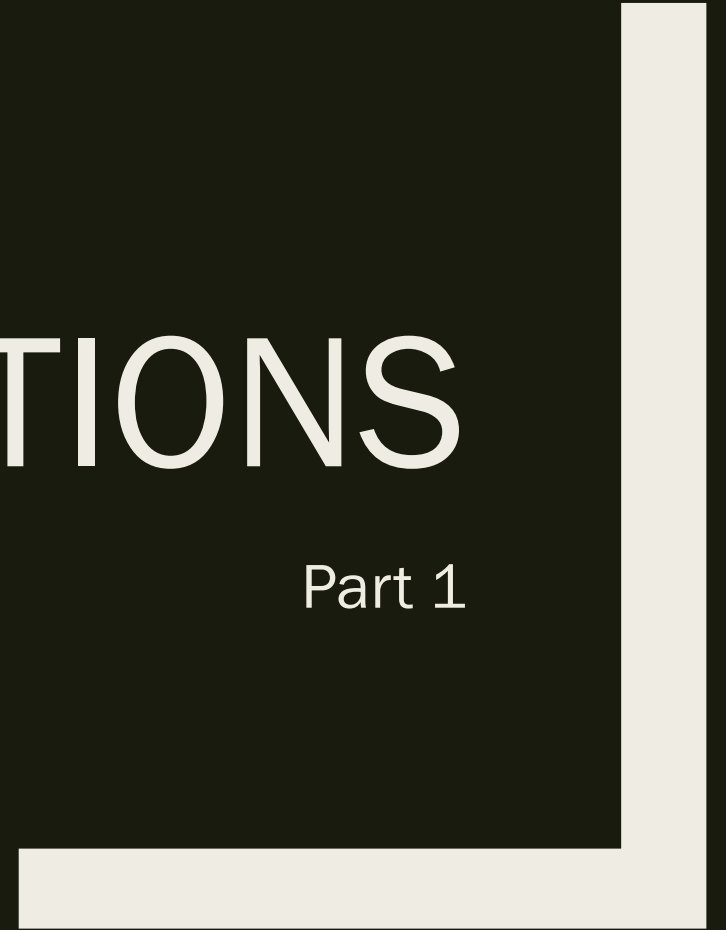




ESSAYS

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Part 1



What is an essay question?

Requires writer to *compose* rather than select a response

Elicits student responses that must consist of more than one sentence

Allows different or original responses or patterns or responses

Requires subjective judgement by a competent specialist to judge the accuracy and quality of responses

Why assess with essays?

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-

Why assess with essays?

- Assess higher-order and critical thinking
-
-

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- Evaluate thinking and reasoning
-

Why assess with essays?

- Assess higher-order and critical thinking
- Evaluate thinking and reasoning
- Provide authentic experience

Why assess with essays?

- BUT: essays do not assess higher-order or critical thinking skills regardless of how the responses are written!

Examples

- What are the major advantages to phalanx warfare?
- If we could determine the exact order of the development of hoplite warfare (which one first: armour or phalanx formation) could we more confidently interpret the development of social classes in archaic Greek cities?

Constructing your essay question: the practicalities

- Clearly define the intended outcome to be assessed
- Clearly define the task and situate the task in a problem situation
 - *Clearly define the task*
 - *Delimit the scope of the task*
 - *Clearly develop the problem or problem situation*
- Written as a question or a statement

Focused Essay Questions

- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’.
- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on social classes in archaic Athens.
- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on poorer social classes in archaic Athens.
- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on poorer social classes in archaic Athens based on the potential benefits and disadvantages of increased political enfranchisement.
- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on poorer social classes in archaic Athens based on the potential benefits and disadvantages of increased political enfranchisement had in strictly economic terms.

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Writing the Question

Topic - Literally: what do I need to do in this essay?

Analyse, comment, compare, consider (etc.) – there may not be any directive verbs in your question – these may be in supplemental information, including in parentheses, or in different tenses, e.g. examine how, why, what, who

Content: what are you actually looking at – specifically?

locations, individuals, theoretical models, contexts, spheres (e.g. politics, religion, etc.)

