

Critical Vegan Studies at the University of East Anglia

Patchwork Assessment

This document was developed for the undergraduate year 3 option module 'Critical Vegan Studies' offered by the Sociology subject group at the University of East Anglia. This document is for tutor reference and is not a student facing document. It contains:

1. An overview of the Patchwork Assessment summative piece that students submit as their end of module assessment (page 2)
2. The four 'Patch' tasks students are set during the module (pages 3-6). Each page details:
 - The patch sequence number, title and the semester weeks that the task is completed;
 - The instructions given to students to complete the task;
 - The 'Follow up for reflection' notes that are made available to students after they have completed their answers to the patch task.

In addition to the follow up reflection notes that students receive, I have also been gathering a collection of audio recorded 'One minute answers' from Vegan Studies scholars for the students to listen to. If you'd be interested in contributing to that collection (all contributors also get access to the full collection of recordings) then please contact me at kate.stewart@uea.ac.uk.

If you use anything from this resource, or if you have any thoughts or questions about it, I'd love to hear from you!

Patchwork Assessment

A patchwork assessment consists of a variety of small sections ('patches'), each of which is complete in itself, and finalized retrospectively, when they are 'stitched together' into a single piece, which is submitted as your summative assessment.

It's a suitable assessment style at this stage of your studies as it's known for its strengths as being student-centred, inclusive, personalised, and contextualised within the real world. So you can bring together your personal preferences, strengths, interests and learning needs (the 'stitches', to extend the metaphor) as well as meet the module learning outcomes.

Summative Assessment

For your summative assessment you will submit a single 3000 word document based on 4 'Patch' task exercises undertaken during the semester.

You will be set 4 patch tasks during the module. After you've submitted each patch, you'll be given some 'follow up reflection' questions relating to the task to help you think further about the activity.

Your summative assessment will be the submission of a single document bringing together the work you did on the patches, plus your additional reflections, to outline what you identify as your personal learning outcomes from the module.

There are 2 main ways of organising the final piece:

Option 1

- Copy and paste each patch task into a Word document adding 3-400 words for each task for your further reflections and to connect them together, so your document is 4 very clear and separate sections.
- Strength of this approach is that most of your essay will be written by the end of teaching.
- Limitation of this is you might find it hard to synthesise insights across the tasks and module as a whole.

Option 2

- Write a personal reflective piece and use extracts from your patch texts to illustrate or support the points in your reflective piece.
- Strengths of this approach are that you will have more words to use for the reflection and may find it easier to synthesise insights across the tasks and module as a whole.
- Limitation of this approach is that you don't have 1400-1600 words of 'prewritten' text to just drop into your final piece.

Further guidance on approaching the final piece will be given during the module.

Patchwork Assessments are designed to enhance your learning experience and help support you to achieve your best work in the assessment. If you complete them on schedule during the module, you will get the fullest learning experience from doing them, and it will help enormously with the completion of your summative assessment.

Patch 1: What's in a word? (Weeks 1-3)

Write about what the word 'vegan' means to you

Only requirements are that you construct an answer and save it as a Word file. Write around 300 words, but if you want to you can make an illustration, take a photograph, or even include an extract from a poem as part of your answer. Feel free to be creative if it helps you answer the question.

I don't want to give you any more instruction than this – it's your opportunity to use your imagination and to think about how you approach making broad, abstract or vague requests into a concrete task that you can complete.

Follow up for reflection:

As a follow up reflection, make notes on the following:

How did you decide what you had to do for this task?
Structure? Use of reading, academic ideas, personal insights?

Whenever we're set a task, or given a question, we break it down to turn it into a set of activities we understand so we can do them.

- How did you go about doing that with this task?
- What does it tell you about the different ways the word can be understood?
- What does it tell you about how you work and what your strengths, weaknesses, preferences and anxieties are about working?

Some of the QAA Sociology subject benchmarks that are relevant to this task, which you might consider in your reflections on this exercise:

- gathering, retrieving, and synthesising information
- making reasoned and evidenced arguments
- interpreting evidence (numerical, visual, spoken and written)
- reflecting on your own accumulation of knowledge
- reflexivity about assumptions and the social processes and structures shaping forms of knowledge
- learning and study skills
- written, visual and oral communication skills in a variety of contexts and to different types of audiences
- independent working and collaborative group work skills
- the ability to assess and understand your own strengths and weaknesses, and to take action to improve and enhance your capacities.

Write your notes in response to these reflections, and any other thoughts you have about completing this task.

If you think these ideas would change how you answered the question, make notes on how you might approach the task differently.

Keep your reflective notes and a copy of the draft you submitted - you'll need these for your formative and summative assessment.

Patch 2: Expertise – a potted biography (Weeks 4-6)

In this task you are required to identify a significant animal studies scholar and create a short, critical biography of them of 3-400 words in length.

