

Writing an essay in History for Dr. Sarah Heath's courses.

Think of it this way: on any given day in lecture, I probably talk about dozens of people, events, acts of government, and ideas, and you read about many more. YOU NEVER HAVE TO RECREATE ALL OF THOSE FACTS TO DO WELL IN MY COURSE. You do, however, need to give me a fair, representative story line that shows me you learned something about US History for the period in question. If you can produce an outline that incorporates a few examples for each lecture topic that applies to a particular question, then you are focusing on the time period in question, and there is little way a person could accuse you of not knowing what you were talking about (or worse, not having been in class).

Remember also that you are being compared to other students in the class. Those students who make use of readings in their essays will do better than students who simply “parrot back” the lectures.

\*\*\* Notice that all of the questions ask you to consider the period from the founding of the colonies through the middle of the 1700s. **That means that you have to provide specific evidence from each and every class that has met in order to cover that whole span of time.** To make sure you offer a representative story line for all lecture topics, try to fill in a chart that looks like this:

Lecture topic	2 examples from lecture	1-2 examples from reading	SO WHAT? (analysis)
Cultures in Contact			
English in America			
Indians, Servants, Slaves			
Colonies and Conflicts			
Women in 17 <sup>th</sup> Century			
Witchcraft			
Social Disruptions/Change			

For each lecture topic mentioned, you should try to offer:

2 examples from lecture;

1 or 2 examples from reading; and

Link back to the question asked by explaining “so what do these examples show about the question asked?”

One positive aspect of this approach is that you can create your outline ahead of time, and keep rehearsing your story line. Pick facts that you feel most comfortable discussing (and avoid those that you cannot discuss clearly). Regardless of which question is asked, you will be covering a fair representative “story line” about that period, so you will satisfy one of the exam’s objectives.

MY DEFINITION OF “EXAMPLES” AND “ANALYSIS” ARE AS FOLLOWS:

“EXAMPLES” should:

- use proper names of people, events, actions, ideas, and policies—name names!
- give a brief “story line” (you should show that you know what happened—what was the end result of the action you mention? What did the person do? What key ideas or beliefs are you illustrating? How did policies change the way people did things?)
- Likely will take only 1-3 sentences to cover (remember, you have to get through a total of 21-28 to complete your exam, so decide what facts will help you make a bigger point about the question asked)

ANALYSIS (“so what?”):

- goes beyond summarizing facts; it explains what you think the examples show about the question asked
- summarizes the significance of ALL the examples you used in one lecture topic, not just one
- helps to explain what your feelings or opinions are about the question asked
- reinforces or refers to themes or key words included in the question
- reinforces why the side you took on the question asked was a reasonable conclusion to make
- should be brief; often is well done when it is a summary sentence at the end of a paragraph

If you follow these instructions, then EACH PARAGRAPH of the body of your essay would use this format:

Setup sentence (introduce the topic, or reinforce a bigger point you are making)

Example 1 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 2 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 3 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

Example 4 (~2 sentences that offer a “high points” description of that person, policy, or event)

[example 4 is optional, but use it if you have time; use one or two examples from readings to flesh out good coverage of all available material]

Analysis: tie together all of the examples used in this section, and explain what they show about the question asked. Be sure that your opinion is clear; take a side on the question asked!