Essay Writing

The college requirement states that essays are to be discursive as opposed to anecdotal. Discursive essays are neutral, objective and explore all areas. It presents an argument in a more balanced way than argumentative and persuasive writing which argues in one direction, for or against. After having addressed and evaluated all arguments the author may state an opinion but it is best done with regards to future implications and weighed in the balance or left open.

Writing objectively:
The aim of academic writing is to write objectively as an observer; in what is a referred to as third person opinion or arguments attributed to some anonymous authority or evidence. E.g. whilst some people say…or one may argue that…..or It has been shown that….

Steps in writing a discursive essay

The essay consists of 3 parts

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Conclusion

1. **Introduction** - Introduce the quote and set some of the issues identified in the title within the wider context that will be laid out in the essay. Clarify the content words as the meanings may be different for different people. E.g. Patients have doubts. We don't. Doctors have answers. In this quote clarify what is meant by doubts and answers.

Here we may say in introduction 'Doctor-patient relationships have become increasingly important in medicine / The Doctor-patient relationship is one of the most important aspects in medicine. It is unclear what doubts and answers mean as they may have different connotations for different people. The quote can be conceptualized from several different points of view.

Pharmacology can enhance human morality - Here the author (Sean Spence BJPsych) states the following introduction:
"There are different ways in which one might construe pharmacology as enhancing morality." (You may then go on to add - Pharmacology spans drugs from medical, psychiatric, herbal and traditional fields. Morality itself has different meanings when viewed from different perspectives.

Tip: Convert the quote in a question form e.g. drugs can enhance human morality = can drugs enhance human morality?
Then MindMap the advantages and disadvantages/evidence for/against the above quote to form the body of the essay.

2. Body of the Essay

This should be broken down into paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain one topic sentence (one major point of argument) and could be derived from ethical, cultural, historical, medico legal, societal, medical or psychiatric perspectives.

- A topic sentence contains the main idea or argument of the paragraph. E.g. From an ethical point of view, this may/may not hold true. (Then give evidence for and against.)

Link the sentences with link words (see later). Continue using link words through paragraphs, to begin a new paragraph i.e. introduce a new topic sentence. E.g. Historically, drugs have played a crucial part in shaping human nature

- The topic sentences of paragraphs may stress continuity between similar arguments. E.g. It is also argued that…… "A further argument that one frequently encounters in this context is that….."

- The topic sentence may also link highly contrasting arguments e.g. however there are also strong arguments against this point of view" "Another counter argument is that…."

Follow a logical sequence linking paragraphs. Write the weakest argument first and strongest at the end

Types of Essays and structures:

1. Problem :

Establish problem and define terms
What are the causes of problem?
What are the effects?
What are the solutions?
Implementation and future implications

2. Examining a quote with contrasts:

Introduce theme and define terms
Good points/advantages
Bad points/ Disadvantages
Conclusion

3. Discuss the situation"

e.g Asylum seekers
Indigenous health

This can be done by addressing the issue at specific levels e.g. ethical, historical, cultural etc

Link words

Listing:

- First of all
- Firstly, secondly, thirdly
- Another reason is
- On the other hand
- On the one hand
- On the contrary
- The final reason is
- One major advantage is
- One point of view in favour against.
- Last but not least
- While it is true to say

Additions:

- Furthermore
- Additionally
- Apart from that
- Besides

Contrasts:

- On the other hand
- While
- Even though
- Although
- However
- Nevertheless
- In spite of
- Despite
- It can be argued that

Conclusion:

- To sum up
- On balance
- It seems that
- All in all
- All things considered
- Taking everything into account
- In conclusion
- On the whole
- To conclude
- As previously stated

Important topics in Psychiatry:

The following are some of the themes that will provide you with brainstorming material for essay writing