Your 'potted biography' should set out the significant life-events of the scholar you have chosen; the significant intellectual milestones in that life, and the significant concepts and contributions they made to the field of animal and vegan scholarship. Try to include what you see as strengths and weaknesses of their scholarship. Include references to their major works and to any other sources that you used to populate information about them. Your reference list isn't included in your word count.

Follow up for reflection:

As a follow up reflection, make notes on the following:

Many animal studies scholars started their academic career in other areas of their discipline and developed an interest in nonhuman animals later on. Think about the connections across established disciplines that the mass movement from other disciplines might have in this field of study.

- Has the scholar you wrote about solely been a vegan or animal studies scholar?
- What kinds of academic backgrounds have they come from?
- What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of their disciplinary background to their current interests in critical animal studies?
- What does that say about the clarity, legitimacy or variety of perspectives in this topic area?
- How do you think this topic area fits into the scholarly biography of your studies so far?

Some of the QAA Sociology subject benchmarks that are relevant to this task, which you might consider in your reflections on this exercise :

- the capacity to identify, assess and analyse sources of evidence in building a sociological argument
- judging and evaluating evidence
- gathering, retrieving, and synthesising information

Write your notes in response to these reflections, and any other thoughts you have about completing this task. If you think these ideas would change how you answered the question, make notes on how you might approach the task differently.

Keep your reflective notes and a copy of the draft you submitted - you'll need these for your formative and summative assessment.

Patch 3: Seeing Speciesism (Weeks 7-10)

In this task, you are asked to identify a "social thing" and write 4- 500 words explaining how concepts relating to speciesism can be "sociologically" seen in it. A "social thing" means any artefact that you find interesting and that can be considered, discussed, and analysed in a sociological way which gives us insights into how speciesism works/functions/is reproduced or contested. It could be an object, photo, image, video that you, or someone else, has made.

Follow up for reflection:

As a follow up reflection, make notes on the following:

- How did you decide what you had to do for this task?
- Do you get a sense that you're thinking differently compared to when you wrote your first patch and first thought about the same question in that context – and if so, how.
- In what ways do you think you are seeing and thinking about things you encounter in day to day life differently?
- What scholarly concepts can you link to that shift or your new ways of seeing?

Some QAA Sociology subject benchmarks to think about:

- cultural processes and the social construction of knowledges, discourses and cultures
- the role of culturally organised processes in social life
- the ability to identify a range of qualitative and quantitative data sources, across different modalities (visual, oral, material or digital) of relevance to sociological enquiry
- appreciating the complexity and diversity of social contexts
- interpreting evidence (numerical, visual, spoken and written)

Write your notes in response to these reflections, and any other thoughts you have about completing this task.

If you think these ideas would change how you answered the question, make notes on how you might approach the task differently.

Keep your reflective notes and a copy of the draft you submitted - you'll need these for your formative and summative assessment.

Patch 4: Vegatopia (Weeks 11-12)

Utopia is about how we would live and what kind of a world we would live in if we could do just that. The construction of imaginary worlds, free from the difficulties that beset us in reality, takes place in one form or another in many cultures...Sometimes utopia embodies more than an image of what the good life would be and becomes a claim about what it could and should be: the wish that things might be otherwise becomes a conviction that it does not have to be like this. Utopia is then not just a dream to be enjoyed, but a vision to be pursued.
(Levitas 2011 p1)

In this task, I would like you to describe what a vegan or antispeciesist utopia would look like to you. What are the key characteristics of both the values and practices you'd find in the world you describe?

Write around 400 words, but if you want to make an illustration as part of your answer then please do so.

Reference:

Levitas, Ruth. 2011 *The Concept of Utopia : Reissue with new preface by the author*, Peter Lang

Follow up for reflection:

As a follow up reflection, make notes on the following:

- Have you outlined a vision that can be pursued? Should we compromise our ideals in light of what we deem pragmatic and achievable?
- How difficult is the task was of writing a utopia? Consider this compared to how difficult critiquing existing social worlds is.
- Think about how your vegatopia would be achieved if barriers to those changes were removed – and whether changes are chiefly practical (systems, resources, spaces) or personal and attitudinal. Think about whether you think one is more important than the other in moving toward change. Are there other outcomes that would inevitably follow?

Some benchmarks to think about:

- the relationship between individuals and groups
- social action, social practices, social institutions, social structures and societies
- cultural processes and the social construction of knowledges, discourses and cultures
- the interconnection between global and local social processes and problems
- the relationship between biography and history
- theories of power
- conflict and cohesion
- the underpinnings of social order
- social inequalities and social divisions
- diverse cultures and contexts
- causes and consequences of social change
- the relationships between individuals, groups and social structures
- social diversity and inequalities
- the role of culturally organised processes in social life
- processes underpinning social change