

History and Philosophy of Economics Phil 362/Econ318 (Fall 2016)

Research Essay (2000 words) Professor M. Schabas

Essay Outline Due: November 1 (in class)

Research Essay Due: November 29 (in class)

Late essays are penalized at 5% per day (Monday to Friday 4PM)

Your outline for the essay must be exactly one page. At the top, give your name, a working title, and no more than three sentences about your argument. There is no need to list the primary source. The most important part of the outline is the list of the secondary sources, with complete reference details: author, title, journal, year, volume, and pagination. Please do **not** give the URL. Be sure to consult a style guide on references, or follow the format in one of the journals you use. Three journal articles (not books, book reviews or encyclopedia entries), by three different contemporary scholars, are required. In the case of joint authorship overlapping with another article, you will need to find a fourth article by a different scholar. The outline will be returned the following week and, if it is unsatisfactory, will need to be resubmitted by November 10th. Your outline will be graded and count for 10% of the total grade for the essay.

I will only grade your essay if and when the outline is approved.

You are advised to write your essay on Adam Smith, but you have the option to write on Hume if you prefer (but not both). Once you have decided on the topic, you will need to find relevant articles in one or more of the following four journals: *History of Political Economy (HOPE)*, *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, *Economics and Philosophy*, and the *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*. Do not go to other journals until you have found two suitable articles in this group of four journals. I will allow one additional source to be a chapter from a recent book (monograph or edited collection) or research annual (e.g. the *Adam Smith Review*). Any exceptions to the list of journals, however, must be approved. Generally, the more *specific* and the more recent the articles you select, the better. All of your articles ought to be published since 1990. These journals are in the UBC library holdings; if you search from home, be sure to log in first. It is advisable to print out your findings at each step in your research to keep track of your findings.

You are not expected in such a short time, and with no previous background to the subject, to arrive at an original piece of work. Your primary task is to sort out a debate in the secondary literature. Rather than write a paper from scratch, aim to find three articles by scholars (experts) who have different interpretations of Smith on a specific question. Your paper must development an argument as to which interpretation is the most compelling; you need to give reasons that support your judgments. Even if you find yourself in almost complete agreement with one contemporary scholar, try with as much integrity as possible to sound out the alternative points of view. You may find, in the process, that they also have some merit. You will be graded on the clarity and soundness of your argument as well as your comprehension of the material.

Your essay should be well written; this usually requires several drafts. A short title for the paper will suffice and there is no need for footnotes or endnotes. Because you are writing the paper for me, get right to the main argument; you can skip any general introduction. Please do not divide your paper up into sections. Your essay should flow well from start to finish; strive for one long argument. Be sure to number the pages and to proofread the text. I strongly encourage you to make final corrections with a pen in hand to demonstrate that the paper has been proofread with care. Be sure to keep a copy of your paper. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UBC; be sure that all of your work is your own and that your sources are fully acknowledged.

Writing Skills Tips from Professor Schabas

1. Writing is about persuasion, but you are most likely to succeed if you establish an objective voice. On rare occasions, you may need to use the first person pronoun to suggest to your reader that you are asserting a more idiosyncratic position.
2. Writing can always improve, no matter how prolific and successful one becomes at the craft. Reading is a great resource; pay attention to the form as well as the content of good prose. The use of rhythm is very important, so read good prose aloud to see how the writer varies the length of sentences. Subordinate clauses serve this end as well, by implicitly ranking the ideas.
3. Every sentence is precious, so avoid repetition or trivial generalizations. Start with a sentence that piques the reader's curiosity and sets the paper in motion.
4. Verbs are the seat of motion. Most of us overuse the verbs *to be* and *to have*, but they do not impart momentum to our prose. Try for greater variety, but refrain from using a verb that you do not fully understand. It is best to use the present tense whenever possible.
5. Aim for clear, concise and precise prose. Ask yourself the following as you edit each draft: could this sentence be more precise (capture the ideas better), more concise (fewer words), and clearer (less ambiguous)? Also, check that each sentence in your essay is grammatically correct.
6. Review the use of punctuation. Avoid using colons and semi-colons and dashes. Commas, for example, usually come in pairs. It is often better to imbed adverbs or qualifiers within the sentence.
7. No colloquialisms or contractions please. "It's" is short for "it is" and therefore should not appear in your essay. Also, it is better not to assign possession to objects or institutions. If you are tempted to write "society's problems", then it is better to change it to "the problems of society".
8. Quotations are best kept to a minimum. Why quote at all? Because the passage has poetic flair or because it gives evidential support to a claim you think is in doubt. It is far better to keep the prose style in your own voice throughout, since moving back and forth can disrupt the train of thought. Also, long quotes are usually skimmed and not read in full. Avoid them altogether. Use ellipses only within, not at the start or end of a quote. You are free to adjust the punctuation at the end and to introduce an upper/lower case letter at the start for fluency, but must otherwise remain faithful to the original source. Identify that source at the end of the quote, in parentheses, in the main text (author, date, page number) and provide the full reference in your bibliography. Do not use footnotes. Endnotes are for points tangential to the main argument and are best kept to a minimum.