
The essay rubrics reward precise use of the historical reasoning vocabulary, and the course turns on a handful of recurring concepts that students use loosely. These are the terms that cost points.

Historical reasoning

- Causation** – an argument that one development produced another, requiring a stated mechanism rather than mere sequence
- Continuity and change over time** – asking what persisted as well as what altered; an essay naming only change answers half the prompt
- Comparison** – an argument about similarity AND difference, with the basis of comparison made explicit
- Contextualisation** – situating the argument in the broader circumstances of the period – a separate rubric point from the thesis
- Sourcing** – explaining how a document's purpose, audience, point of view or situation affects what it can be evidence for

States and empires

- State** – a political organisation with defined territory, a permanent population and a government exercising authority over both
- Empire** – a state extending its rule over other peoples and territories, usually extracting tribute, labour or revenue from them
- Tributary system** – a hierarchy in which lesser states acknowledged a dominant one with gifts and ritual, receiving trade access and legitimacy in return
- Bureaucracy** – administration by appointed officials following written rules, which allows a state to govern beyond the reach of personal loyalty
- Legitimacy** – the accepted right to rule, claimed through religion, descent, conquest, law or consent

Economies and networks

- Columbian Exchange** – the transfer of crops, animals, people and diseases between the Americas and Afro-Eurasia after 1492, whose demographic effect was the largest
- Mercantilism** – the doctrine that a state's wealth is measured by bullion and secured by a trade surplus, requiring colonies to supply raw materials and buy manufactures
- Cash crop** – a crop grown for sale rather than subsistence, which ties a region's food security to distant markets
- Industrialisation** – the shift to mechanised, factory-based production using inanimate power, which reorganised where goods were made and who supplied their inputs
- Economic imperialism** – control exerted through investment, debt and trade terms rather than formal annexation

Societies and change

Diaspora – a dispersed population maintaining ties to a homeland, often forming merchant communities that carried goods and ideas

Syncretism – the blending of belief systems or practices into a new form, common where religions spread along trade routes

Nationalism – the belief that a people sharing culture and history should govern itself, which both built states and broke empires apart

Decolonisation – the process by which colonies achieved political independence, by negotiation or by war, chiefly after 1945

Globalisation – the intensifying integration of economies, communications and cultures, distinguished from earlier trade by its speed and scale