

Key Issue Op-Ed Exam

Due Dates:

Stage One Issue Brief: [-insert due date-]

Stage Two Group Review: [-insert due date-]

Stage Three Op-Ed: [-insert due date-]

PURPOSE: The purpose of this written exam is to provide you an opportunity to demonstrate your learning of a key issue we've engaged this term, and to communicate a critical social scientific perspective with others. The Op-Ed format simulates a public text that is designed to convince others about a specific view on an issue of significance; it thus requires that you communicate clearly, concisely, and convincingly. You will draw on your learning of course content in readings and lectures and from discussions with peers to form the foundation of your writing. This exam assesses your proficiency in course learning objectives 2, 3, 4, and 7, as outlined on the syllabus.

TASK: In the three stages outlined below you will develop and write an Op-Ed of 750-1000 words that uses a critical social science perspective to explain a specific issue related to a class topic we have engaged this term.

Stage 1: Create an "issue brief" that outlines a rough draft of your ideas for writing an Op-Ed. You will **first** need to identify an issue of relevance to you related to one of the class topics we have engaged this term. You will **then** choose one of the following critical social scientific perspectives from our class as the "lens" through which you will explain the issue:

- Metabolic rift
- Racial capitalism
- Settler colonialism
- Environmental justice
- Food Justice

Next, write up your rough draft of ideas – a bulleted list of key points is fine for now – in response to the follow questions; this will be your "issue brief" that you submit to your group of peers for discussion and feedback:

- 1) What is the issue of relevance you have chosen, and why is it significant as a social-environmental problem?
- 2) Where is it happening, who is involved (stakeholders), and what are their interests or aims?
- 3) Who benefits and who loses as a result of this issue?
- 4) What is the dominant story that "explains" this issue?
- 5) What is the critical social scientific perspective you have chosen as your "lens" for explaining this issue in a more critical way, and why have you chosen this lens?
- 6) According to the critical lens you have chosen, what is the structural or systemic cause of the problem at issue, and why?
- 7) What is an alternative approach that might address the structural or systemic cause of the problem? To what extent is this alternative viable, and what else might be needed to make it more effective?
- 8) What sources of evidence are you using for your ideas? *You must include at least two class readings.*

Finally, your issue brief is due for submission to the Canvas discussion forum by [-insert due date-] for your group to review and offer feedback. Instructions for uploading are found on Canvas.

Stage 2: Review your fellow group members' issue briefs and offer feedback that:

- 1) Affirms what is promising in their ideas and suggest additional insights or resources, if appropriate
- 2) Identify what is missing, if anything, and what might be unclear and why, with suggestions that might help improve clarity
- 3) Note any additional ideas or resources you feel they might consider for improving their draft; the point is not to argue about ideas but to make suggestions

Your feedback is due by [-insert date-].

Stage 3: Using your research for your issue brief and feedback from your group members, write your Op-Ed (750-1000 words) using the following outline, then submit it to Canvas by the due date: [-insert due date-].

Your Op-Ed should take the form of this outline and needs to include all components indicated:

1. *Identify* the issue and state why it is significant as an environmental *and* social problem.
2. *Describe* what is happening, who is involved and why, and who benefits and loses because of the situation.
3. *Describe* how this issue is typically “explained,” that is the dominant view that explains the problem or why there is now problem.
4. *Define* in your own words the critical social scientific perspective you have chosen and *include a reference to* a leading thinker or practitioner of it.
5. *Explain* a structural or systemic cause of the problem using the critical social scientific lens you have chosen.
6. *Identify and describe* an alternative approach to addressing the issuing.
7. *State* your opinion about the alternative – whether it is viable or not, or what might be needed to make it more effective.

In your Op-Ed, also include the following:

- *Use and cite* at least two sources of evidence from our class readings to support your descriptions or explanations.

How to cite your sources: Please use a footnote or endnote when citing a source, though it is okay to use an author's name in the paper (e.g. “According to Gunderson....”). For class readings, you need only indicate in the footnote or end note the author and page number (e.g. Gunderson, p. 410).

Instructions for submission are posted on Canvas. Your paper will be reviewed by VeraCite for plagiarism, and please remember the course policy that your paper must be original work for this class.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS: The issue brief and peer review will be assessed for completion of the components indicated above, and the rubric at the bottom of this instruction sheet indicates the criteria for evaluation of the Op-Ed. The rubric is also posted on Canvas.

TIPS: (1) Assume your reader does not know what you mean when using specific terms or concepts from our class. Remember that the audience for an Op-Ed is a broad public. Therefore, you will need to define or summarize key words, concepts or ideas. (2) Use and cite evidence to support your ideas, but don't use a bunch of quotations from articles. That is, don't substitute quotations or others' words for your own descriptions and explanations. (3) Plan carefully and use words efficiently. You have a lot to accomplish in a short amount of space, so don't be let the Op-Ed paper length of 750-1000 words fool you into thinking it is an easy thing to write. (4) Organize your Op-Ed in the order of the seven components indicated. This is what your graders are looking for.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR EXAM STAGES: Submit your Issue Brief, peer feedback, and Op-Ed on Canvas. Specific instructions for each stage of submission are posted on Canvas, including due dates and paper formats.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT: Please include your name at the top of your Issue Brief and Op-Ed papers. Please type your papers and use a standard 12pt font such as "Times," 1-inch margins, and double-spaced lines.

TO ASK QUESTIONS OR GET HELP: Please contact your discussion section GE Instructor if you have any questions about the stages of the exam or need assistance. You can also contact Instructor Schreiner with questions.

