-formulated definition of the chosen concepts.

They are also expected to be able to explain the concept in their own words. This can be done in many ways, and may require explaining nuances, different sub-concepts or relating the concept to broader theoretical frameworks or fields of research where it is commonly used. Drawing on good examples and illustrations from the syllabus or elsewhere should be rewarded if these contribute to the explanation.

A good definition and explanation should be clearly and concisely formulated and easy to follow for an informed reader. It is important to remember that English might not be a native language for many, if not most, students and this factor might affect the clarity of writing.

Brief discussions of alternative definitions or criticisms of concepts or definitions should be awarded as long as these are well-founded.

Part 3 – Essay

Students are presented with three open-ended questions/assignments. They must choose one of them to answer with a long-form essay.

The questions are intentionally very broad, politically contested and not possible to give a definitive answer to, given the state of current knowledge. Students are thus expected not to provide definitive answers, but to discuss different theoretical or empirical contributions and provide a nuanced synthesis and presentation of the topic.

General expectations:

This part is intended to test students' ability to discuss, reason and argue on a topic central to the course. A good essay will be expected to show both a nuanced general understanding of the chosen topic and ability to draw on specific concepts, theories, and empirical findings from the syllabus, other readings or elsewhere. They may relate the topic to other relevant information on current issues where relevant, such as current cases or debates in the news in Norway or other countries, etc. Critical thinking and reasoning is rewarded, including well founded critical views on arguments, theories and findings presented in the course material/syllabus/lectures.

Below, we list what we expect from a good essay in detail. Note that a good grade does not require that all of these criteria are met, but each of these points should factor into the grade, and an essay should meet the majority of these criteria to receive an excellent grade.

Knowledge

- The essay should show sufficient knowledge about and a good understanding of the topic;

- The essay should show an understanding of central concepts, theoretical positions and methods. Concepts, measures and definitions should be used clearly and accurately;
- The essay should show that the student has read and manages to incorporate central arguments from relevant syllabus texts (explicit references are a bonus, not a requirement).

Critical thinking and reflexivity

- The essay should show a high level of critical reflection;
- The essay should present and address counterarguments, possible alternative explanations, and conflicting views/theories, and show openness to alternative interpretations;
- The essay should include critical reflections on the utility, strengths and weaknesses of concepts, definitions and measures;
- Essays that in a good way challenge prevailing views, theories, methods or approaches, particularly those presented in the course or syllabus texts, should be rewarded.

Clarity

- Arguments should be clearly articulated, logically consistent, clearly linked to the question, and progress in an orderly fashion that is easy to follow;
- The essay should be written in a clear, succinct language;
- The essay should be sufficiently grammatically correct and use formally well-formed sentences, but we encourage the examiners to focus on the substantive content of the essay (again, even if essays are written in English, most students are not native-speakers of this language).

Creativity

- Essays that show a high degree of creativity and/or independence in the use of theory, examples, etc., should be rewarded.

Identifying what's important

- The essay should show that the student can differentiate between central and more peripheral aspects of the topic. This is frequently emphasized in the course, where we often discuss questions like 'how much do factors A, B and C matter for outcome Y? Which are more or less important?'. Overemphasizing peripheral points should count negatively.

Empirically informed

- The essay should draw on relevant empirical research from the syllabus or elsewhere and incorporate their implications for the topic. Although we do not expect students to recall specific statistics, years, other facts, etc., we do expect a good essay to incorporate some aspects of empirical findings into the argument;
- When drawing on empirical evidence, the essay should show an understanding of the difference between correlation and causality.

Balance and nuance

- The essay should primarily be an academic text, not a normative or ideological statement;
- A good essay should be balanced and not present only a single side of an argument.