



Essays

Tip: essays are always a debate. So, you must include argument here with lots of evaluation throughout your answer. Essays in Unit 4 will always require you to examine and evaluate theories of social inequality. Social inequalities are evident in different areas of society, but many find their roots in income inequalities. When you plan essays, start by looking at all of the points for and against. Your essays must always be a debate which contain a spread of AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills.

Suggested writing framework for every section of your essay:

[D] escribe a point or a view that is relevant to the focus

[E] xplain what it means

[S] upport and criticise the point or view with evidence

[I] nterpret what each reference to evidence shows

[R] efer (apply) this to the debate

[E] valuate - point out the strengths and weaknesses of the specific idea (remember to make a judgement at the end)

Professor Wilkinson offers some ideas about the impact of such inequalities in this lecture which you may like to watch. This might improve your understanding of the nature of social inequality: <https://bit.ly/3uZcZVp>.

Tip: organise essay plans. Spider diagrams or lists can help, and you can consider all explanations or specific ones. Here is an example for a broad essay on theories of social class inequalities.





Theories of social inequality, an overview. Add to this table.

	Key writers	Key ideas	Supporting evidence	Criticisms
Functionalist / New Right	Parsons Murray Saunders Davies and Moore	Inequality is a result of personal weakness and lack of effort Inequality is inevitable and functional Meritocracy	Minority groups who succeed in spite of barriers	Evidence that class, gender, ethnicity and age play a part Meritocracy challenge
Marxist	Marx Gramsci Althusser Bowles and Gintis	Social class is the basis of inequality and more important than other factors False consciousness and ideological control Polarisation	Use evidence of class inequality Some ideas easy to defend such as lack of meritocracy	Reductionist; does not take account of other variables Some claims are difficult to prove
Weberian / Neo Weberian	Weber	Inequality is caused by class, status and party	Use evidence of: • class inequality • gender inequality • ethnic inequality • age inequality Evidence of power as significant	Lacks detail and some say detracts from the real causes of inequality
Racism	Various, based on evidence	Institutional racism causes inequality	Lots of evidence of racism in every area of social life. Use this to support the notion that ethnicity and racism causes inequality	Reductionist Evidence of minority group success Does not consider inequality experienced as a result of other variables
Feminist: Liberal Marxist Radical Black Triple systems theory	Barron and Norris Benston Ansley Firestone Oakley Hooks Walby	Gender is the source of inequality Reserve army of labour Dual labour market Subordination of women	Use evidence of gender inequality	Hakim, preference theory Inequalities experienced by men Reductionist

Top band mark descriptors for essays:

A01 9-11	Detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of evidence and theories. Confident and accurate use of sociological language and logical structure of answer. There will be a balanced discussion.
A02 9-11	Detailed analysis and application of knowledge with depth and breadth. Reasoned analysis of the evidence. There will be references to research evidence with detailed commentary on each and what they might suggest about the theory in question. The debate will be focussed on the question. Evidence will be used with commentary on what it shows in relation to the debate for this band.
A03 15-18	Detailed evaluation with depth and breadth. Reasoned evaluation of the evidence. Debate will be focussed on the question. A conclusion will be drawn which is based on the debate in the essay.