Op-Ed Exam Rubric

Criteria	Ratings						
Issue Identity - 1 pt	[1.0] The issue is clearly identified, specific, and pertinent.	[0.75] The issue is fairly clear, specific, and pertinent.	[0.5] The issue is not entirely clear or overly general or not very pertinent.	[0] The issue is missing.			
Issue Description - 3 pt	[3.0] The description is especially clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with keen insight and demonstrates the issue is well understood.	[2.8] The description is clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with solid insight and demonstrates the issue is understood.	[2.55] The description is mostly clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with some insight and demonstrates the issue is mostly understood.	[2.25] The description is partially clear, focused, and accurate, though at times vague or too general. It is articulated with basic insight and demonstrates basic understanding of the issue.	[1.95] The description is not very clear, focused or accurate. It is articulated with little insight and demonstrates only minor understanding of the issue.	[1.5] The description is quite vague, lacks focus or is not very accurate. It is articulated with very little insight and does not demonstrate adequate understanding of the issue.	[0] Description is missing or off-topic.
Dominant Explanation - 3pt	[3.0] The description is especially clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with keen insight and demonstrates the issue is well understood.	[2.8] The description is clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with solid insight and demonstrates the issue is understood.	[2.55] The description is mostly clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with some insight and demonstrates the issue is mostly understood.	[2.25] The description is partially clear, focused, and accurate, though at times vague or too general. It is articulated with basic insight and demonstrates basic understanding of the issue.	[1.95] The description is not very clear, focused or accurate. It is articulated with little insight and demonstrates only minor understanding of the issue.	[1.5] The description is quite vague, lacks focus or is not very accurate. It is articulated with very little insight and does not demonstrate adequate understanding of the issue.	[0] Description is missing or off-topic.
Critical Social Science Definition - 4pt	[4.0] The definition is especially clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with solid depth and demonstrates the critical perspective is well understood.	[3.7] The definition is clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with reasonable depth and demonstrates the critical perspective is understood.	[3.4] The definition is mostly clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with some depth and demonstrates the critical perspective is mostly understood.	[3.0] The definition is mostly clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with some depth and demonstrates the critical perspective is mostly understood.	[2.6] The definition is not very clear, focused or accurate. It is articulated with limited or no depth and demonstrates only minor understanding of the critical perspective.	[2.0] The definition is quite vague, lacks focus or is not very accurate. It is articulated with no discernible depth and does not demonstrate adequate understanding of the critical perspective.	[0] Definition is missing or off-topic.
Critical Social Science Practitioner - 1pt	[1.0] A relevant reference to a critical social science practitioner is included.	[0.5] The reference to a practitioner is not relevant.	[0] No reference to a practitioner is included.				
Structural/Systemic Explanation - 5pt	[5.0] The explanation is especially clear, focused, accurate, and specific. It is articulated with keen insight and demonstrates a cause is well understood.	[4.65] The explanation is clear, focused, accurate, and specific. It is articulated with solid insight and demonstrates a cause is understood.	[4.25] The explanation is mostly clear, focused, accurate, and specific. It is articulated with some insight and demonstrates a cause is mostly understood.	[3.75] The explanation is partially clear, focused, accurate, and specific, though at times vague or too general. It is articulated with basic insight and demonstrates basic understanding of a cause.	[3.25] The explanation is not very clear, focused, accurate, or specific. It is articulated with little insight and demonstrates only minor understanding of a cause.	[2.5] The explanation is quite vague, lacks focus, is not very accurate, or lacks specificity. It is articulated with very little insight and does not demonstrate adequate understanding of a cause.	[0] Explanation is missing or off-topic.
Alternative Approach Description - 4pt	[4.0] The description is especially clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with keen insight and demonstrates the issue is well understood.	[3.7] The description is clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with solid insight and demonstrates the issue is understood.	[3.4] The description is mostly clear, focused, and accurate. It is articulated with some insight and demonstrates the issue is mostly understood.	[3.0] The description is partially clear, focused, and accurate, though at times vague or too general. It is articulated with basic insight and demonstrates basic understanding of the issue.	[2.6] The description is not very clear, focused or accurate. It is articulated with little insight and demonstrates only minor understanding of the issue.	[2.0] The description is quite vague, lacks focus or is not very accurate. It is articulated with very little insight and does not demonstrate adequate understanding of the issue.	[0] Description is missing or off-topic.
Opinion Statement - 4pt	[4.0] The statement of opinion is clear and indicates viability or need with keen insight.	[3.4] The statement of opinion is clear and indicates viability or need with fair insight.	[3.0] The statement of opinion is mostly clear and indicates viability or need with some insight.	[2.6] The statement of opinion is not very clear or indicates viability or need with little insight.	[0] Statement is missing.		
Sources - 2pt	[2.0] At least two pertinent references to a class reading are included, used clearly to support a claim, and provide reasonable evidence to support the claim.	[1.5] One or two fairly pertinent references to a class reading are included, used in a mostly clear way to support a claim, and provide basic evidence to support the claim.	[1.0] A reference to a class reading is included but the relevance is not clear or provides little evidence to support a claim. Or, there is an excessive use of quotations.	[0] No reference to a class reading is provided.			
Citations - 1pt	[1.0] Class readings or other texts are properly cited and clear.	[0.75] Not all class readings or other texts are properly cited or clear.	[0.5] Sources are not cited or are unclear.				
Spelling and Grammar - 1pt	[1.0] Spelling and grammar issues, if any, do not interfere with meaning.	[0.75] Spelling and grammar issues sometimes interfere with meaning.	[0.5] Spelling and grammar issues frequently interfere with meaning.				
Length - 1pt	[1.0] The paper is 750-1000 words in length	[0.5] The paper is short or too long.					