1. Controversy about illness and disorder

Disorder or illness is not an exact term but implies the existence of a set of symptoms or behaviour associated with distress and with interference of personal functions. Medicine has not agreed on the exact definition of a disorder and this definition becomes even more difficult when it comes to the definition of a mental disorder. The term mental disorder itself implies a dichotomy or separation between mind and body i.e. a dualistic assumption that the mind and body are separate entities. This dualism, first proposed by Descartes has shaped psychiatry to a great extent. The conceptual dualism has had moral and service implications. E.g. Psychiatric disorders are considered to be the fault of the person as opposed to the disorders of the body leading to considerably more stigma. Furthermore, the organizational dualism with mental health services being structurally and geographically separate from main hospitals.
This dualism does not exist in the definitions of health in many collectivistic cultures. E.g. Aboriginal cultures have a holistic concept of health and therefore the models of illness have to be adapted to their explanatory models of illness.

2. Psychiatric disorders are concepts and not valid discrete entities.

In psychiatry diagnoses continue to be based on clinical syndromes. In medicine however, diagnoses are based on etiology. This often leads to the debate that psychiatry is not grounded in fact and is reflected within the field as disagreements about diagnosis; changing diagnoses for patients etc. this may lead to a lack of confidence in the public about psychiatry as a whole. However more recently a lot of research has focused on biological origins of illnesses and new concepts are emerging.

3. Psychiatric classification:

Psychiatric classification is based on a categorical classification. However for a classification one needs to have a clear boundary between the groups. This boundary is not clear in psychiatry. Kendell and Kendler have not been able to show the boundary between depression and normality or depression and schizophrenia. The current classification however leads to a greater interrater reliability which is often taken as a proxy for validity. It is not validity, however in the true

sense. Categories also lead to clear treatment implications and plans. DSM-5 is now considering dimensional classifications for psychiatric disorders especially for personality disorders.

4. Culture and psychiatry:

Mental illness expressed differently in different cultures
Euro-centric nature of psychiatry
Culture bound syndromes
Western-Culture bound syndromes- Anorexia Nervosa, Borderline personality disorder
Culture cannot be excluded from psychiatric assessments – can lead to misdiagnosis etc
Relevant to aboriginal and refugee populations

5. Legal and ethical aspects of psychiatry

Ethical issues are ever present in psychiatry; however they only seem to rise to the surface in times of conflict.
e.g capacity assessments
Sensitive issues include end of life decisions (give evidence and stay neutral)
Late trimester abortions

6. Historical perspectives

Ethical issues are closely related to powerful socio-political, legal, cultural factors that impinge upon doctors, patients and settings in which they meet. E.g. stolen generations leading to intergenerational transmission of trauma with long lasting effects resulting in poor mental and physical health of Indigenous populations around the world.

Paternalism was the key moral principle underpinning many of the asylums in the past. Over the years news of mistreatment, abusive practices especially the use of mechanical restraints began to surface. This led to a debate on the place of asylums and became subject to ethical concern. The deinstitutionalization, contrary to popular belief was not only due to the discovery of CPZ but also the ethical issues. Deinstitutionalization has brought with it its own problems. As justice is one of the central tenets in psychiatry with a fair allocation of services to people, it is now prudent that community management be given a priority. This is often a problem leading due to funding issues leading to continuous relapses with even a greater burden on hospitals , families and communities.

Psychiatric abuses by Russia, NAZI Germany etc are well known and show how invalid concepts can be used to meet political ends.

7. **Recent issues**

- Controversies about diagnosis of ADHD
- Role of pharmaceutical industry
- Personality disorder and its existence
- Stigma

3. **Conclusion**

Begin with link words as mentioned above. Stay neutral, provide a balanced view. E.g. There are no clear solutions. It would seem that in the case of psychiatry, further research needed to provide definite answers firmly grounded in fact.

“On the balance pharmacological modification of human nature raises significant controversial issues. However, such opinions are valuable as they make the psychiatric profession exciting, stimulate alternate conceptualizations of pharmacology, modify research and may in the future lead to improvements in treatment.”

Good Luck!!
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The CTF Course