

Political Analysis Essay

Content

In order to complete the Political Analysis part of the Politics Prelims course you are required to submit an essay. In this essay you are expected to provide an empirical answer to one of the three questions listed below that deal with Lijphart's regime type classification and its consequences:

1. Does consensus democracy reduce social inequality?
2. Does consensus democracy improve economic outcomes?
3. Does consensus democracy improve the quality of government?

The essay should be structured in a similar way to a tutorial essay; this document offers some suggestions on how to structure the essay. The main difference is that in this essay you will provide evidence for your argument based on your own analysis (using R) of the Lijphart dataset. Specifically, you are required to produce at least one Table and one Figure in your essay to test your argument. It is important to stress that you do not only rely on your own data analysis, but also reference the theoretical and empirical literature on the topic. You can find the relevant literature in the Politics Prelims reading list (part b) under essay topic 2. Please also include the R code you used in an appendix; this does not count towards the required number of words.

Word Count and Style

The essay should consist of 2000 words (10 per cent more or less). Please make sure that your essay is 'tidied up' before you hand it in, i.e. no spelling mistakes, run-on sentences etc. Please use Harvard style referencing; for more information see <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>. Please include two sections, one section (References Used) outlining the references used in the essay and one section (Background References) including the literature used in preparation. Finally, please list your references in both sections in alphabetical order.

Deadlines and Marking

The essay should be handed in online via Weblearn at noon on Tuesday of Week 2 of Trinity term (May 3). Instructions on how to upload your essay will be emailed to you before the start of Trinity term. Your essay will be scanned for plagiarism through online software and marked by the OQC tutors. The marks and comments will be returned to you and copied to your college Politics tutors. If you fail to submit an essay on time, the OQC staff will inform your college tutor.

To aid you in your analyses, OQC staff will be offering drop-in sessions during the week before the due date of the essay. Alice Evans will email you about these arrangements.

The OQC tutors encourage you to discuss your assignment with others, but student collaboration should limit itself to discussion. In discussion with fellow students, you may check your understanding of the question and approach in answering it, as well as the results that you get. But you need to write up your essay and R code independently. Essays prepared jointly with others or by copying or paraphrasing someone else's work are unacceptable.

Prize

The best methods essay will be awarded with the Oxford Q Step Methods Essay prize and the amount of 200 pounds. The second and third best essays will receive a honourable mention. A prize committee of OQC staff members will choose the winning essays.

Suggestions on Structuring Your Political Analysis Essay

Please find below some guidelines on how to structure your essay. Please note that these only serve as suggestions. If you feel that a slightly different structure works better for you, feel free to structure it accordingly.

1 Introduction: The Political Analysis essay provides an empirical answer to a question outlined above. In an introductory paragraph, outline the question, touch upon the societal and scientific relevance of this question, concisely define key concepts, and briefly summarise the answer you will give. Please keep your introduction short.

2. Definitions: The second part of the essay provides a set of definitions to the main concepts you will be using.

3. Argument: The third part lays out your argument. It is important that you here answer the question itself: it is not a general discussion on a broad topic; it is an answer to a specific question. Accordingly, every sentence and paragraph should be directed to establishing and explaining your argument. Please make sure to also consider counter-arguments.

4. Empirical Analysis: The fourth part your essay presents the empirical analysis of your argument. Please provide at least one Table and one Figure. In addition, please briefly discuss the operationalization of the key concepts you are using, discuss their strengths and weaknesses and discuss your results carefully.

Important: make sure that you do not simply copy and paste the outputs from Rstudio. Instead, try to make your tables and figures look like the ones that appear in published research; examples are found in Lab 3 and in the slides for Lecture 6. (Note that Lijphart's own tables do not follow the standard format.) Provide sensible labels for rows (e.g. "Consensus democracy (executive parties measure)", not "exec_parties_1981_2010") and columns of regression tables, and also clearly label the axes and other components of your figure(s).

5. Conclusion: You should finish the essay with a concluding paragraph that summarises the main findings, and, if appropriate, opens up the debate (e.g. by mentioning other issues that are relevant and interesting but that constitute further avenues of inquiry). Please keep your conclusion short.

Finally, Tips and Tricks

Always write up an essay plan before you start writing the essay itself. Make the plan as detailed as possible, and highlight the connections and links between the different parts of the essay. Always take time to re-read your essay. Finish your first draft some time before the deadline, set the essay aside for half a day, and get back to it with a fresher eye. You will notice problems that you would not have spotted otherwise. Finally, please don't forget to always reference your essay properly! Have fun with writing your first essay using your own data analysis.