Scope: limiting factors

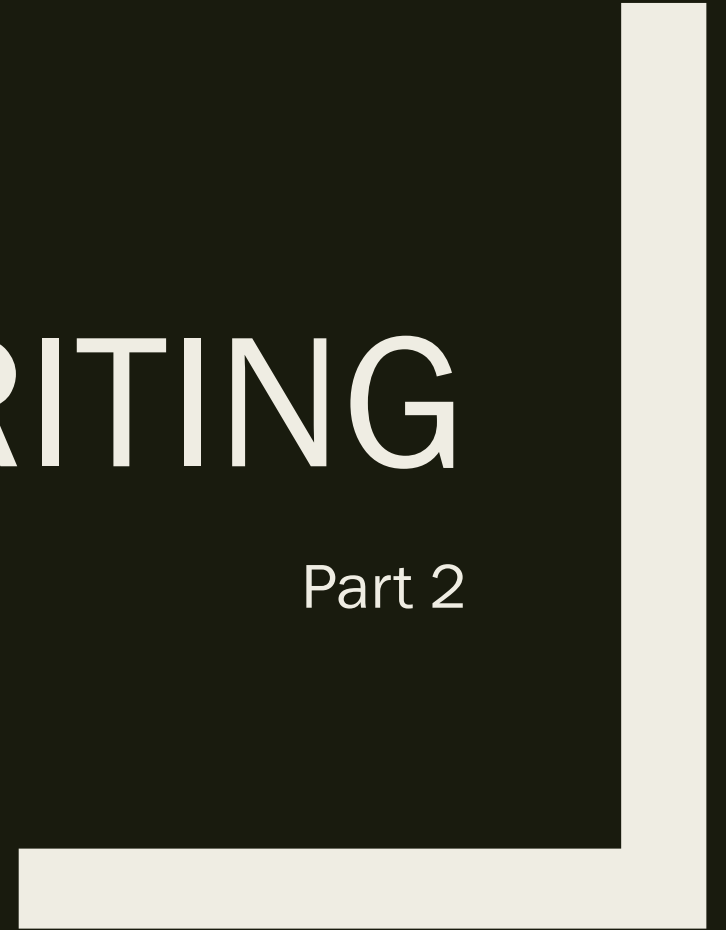
*chronological or geographical limitations
also includes things like length which are built into the assessment rather than your question*

Writing the Question

- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on poorer social classes in archaic Athens.
- Evaluate the impact of the ‘hoplite revolution’ on poorer social classes in archaic Athens based on the potential benefits and disadvantages of increased political enfranchisement.

ESSAY WRITING

Part 2



Introduction: not just a pretty face

- What needs to go into an introduction?
 - Your delineated smaller questions
 - Flagging the problematic terminology (or defining it if easy)
 - What kind of evidence you are going to use to answer the question
 - What aspects of the question you will discuss/what the views of other scholars are (e.g. the PLAN of the essay)
 - What your answer is going to be (e.g. your THESIS)

The Body (that's the main part!)

Follow the plan you have (if you don't have one, then write one!)

- Address your sub-questions in turn
- Start with primary evidence (What do we know? What does it say? What are the issues of interpretation? Are there any major scholarly debates surrounding it? Can we use this to come to an answer?)
- Analyse your evidence: Does all your evidence agree on certain points? Is some of your evidence contradictory? How can you explain that?
- What considerations do you need to take into account when analysing different kinds of evidence?

Evidence considerations

LITERARY EVIDENCE

- What's the date? How does that relate to the topic? (e.g. is the evidence much later, or fairly contemporary?)
- Genre and audience (intended and unintended)
- The Author: where are they from? What kind of biases might they have? What is their background?

MATERIAL EVIDENCE

- What type of material evidence (epigraphy, iconography, architectural, burial goods, religious items)
 - *What does this say about the item, about the creator, and the user of the item?*
 - *Date, quantity, context of deposition, archaeological record*
 - *You might also want to think of provenance and issues related to that.*

Critical engagement with scholarship

AFTER you have looked at the ancient evidence and thought about how to put your argument together, then you should start your critical engagement with scholarship. Look at what each scholar says:

Do they agree?

What are the points of agreement/disagreement?

What do you think? AND WHY!

- How to read the scholarship
- Just like ancient authors, scholars have agendas and ideologies that colour their interpretations of the past. You must also be aware of these.
- Do they only look at particular types of evidence? Why do you think this is?
- Is their discussion limited in scope, is there an obvious agenda or preoccupation?
- Do they consider the problem from multiple angles?

Practice INTERSECTIONAL citation!

Read women, Black, Brown and Indigenous,
LGBTQIA+, disabled and neurodivergent,
and precarious scholars

Don't just read old white guys from
Oxbridge!

Conclusion

Synthesis

- Conclude (that's obvious!)
- Draw together your analysis and present a viable narrative for the answer you are arguing for.
- Also: sum up your critique of other scholars!
- What is the obvious answer based on your analysis of the ancient material and your critical engagement with scholarship?
THAT'S YOUR ANSWER!

Final Steps

- REWRITE YOUR INTRODUCTION!
 - *Make sure it matches what you have argued!*
- Make sure you have ANSWERED THE QUESTION!
- EDIT
 - *You do not have to include everything, some things you have read/written will be irrelevant to the question – get rid of superfluous stuff!*
 - *Rewrite sections that aren't clear*
 - *If you've used a lot of direct quotes from scholars, go back though and try to paraphrase*
- Proofread your essay

How to support your claims

Wrong 😞

- Peisistratos was a demagogue (leader of the people) before he claimed tyranny. However, this path to power does not necessarily characterise all tyrants.

Right! 😊

- Peisistratos was a demagogue (leader of the people) before he claimed tyranny.¹ However, this path to power does not necessarily characterise all tyrants.²

- 1. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 14.
- 2. Arist. *Pol.* 1310b.16-31.

Evidence vs. opinion

Scholarship is NOT evidence 😞

- As we see from Osborne, Peisistratos was a “good” tyrant.

Ancient evidence is evidence 😊

- As [Aristotle’s] *Athenian Constitution* (14) tells us, Peisistratos was a mild and law-abiding ruler.
- Modern scholarship is not proof of anything about the past, but only OPINION about the evidence.