DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

STEP-BY-STEP ESSAY WRITING GUIDE

STRUCTURE

1.1 The Introduction
- **Should be half a page to a page in length**
- **Content**

    What you are examining in your essay. A summary.

    Any relevant points you wish to make.

1.2 Sections

Your essay should be broken into sections; each section discusses a major theme or argument of your essay, and you should make clear how the theme or argument of that section relates to the essay question. You should in turn break each section into several paragraphs, with each paragraph devoted to a single idea. Organization and clarity are the keys; you don't want your essay to just be a jumble of disconnected ideas, but rather you want each idea to flow logically to the next. Everyone will develop their own style of essay writing over time, but make sure to refer back to the reading material while making your points.

1.3 Conclusion

Contains a brief summary of your essay and aims to highlight the relevant points that you made. It is a chance to show how the previous sections fit together as a coherent whole to answer the title of the essay. Remember the conclusion is the reader's final interaction with your writing, so try to end it as neatly and effectively as possible.

1.4 Planning

Your essay should have a clear and logical 'picture'- by this we mean that the main ideas and structure should be clear enough to be represented in a 'mind map', 'knowledge tree', or any one of several popular techniques. This may not work well for everyone, but is worth trying. Basically, one addresses the essay question through logical steps - introduction, clearly identified component sections, necessary scholarly sources, etc. - leading you from the question into discussion and analysis and back to the answer to the essay question.

Obviously you do not include a 'map' in your essay; rather, it should be part of the planning process. There are at least three valuable outcomes for students who use such a planning process: first, it indicates information that may be irrelevant because such information will not 'fie; second, it tends to produce a flowing writing style, where each point connects to the next; and, third, students who plan in this way tend to produce a coherent essay quickly, thus allowing for more time to re-read, edit, and re-shape the final essay draft.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS

- Try to use short, to-the-point sentences. Do not allow the same sentence to take up more than three lines, if it does then break it down into smaller, easier to read sentences.

- Use indented paragraphs to contain your ideas. One idea (point, argument or a distinct part thereof) should take up one paragraph. A paragraph must consist of at least three sentences. On the average you should fit about two paragraphs per page, although this is more a guideline than a rule. (The length of paragraphs can vary depending on your personal style and the argument you are making, but keep in mind that your reader will find long chunks of unbroken text harder to follow.

- Use the spell checker!

- Do not use words that you do not understand. Keep it simple. If you use anthropological terms then explain them. If you draw your explanation of terms from a text, then you must reference that text that you used.

- Proofread your essay for errors and incomprehensible sentences. You could even get someone else to proof it.

- Use evidence to support any opinion, and always reference the source you used for your evidence.

- Stay within the word count - it is equally undesirable for your essay to be either significantly over or significantly under the word limit.

- Use block quotations sparingly. Your reader can tell when you are citing the work of others just to fill up space.

- Avoid other forms of artificially lengthening your essay (excessive repetition, irrelevant points, etc.)

- All essays should be typed using *Times New Roman* (or an equally book-like font), pt. 11 or 12, and double-spaced, with 1" margins on all sides

- If you are struggling with the nuances of academic phrasing, you may find the *Academic Phrasebank* maintained by Manchester University a useful resource. This can be accessed at: http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

3. STYLE GUIDE

3.1 Front Matter [A Title Page]

First, fill in the *Departmental Essay Cover Sheet!*

Departmental Essay Cover Sheets are normally found on the Moodle site for each course. Printed copies of the Departmental Essay Cover Sheet are to be found outside the Department Offices. Departmental Essay Cover Sheets are used for tracking essays and for results databases, therefore the sheet must be attached to your essay, otherwise the submission does not count!

The title page (separate from the Departmental essay cover sheet) should contain the following information in the following order: 1. Title of essay, 2. student name, 3. student number, 4. lecturer's name and tutor's (TA), where relevant, and 5. the date. This information should be presented in the same size font as the rest of the essay, capitalised and in 'bold'. No page number should appear on the title page. This page must be included, and a Department submission form must also be filled out.

