



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Senior Freshman / Two Subject Moderatorship

SEMINARS

Introduction

The Senior Freshman Two-Subject Moderatorship Seminars are designed to foster a student's independent research skills in Geography. Second year Geography students who participate in these seminars are encouraged to take a personal self-inventory of their particular interests within the broad spectrum of humanistic, physical and environmental subjects and topics which they have been exposed to as students in Geography at Trinity. As students identify their particular interests in Geography, they are encouraged to discuss and construct a research question, based upon their first and second year course work. Building upon the critical writing, reading and research skills developed in first year Geography seminars, they are encouraged to embark upon a course of independent research and produce a referenced academic essay. Through this process students may be better prepared to address a dissertation topic during their Sophister years in Geography.

Seminar Essays

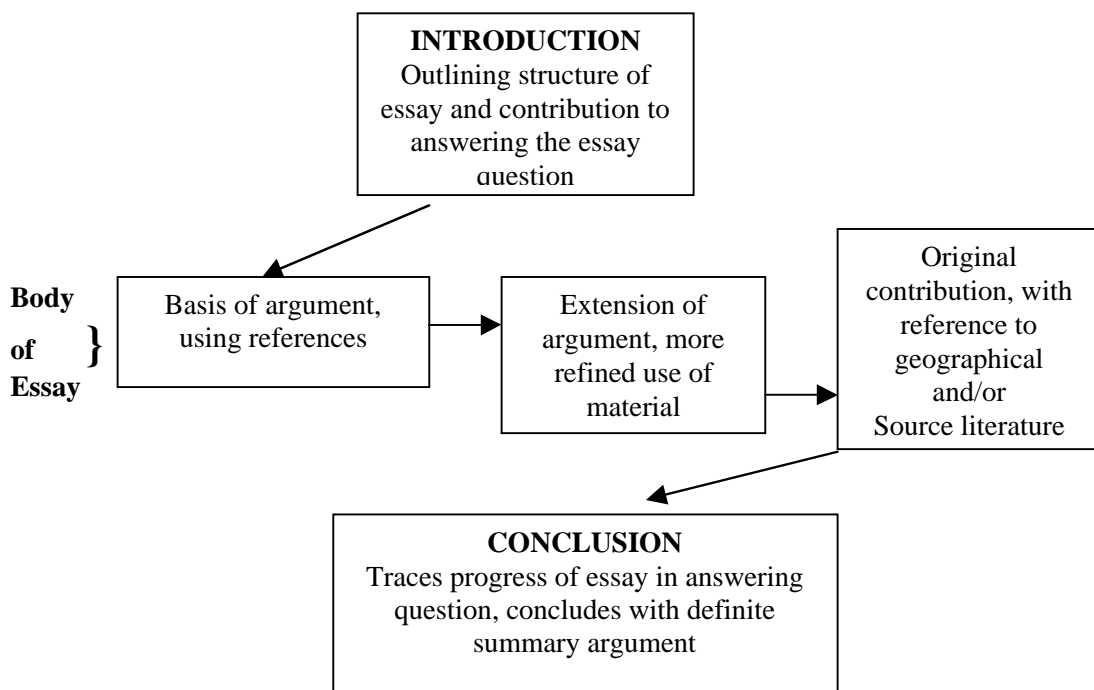
Writing and research abilities are crucial to the development of a student's academic progress in Geography. The exercise of undertaking an independent research project involves numerous skills and requires students to identify, research, discriminate, collate and synthesize diverse pieces of information. A well written academic essay presents the questions and answers of a research project in a clear, logical and concise manner, supported by referenced material, gathered by the student.

Writing guidelines

The practice of writing a referenced essay serves a number of academic purposes. It exposes students to a range of often-contradictory information and knowledge in a concrete fashion. Researching and writing an essay teaches students how to collect, collate and interpret information and knowledge. The practical aspect of actually writing an essay gives the student the opportunity to externalise their thoughts on a given topic or subject, whilst synthesizing newly acquired information. The entire process of essay writing allows the student to feel that they are becoming part of a larger discourse within a discipline, through which they can develop their own voice and views on academic matters, while at the same time contributing to a larger body of knowledge.

Mapping the Essay

Before embarking on writing an essay, a student should figure roughly the scope of its organisation and content in an essay plan. A research essay should have a clear and logical outline. The main ideas and structure should be mentally mapped in a consistent fashion. Such a map will not be included in the essay; rather, it should be part of the essay planning process. Before students begin to write, they might draw such an outline, to better help themselves visualise the contents of their essay. For example (this map may vary from essay to essay):



The Introduction

In the introduction to an essay it is often useful for a student to provide an indication of how they have chosen to interpret the essay title (Taylor: 2002). The introduction may then go on to review the content and delineate the subject of the essay, before previewing the essay's structure. For some students, writing the introduction and conclusion might be, the final step in actually writing the essay. Students may choose to review and pull out the themes they covered and then write the introduction and conclusion according to the main body of their essay. It is important that students attempt to define which approach suits them the best individually, before commencing their essays. Indeed, the first principle of composition is to foresee or determine the shape of what is to come and pursue that shape (Strunk and White: 1979).

The Body of the Essay

The body of the essay is the heart the paper. In the body, the student's arguments and points are laid out in detail. This is where the bulk of the essay's referencing will take place, and where original ideas, conceptions and arguments are synthesized with source materials that have been quoted and/or paraphrased. A few observations should be kept in mind when constructing the body of the essay: Firstly, before students write the body of the essay they should construct a brief outline, illustrating and mapping the themes they wish to explore in the essay. Secondly, students should be reminded to connect the individual themes as outlined (along with the concurrent arguments and points) with a tie-in sentence, tightly linking their themes together.

Revision

Before the students write their conclusions, they should review their essays and should check the following:

- **Grammar and spelling:** Has the essay been proofread? Yes _ No _
- **Examine content:** Is all the material relevant? Yes _ No _
- **Focus on clarity:** Is the text clear, logical and unambiguous? Yes _ No _
- **Style:** Could the text flow better, making it easier to read? Is the structure consistent? And does it permit a rational argument to unfold? Yes _ No _
- **Brevity:** Could the essay be more concise and still have enough content to convey its subject matter? Yes _ No _
- **References:** Has the essay been properly referenced in its body and bibliography? Yes _ No _

If students have answered 'No,' to any of these questions, they should review and refine their essay.

The Conclusion

Students, after reviewing their essays, should draw forth the main and salient points of the essay's arguments. In the conclusion, they should review briefly the topic of the question, the points which have been made and tie in their themes, arguments and examples in a summary paragraph.

REFERENCES

Strunk W. & White, E.B. (1979) *Elements of Style*, 3rd Ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon)

Taylor, David (2002) *Tutorial Essay Guide*, Department of Geography TCD.

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