

# ESSAY CHEAT SHEET

## TOPICS and FOCUS AREAS

*(Adapted from Cambridge 2002 A -level Syllabus)*

Indicated here are the more **pertinent issues** surrounding the given focus areas with useful **web-friendly 'search terms'** that allow you to carry out your own research to build content knowledge and bolster arguments.

As far as possible, key events/issues and examples from 2009-2011 have also been included in a bid to strengthen the **currency** of your examples.



## MEDIA

- **Comparisons of the uses and functions of different media forms** (traditional /mainstream vs new media, new media vs social)

*Decline of print readership - newspapers, death of broadsheets, competition from online media*

- **Responsibility of the media** - Upholding journalistic values/standards, voice of the common people, press as the fourth estate/watchdog

*Guardian - advertising standards/Advertising standards authority, Rupert Murdoch News Corporation phone-hacking scandal July 2011*

- **Representation of different groups**

*Furore over sports advertising of female athletes, greater diversity of characters and minorities on screen, shift in the portrayal of men and male relationships*

- **Issues in Advertising, Print, TV, Online media (medium specific)**

*Rise of narcissism and 'Generation Me' due to Youtube/Myspace, instant celebrities, role and power of social media*

- **Politics and its relation with the media** (manipulation, use of, ownership and intervention)

*Silvio Berlusconi -media mogul/politician, Barack Obama and social media*

- **Media's influence on family + social groups**

*Violence in video games - Quake, Doom, Dead Space, cyber addiction, alternate realities -Second Life, shift in nature of social relationships*

- **Censorship + Control of various branches of the media + implications**

*Current Issues: Great Firewall of China, google pulling out of China saga*

## THE ARTS /CULTURAL ISSUES

- **Art forms - architecture, photography, film, traditional art**

*Photography increasingly accorded status as fine art, place and value of architecture/film, rise and prominence of comics and graphic novels, death of film as art form, blockbuster-syndrome.*

- **Nature of culture and how it is shaped and influenced by various forces**

*Art as a cultural construct (ideological/current influences), as a reflection of social values/ tastes/ norms/ preferences, as a signal of social concerns/struggles, the artist as political hero E.g. Ai Wei Wei*

- **Impact of modern technology on the arts**

*Digital animation, graphic design - changing nature of story telling, mixed media artists, ability to showcase art - rise of independent artists (website: deviantart)*

- **Social status of the arts, value/importance of the Arts**

*Art as soft power, recording breaking art prices/sales, increasing investment/corporate funding of the Arts*

- **Criteria for the definition of art (refer to Arts lecture)**
- **Language change - accents, dialect, standard English vs. pidgin forms**

## HISTORY and THE FUTURE

- **Value of history as a guide to human behavior (A level P2 2008)**
- **Nature of history and the means by which it is shaped - *who writes history, about what, for whom.***

- **Predictions of future/current events** - *awareness of major shifts in the last century (various aspects -PERMS) to predict future trends.*

## **CRIME, CONTROLLING CRIME, CONFLICT and VIOLENCE**

- **The use and abuse of power in various forms (vs Rights)**  
*Revived debate on torture, DNA and racial profiling, surveillance and privacy (George Orwell's Big Brother), culture of fear, rise of police states, police brutality*
- **International crime and justice**

*Rise of transnational crimes due to increased connectivity, concept of world government, International Criminal Court (Hague, Netherlands), prosecuting of individuals for crimes against humanity, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), prosecution of Radovan Karadzic, sentencing of Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch, recent attempt to prosecute Libya's Muammar Gaddafi*

## **POVERTY**

- **Causes/reasons** - recognizing the complex relationship between factors that lead to poverty

*Poverty in the first world/developed nations, persistent corruption in local government, worsening of environmental factors, exploitation of low wage nations*

- **Solutions**

*Micro-finance and micro loans, education, international aid, social programs (medical support), UN Millenium Development Goals 2015*

- **Evaluating responsibility for alleviating global poverty**

*White man's burden, neo-colonialism, International Monetary Fund/World Bank -strings attached, fighting corruption in poor countries*

- **Issues surrounding humanitarian aid/loans**

*Aid fatigue, misuse of aid, creation of aid dependency*

## **POLITICS**

- **Governance and leadership**

Failing/fragile democracies, Qualities associated with political leadership

- **Nature and effectiveness of political systems, means by which political ends are achieved**

*Democracy in decline, decreasing confidence in liberal democracies, credibility of soft authoritarian government systems, rise of East Asian model of democracy, installation of democracies by the West (Afghanistan, Iraq), soft revolutions, twitter revolution, Iranian bloggers, fragile democracies - Thailand*

- **Effectiveness of international organizations, governance and/or Hs**

Surge of humanitarian aid, rise of philanthropy, prominence of NGOs during crises (Red Cross, Red Crescent)

- **R/S between individual and state (extent of state intervention)**

*Support for Nanny states (Singapore, California)*

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- **Interference by countries into politics of another, national sovereignty**