3.2 Parts of the Essay

All principle headings (e.g. **INTRODUCTION)** should be in bold font, aligned at the left margin and capitalised. The second level of headings—sub-sections—should be typed in bold title-case (e.g. **Malinowski and Functionalism).** Do not number sections. But do insert page numbers on all pages except the title page.

3.3 Abbreviations

The trend is away from using period marks in abbreviations. Examples where they are not necessary include common abbreviations such as Dr, Mr, Ms or IRA, AIDS, NUIM. However, all abbreviations that cut short a word or a name must carry a period mark For example, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (note the space between E. and E.; and A. and R.), e.g., i.e., etc. Col. Smith, Bros., Co.

3.4 Numbers

Spell out numbers in the following instances: (1) one through ten (for numbers 11 and above, use numerals); (2) when a number appears at the beginning of a sentence; (3) where an approximation is being made, e.g. "Roughly one hundred thousand died in the war." Enumeration in the text should be enclosed in brackets, e.g. (1). For ages use "24 years old", and remember to use hyphenation in a phrase such as " A 24-year-old woman". Currency: $20, En.. Dates: 20th century, 1965-1966, 1960s or "the sixties" *(not* 6o's or 1960's), 28 June 1989. For quantities use: 28 grams, 10 pounds, 70 mph, etc. Times: 12.00 p.m.

3.5 Spelling and Punctuation

Spell using standard English (British or USA, but be consistent) usage where possible. Remember that **it's** means "it is" ("It's important to use a consistent style in your essay"), whereas **its** signifies possession ("Each part of an essay should have **its** own internal structure."). A comma is used to divide clauses. Therefore, no

comma occurs in the following sentence: "The Department recommends that you digest the contents of this **guide** and not take that to mean eating **it."** However, a comma is used where there are two clauses in a sentence. For example, "There are several clauses in this sentence, and clauses are not difficult to identify." Please include a comma where there is break in the flow of a sentence, e.g. "His head was, medically speaking of course, too big."

A semi-colon is used, often for dramatic effect, to break up a sentence, e.g. "Nations are artificial; states are real and concrete." Please use this form of punctuation sparingly.

A colon indicates something to follow. For example, "There are two problems: (1) how much it costs and (2) how big it is." Remember that a colon will precede many quotes.

A dash is used as an informal colon and to insert a statement within a sentence. An example might be, "There is no excuse—except for death—for late submission." Typing two hyphens (--) marks that link the words where the punctuation occurs, achieves this punctuation mark A computer will normally convert this mark to an elongated dash. If your computer will not do this, then leave the mark as a double dash--as so.

Despite recent—some would say controversial—changes to the OED grammar guide, it is still usually not recommended that you split your infinitives: **to boldly go** where no one has gone before is not a good idea.

3.6 Foreign Words and Phrases

You should italicise all foreign words and phrases, including *Gaelic* words. Where possible, include a translation in parentheses, e.g. *passim* (here and there).

3.7 Interpolations

When quoting material, it may be necessary to insert a word for clarification. An interpolation is inserted in square brackets [like so]. If the interpolation is the original author's then it is written in plain text; if the interpolation is your own then it is italicised *[like so]*. When the original author misspells a word then the Latin word *[sic]* is inserted. If you are quoting non-standard English then this must also be used.

3.8 Capitalisation

Capitalise terms such as African-American, Irish-American that refer to a specific people, but do not capitalize terms that are generic: for example Australian Aboriginal but not aboriginal. Capitalise historical, cultural and political events, such as the Boston Tea Party, Battle of the Boyne, Industrial Revolution, etc. Capitalise historical eras, such as the Stone Age, Middle Ages. Capitalise organization names, names of institutions, committees, associations, countries, such as NUI Maynooth, Students' Committee, Anthropology Department, Mexico. Use lowercase for generic use of terms, e.g. "anthropology departments everywhere have students' committees." Also,

capitalize place-names, e.g. Asia, Atlantic, Co. Kerry, etc. However, lower case for non-specific areas, e.g. western Europe, the western world, the eastern world, etc.

