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## **IR102: Mid-session assessed essay**

If you are taking IR102 for credit, the mid-session essay comprises 50% of your final grade. Detailed instructions on how to submit your work are below, as well as broad guidance on how to construct a successful essay.

### **Deadline for submission**

Essays must be submitted by email to your class teacher, no later than **2pm, Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July**. Late essays may be marked down.

### **Format and word count**

The word limit is 1,000. This includes references in the text, but does not include the bibliography. Essays that are significantly over the word limit may not be read in full; make sure you complete your argument without over-running. Graphs and charts do not count within the word limit, but should be used selectively.

Please submit the essay as either a Word document or a PDF.

**You should not put your name anywhere on the essay itself, but must include your candidate number** (get it from the summer school office if you are unsure).

### **References**

If you are used to writing essays, please use whatever system of referencing you are most familiar with. If you are not familiar with any system, reference to author and date, in parentheses within the text, using the format (Author, date). If quoting directly, refer to the page number e.g. (Block, 1994: p.25). If you are including graphs, diagrams, or other secondary data, give a reference for the source of that material.

Whatever system you are using, be consistent, and include a bibliography of texts that you refer to in the essay.

Guidance from the LSE on avoiding plagiarism is also available on Moodle, and you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with it. The School may use anti-plagiarism software to screen essays by checking the content against published and web-based sources.

### **Writing the essay**

The following are guidelines only, to give you an idea of what we look for in a good essay.

- You choose one essay question from the list on Moodle. Include the question at the top of the page so we know which one you are answering.
- A brief introduction is a good place to define the scope of your argument. If you are choosing to narrow down a broad question, (for example by focusing mainly on certain theories or certain countries) explain briefly what your angle is, and why it is justified. Otherwise it can appear you have misread the question or failed to consider the broader issues.
- Weigh up competing arguments and alternative explanations. You gain marks for showing you appreciate more than one possible line of argument. Discussing those you find less convincing, or limited in some way, can be as important as discussing the theories you agree with.
- Use the course readings, drawing links between them and the essay question. We are looking for evidence that you have engaged with the course material and the readings, so while general knowledge is a good way to expand your argument, it is not enough on its own. For top grades, we are looking for critical thinking and some reflection on the big ideas in political science; the reading material is designed to give you plenty to work with.
- Empirical examples are a useful way to illustrate your argument. When discussing competing explanations of political trends, drawing on real-world cases can help expand and support your critique.
- Draw a conclusion. Having weighed the possible arguments, which do you find most convincing, and why? Strong essays draw well evidenced conclusions that tie the essay back to the question.



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