*North Korea Nuclear Testing (2009), UN-NATO intervention in Libya, Just Wars/Just war theory, South China Sea disputes,*

## **SOCIAL ISSUES**

- **MARRIAGE, FAMILY, SINGLEHOOD AND PARENTING**  
(changing norms and structure)
  - Traditional family structures (heterosexual) vs. rise of alternative lifestyles (homosexual)
  - Marriage rights (legal protection) for homosexual marriages (e.g., Netherlands 2001)
  - Value of marriage vs. cohabitation
  - Rights of single mothers (maternity leave, childcare benefits. Compare Sweden with more conservative countries, e.g., USA, Singapore)
  - Family Law- who does it protect?
  - Rising divorce rates and normalizing of multiple marriages as a result of the media/celebrities (celebrities: Elizabeth Taylor 9, Larry King 7)
  - Parenting styles - Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of The Tiger Mother* (in support of less liberal parenting techniques)

## **DISCRIMINATION/ PREJUDICE**

(reasons for, evidence of, minority groups and their treatment)

*Racism (attribution of characteristics according to race), eugenics, race as an invented concept, discrimination of aborigines (in Australia, China etc), Ultra-Nationalism (Japan)*

## **EDUCATION**

- **Form, varying function/goals, criticisms of, value of subjects- e.g. value of mathematics etc)**  
*Cynicism about formal education, rise of home-schooling, hot-housing, education and religious radicalism/liberalism, McKinsey report on education*

## **SPORT**

- **Sport as entertainment, relationship with profit/money**

*Exorbitant transfer fees for sports stars, cult of the sports celebrity, selective funding of sports, corporate interest in sport (ownership and control of teams), rise of televised sport (NFL, F1, Boxing championships)*

- **Value of sports**

Celebration of human endeavour, inspiration and the stretching of human limits, sport as a political platform to unite (Olympism, nationalism)

## **CELEBRITIES AND THEIR STATUS**

*Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor's passing, invasion of privacy, public misbehaviour - Lindsay Lohan, various soccer stars, publicly known addictions (Amy Winehouse), the rising status, even importance of the paparazzi, celebrities as cultural icons and signifiers - Lady Gaga, celebrities using star power to champion causes - UN Goodwill Ambassadors (Bono, Angelina Jolie)*

## **YOUTH ISSUES + SOCIALISATION**

*Impact of social forces (e.g., media, education, politics, economic climate) on the development on young people, rise of anti-social behaviour, strawberry generation, generation me, rise in political activism, mandate of the young voters*

## **ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION**

*Rising influence of religion in civil society, religious extremism/fundamentalism, religion in schools (schools as a secular space),*

*Issues: Religious/legal code (Sharia law in the US), Islamic center at ground Zero, Tea Party*

## **IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONS VERSUS PROGRESS**

*Functions of tradition in modern society, tradition competing with globalisation/homegenisation*

## **FASHION**

- **Fashion as identity, political statements, art /as a concept (trends/ what is currently popular)**

*Death of fashion icon- Alexander McQueen, rise of fashion as political statement, prominence and reliance on stylists - image creation (Patricia Fields, Rachel Zoe), image manipulation, rise of "It Girls", fashion bloggers, The Sartorialist, musicians creating fashion - Haus of Gaga*

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & MEDICINE**

- **Roles of Science (Term 2 Science Lecture notes)**
- **Science and its relationship to progress, profit**

*Big pharma, for-profit science (space tourism)*

- **Advantages and dangers of scientific developments**

*Development of nuclear technology, biomedical science and ethical dilemmas, surveillance technology, issues surrounding investment in Large Hadron Collider*

- **Impact of modern technology on society (Benefits + hazards of modern technology)**

*Overreliance, Culture of convenience, increasing acceptance of A.I, negative impact on skill level and knowledge acquisition*

- **Responsibilities of scientists (Term 2 Science Lecture notes)**
- **Developments in medical field - controversies, promises**

*Gene patenting, 1000 dollar genome, "medicalisation" of social problems (shyness as 'social anxiety disorder')*

- **Issues involving life and death (euthanasia, AMD vs Physician's ethical code)**
- **Responsibility of the state + individual for healthcare**



*Budget cuts and spending on healthcare (USA), passing of the US Healthcare Bill vs Medicare in SG, National Health System - UK*

## **ECONOMICS + BUSINESS (LINK TO GLOBALIZATION)**

- **Competition and Profit motive/expanding focus of business**

*Shifting trends in branding and advertising, rise of the Fortune 500, corporate social responsibility and involvement with charity work, rise of socially conscious businesses (fair trade practices, hiring of intellectually disabled/ elderly workers. e.g., 'Walmart greeters'), Competition and anti-monopoly laws, open source code for software programming (Microsoft-closed, Apple & Google-open),*

- **Consumerism and materialism**

*Culture of consumerism and materialism, increasing consumerism in the younger generation, role of businesses in perpetuating C&M, industry dependence on consumerist behaviour*