4. QUOTATIONS

Use of the ideas of others without accurate references is plagiarism and will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism denotes making use of the work of someone else and presenting that person's ideas as your own. You must put someone else's words/ideas in quotation marks and reference the source of the material.

Please note that the Department of Anthropology considers plagiarism to be of the greatest seriousness and will deal with such cases as a disciplinary matter.

So, how do you quote correctly?

Generally, it is best to keep quotations to a minimum — it is much more impressive to explain things in your own words. When you do insert a quotation, it should be short and accurate. Short direct quotes should be incorporated into the text and enclosed in quotation marks—they are **not italicised.** Quotes of two or more sentences must be separated from the text by one space downwards, indented away from the left margin, single spaced and without any quotation marks. For example:

> His easy, unaffected speech and general air of sincerity convey none of the pressures of his work. Even on informal occasions he seems relaxed. Though, on occasion, he seems to be out of breath—we don't know the explanation for this. Perhaps, he smokes. (James 1913, 14)

It is highly advisable to avoid long quotations — explain the author's intent in your own words instead.

Punctuation within quotation marks can often prove quite difficult. Please do your best to follow some basic guidelines:

Question marks and exclamation points, together with other punctuation marks should be placed outside the quotation marks (this is for quotes within your general text). Where the author you are quoting has punctuation in or ending the sentence(s) you are quoting, please leave them inside the quotation marks.

Ellipsis points are used where there is any omission of words, or sentences. An omission within a sentence is indicated by three ellipsis points, with a space **before ... and** after. Where a full sentence is left out, three ellipsis points follow, without a space, after the last full stop, and a space is left before the rest of the quote **resumes.... As** so.

5. REFERENCES

If you quote phrases or sentences from any source (readings, course overheads, etc.), you must use inverted commas to mark the quotation as a quotation, and you must provide a source and page reference. When referencing a work, parenthetical referencing should be used. Take for example the following sentence which may appear in an essay:

The means by which traditional composers have attempted to communicate with their audiences have been discussed by Heinrich (1989, 15).

When an examiner reads this sentence he or she now knows that you understood a topic as it connects to the work of a scholar; he or she knows that this person named Heinrich has written in a similar vein to your essay in a work published in 1989, especially on page 15, and if a check is required or if the reader wishes to know the details then consulting the bibliography at the end of the essay will reveal the full publication details of Heinrich's work. That is why we reference!

One might also cite a work more generally. For example, one might say Edward Heinrich (1989) has elaborated on his previous work.

One might direct a reader to the title of a book, e.g. "In *Material Culture,* which was edited by Daniel Miller ..." **(note that the book title is italicised here),** or the title of an article, e.g. "In "One or Two Things I Know About Culture" by Marshall Sahlins the author argues that ..." **(note that the article title is enclosed in inverted commas—the same may apply to a chapter within an edited book).**

If the names of the authors are not obvious in the sentence then direct your reader. For example:

The means by which traditional composers have attempted to communicate with their audiences have been discussed by leading authors (see Heinrich 1989, 15; and Langer 1959, 12-18).

The illustrative references above refer the reader to your reference list, which must be included at the back of your essay, normally on a separate page. It is common to include a list of all the books, articles, and chapters, etc. consulted in the preparation of your essay and to describe this list as **References.** Sometimes it is appropriate to include a list of additional relevant works that you did not directly quote or reference in your essay; this would be titled a **Bibliography.** In informal speech, both of these are commonly referred to as a "bibliography".

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The referencing approach used in this Essay Guide is the Chicago Author-Date style from the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition, adopted by the American Anthropological Association since September 2015. It is possible to use other styles such as Harvard or APA in your essay, but these must be used *consistently*.

Referring to the examples given on the pages above, the reader should expect to find the following entries in the list of references:

Heinrich, Edward. 1989. *The Beautiful*. G. Cohen, trans. New York: New York University Press.

Langer, Suzanne. 1959. *Philosophy in a New Key*. New York: Mentor Press.

