



# Answering Essay-style Exam Questions

## Handling the question(s)

- Check how many questions you need to answer and divide your time accordingly
- Read each question carefully and consider what is being asked
- If your preferred topic is there, make sure you consider the angle before diving in
- If you aren't sure which question to answer, jot down some key points and material for each one; you may remember more than you expect

## Exam essay plans

- Keep essay plans brief
- Only jot down an outline of the points you need to cover
- Use an essay structure to help organise your plan
- Jot down any ideas on scrap paper as they occur and cross them out once you have covered them

## Answering the question(s)

- Use an essay structure
- Use evidence and examples to support your arguments
- Be critical in your analysis; don't just describe or list arguments (see the pyramid)



### Writer's Block?

Keep calm: you won't be the only one! Move onto another point, or write rough notes on some scraps paper. Keep your pen moving!



### Timing

Keep an eye on the clock. If you've allotted an hour for one question, make sure you stick to it and move onto the other questions!

Adapted from Cottrell, S. (2013). *The Study Skills Handbook* (4th Edition). Palgrave: Basingstoke.

### THINK

How many major schools of thought or key perspectives are there on this question?  
Which perspectives are most relevant to the exam question?

Which theorist or writer said what, when?  
How can these be briefly summarised?

How good is this evidence to support a position or theory?  
What are the implications of this position or theory  
How and when can this theory or position be applied?  
Is there evidence against this theory or position?  
How good is the evidence overall?

Do you need to include specific examples of applications, implications or evidence? Which examples are the best?

Depending on the time available, how much detail is required about the evidence? Will a name, a date and a one-line explanation suffice?