- **Role of state in business and corporate influence**

*Influence of corporations on governments and vice versa (strength of industry lobby groups), role of government as a regulator of businesses, responsibility for public infrastructure*

- **Merits and disadvantages of various types of employment (2009 A-levels P2)**

*Ethical dilemmas inherent in some jobs (lawyer, bio-genetic research), high-risk jobs (police/firemen), high powered/paying employment vs. "noble" professions (teaching/nursing)*

- **Sentiments about/Relationship/dynamics between rich and poor/global inequalities**

*Anti globalisation backlash, growing middle class in first world countries, Singapore - growing income disparity,*

## ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

- **Energy/resource issues (Crisis, hazards, developments/solutions)**

*Climate change denial/scepticism, Climategate, failed Copenhagen Summit, UN Security Council, clean energy investment/technology, controversy over dangers involved in hydraulic fracturing (natural gas), biofuels, growing water crisis/deficits, dwindling grain harvests*

- **Oceans + their role**

*Loss of biodiversity, destruction of reefs, BP oil spill*

- **Land use (Urbanisation, city life)**

*Green cities, zero-waste systems, greener living in cities compared to countryside*

- **Natural disasters and their impact**

*Aftermath of BP gulf coast oil spill, Fukushima nuclear explosion, Pakistan floods, Haiti earthquake (outpouring of humanitarian aid), UN-declared famine (Somalia July 2011).*

*\*Note also the outpouring of aid as a result of social media and the inequality in the distribution of aid (Haiti vs Pakistan)*

- **Importance of geographical location**
- **Issues relating to food and its production**

*Food safety issues/global food scares (China, Japan), radiation contamination, bovine/avian flu/diseases, panic buying of staples, equitable distribution of food, food crisis (as a result of investment in Biofuels)*

- **Organic food/GM crops**

*Move to allow member states to ban cultivation of GM crops in the EU (Jul 2011), concerns over corporate farming - environmentally unsustainable, criticisms against Monsanto -GM food corporation, controversial food production methods, food label laws, organic and raw food movement.*

## PHILOSOPHY

- **Freedom and culture (2006 P2 A level)**

*Importance of upholding liberty/freedom, constraints to liberty (for the greater good)*

- **Value of life**

*Developments that question the value/sanctity of life (euthanasia, stem cell research, cloning, genetic manipulation)*

- **Human rights**

*Importance of upholding basic inalienable rights (UNDHR), UN resolution - responsibility to protect (RtoP)*

- **Animal Rights**

Rising awareness of unethical farming and food production practices, veganism in response to championing animal rights, fashion companies (e.g Forever 21)/celebrities boycotting use of fur, more stringent anti-hunting/poaching laws (not strictly animal rights but related to the issue of protection of endangered wildlife)

- **Truth + Dishonesty**

*moral and ethical debate behind truth telling, making or breaking promises, post modernist challenge to Truth (as an absolute)*

- **Ideal way of leading one's life/ personal + social values**

*Also likely to emerge as part of AQ - questioning of personal and social values like empathy, awareness, activism etc*

## **SINGAPORE BASED QUESTIONS**

- **Impact of global events/movements in Singapore** - significant events that have had a ripple effect on our economy, socio-cultural fabric and in terms of policy making

*Asian Financial Crisis, 2008 Global Financial Crisis, 9/11 and The War on Terror, global pandemics, growing homosexual rights movement, shift of power to the East*

- **Significance or importance of geographical location**

- **Migration and its policies**

*Growing proportion of foreigners, stiffer competition across all aspects, dissatisfaction with policies on foreign talent, recent policies to reduce tension (more stringent criteria for immigrants), integration policies for foreigners, prevention of enclaves*

- **History and its repercussions (2008 P2 AQ)**

- **Social trends**

*(Look at Key Annual Indicators from Statistics Singapore - website) Income inequality, growing influence of women's rights groups, higher incidence of affluence related diseases, social media usage - in politics, increasing affluence of the young, tensions between the young and old - political leanings/beliefs,*

- **Cultural developments + influence**

*Key study - Singapore Cultural Statistics 2011, Cultural policies - doubling in the number of arts companies (2003-2010), rise in number of museums, rise in enrollment in arts education, rise in employment in the arts +economic contribution of the arts, rise in patronage of the arts - performing arts sector, bld to turn SG into regional fashion hub (Singapore Fashion Festival/Fashion Week), tension between developing a progressive cultural/arts scene and censorship/OB markers, growing international architectural influence.*

- **Economy, competitiveness**

*Loses No. 1 economic competitiveness in 2011 (1- US, 2nd- Hong Kong, 3rd SG) due to rising cost of living, excellent rankings for - best protection of intellectual property, open economy, investment potential, skilled labour, first choice for foreign talent etc (EDB website, SG rankings), economic boom widening income gap (2nd highest among advanced economies), recent questioning of transparency and politicization of sovereign wealth funds (Temasek Holdings, GIC)*