Basically, a book is referenced as above with the information given in the following order:

- Name(s) (last name, then first name(s) in an **alphabetically-arranged** list)
- Year
- Title
- Title of the journal or book in which the work appears (unless the work itself is a book)
- Name of editor if the work is a chapter in an edited book
- Volume and issue number of the journal in which the work appears
- Facts of publication (books only): city, name of publishing company, (if unpublished, please state)
- Page numbers of the journal article or book chapter

For a co-authored book, say if Edward Heinrich wrote a follow up book to *The Beautiful* with Joe Bloggs (Heinrich and Bloggs 1990), then one might find the following in the Bibliography:

Heinrich, Edward and Joe Bloggs. 1990. *Rethinking the Beautiful*. New York: New York University Press.

If there are several authors, then in the text show the reference this way: (Heinrich *et al* 1990). And, if Heinrich had written both books himself in one year then, for example the text might include: "Heinrich's work is the most illustrative guide on this topic (Heinrich 1989a, 1989b)." In this case the bibliography will include the following information:

Heinrich, Edward. 1989a. *The Beautiful*. G. Cohen, trans. New York: New York University Press.
_____.1989b. *Rethinking the Beautiful*. New York: New York University Press.

If either work was unpublished, in press or was so old that it might not include a date of publication then:

Heinrich, Edward. In press. *The Beautiful*. G. Cohen, trans. New York: New York University Press

Or,

Heinrich, Edward. n.d. *The Beautiful*. G. Cohen, trans. New York: New York
    University Press

Note: n.d means no date

Or,

Heinrich, Edward. n.d. *The Beautiful*. New York: Unpublished PhD manuscript.

For a chapter in an edited book, let's say Heinrich's book *The Beautiful* was an edited
volume and that it included an essay by Susanne Langer, then one may reference
Heinrich himself in terms of the overall text: "... such as Heinrich (1989)." Which
refers the reader to the following entry in your bibliography:

Heinrich, Edward, ed. 1989. *The Beautiful*. New York: New York University Press.

Or, one may reference Susanne Langer's chapter: "... in this regard Langer has made
the definitive argument (Langer 1989, 120)." Which refers the reader to the following
entry in your bibliography:

Langer, Susanne. 1989. "Philosophy in what is now an Old Key." In *The Beautiful*,
    edited by Edward Heinrich, 114-129. New York: New York University Press.

One references a journal in broadly the same fashion:

Langer, Susanne. 1990. "The Anthropologist and the Philosopher." *American
    Anthropologist* 33 (3):112-119.

In the above instance the 33 refers to volume and the 3 refers to the issue.

For articles in newspapers and popular magazines:

Langer, Susanne. 1990. "Public Philosophy." *New York Times*, May 4, 1990.

For a web page:

Langer, Susanne. 1990. "The Anthropologist and the Philosopher: Some Draft
    Comments." Electronic document, Accessed, July 5 2019.
    http://www.university/harvard/phil/1990.staff.html.

7. REMARKS ON WRITING

The art of writing a good essay is a relatively simple one to master, which may be broken down as follows:

- Write down everything, and start writing notes as soon as you begin to gather material. Remember that Ludwig Wittgenstein once remarked, "I really do think with my pen, because my head often knows nothing about what my hand is writing." Also, this will offset the possibility of having to write everything at the last moment.

- Think about dividing your written notes into background information, impressions and concrete data.

- Plan what you write in advance. A stream of consciousness style is okay for James Joyce but not for an anthropology essay.

- Structure your work so as to do justice to the argument you will make.

Following the Greek philosophical tradition, your writing should have a beginning, middle and end. But remember that writing well is like good table manners: it's only when you have mastered them that you can experiment with abandoning them!

At the very least you should be able to complete the following checklist:

Question	Yes/No
Does your essay have an introduction, different sections, a conclusion and bibliography or reference list?	
Has your essay been proofed and spell checked?	
Have you references for all the material you have cited?	
Do the references you have cited contain adequate information on the author(s), date and page number(s) of the publication?	
Is the material you are quoting enclosed in quotation marks?	

If you have answered "no" to any of the above, then it would be an excellent idea to alter your essay!

We wish you every success!