Planning – Editing and Ordering

Edit the following notes for the essay question below and then organise the remaining notes into a plan for the essay.

Essay question:

In the light of a number of recent high profile complaints about invasion of privacy, critically assess whether the press should continue to be self-regulating.

Notes:

1. Public figures have a public role and whatever is in this public role is not private.

-- public interest is served when it shows public officials to be corrupt,

inefficient, negligent or dishonest.

2. If you seek good publicity you should be willing to accept invasions of privacy –

the loss of privacy = the price paid for fame, power, wealth and influence.

3. Outline the details of the scandal involving Sarah Ferguson in 1996 when pictures

were taken of her on a private holiday.

4. Most disclosures are sexual – nothing to do with their public role:

But,

a) Any kind of private immorality should disqualify a person from public office.

b) Reveals hypocrisy in what public figures say in public and the way they act in

private e.g. a politician who stands for family values, yet commits adultery.

But how important is it to learn that he/she is a hypocrite?

(i) may not be a hypocrite in all matters.

(ii) few of us live up to the ideals we espouse.

c) An adulterous government minister = distracted.

But then so too is the family man or those that have all-consuming hobbies

e.g. golf.

d) A man who deceives his wife will also deceive his country.

You need to be able to show this to be true.

5. Give an account of the role of the press in making governments accountable.

6. What is in the public interest is not the same as what interests the public.

7. Mere gossip:

But gossip performs a valuable social purpose:

a) Helps define a community and maintain its unity in its shared values.

(i) It tests and rehearses values by exposing conduct that they proscribe.

(ii) It acts as a deterrent by exposing the wrongdoer to publicity, shame

and ridicule.

b) Egalitarian – it demystifies the pretentiousness of public status.

c) We learn the true values of our society – by learning that people cannot live by

these values we are led to re-evaluate our values and ideals – plays valuable

role in the debate about the values our society should have.

8. Describe the case made by J.S. Mill in *On Liberty* that the only purpose for which

power can rightfully be exercised over an individual thereby limiting his

freedoms, including his freedom of expression and information, is to prevent

harm to others.

9. Voyeurism and self-indulging in the frailties of others – only purpose = enjoyment

at someone else’s expense.

10. Deference to the rich and famous may be important in a society – publishing

scandalous stories about their private life may result in demystification, which

may be socially destructive – deference may be an important unifying factor in

a society e.g. Sports people who you may have admired found to be cheating

on their spouse.

11. Give an account of the case involving Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1993, when

pictures were taken of her in a gym, and the courts found that her

confidentiality was breached because she had a tacit contract with the gym.

12. It’s dangerous to suggest that a community shares a single set of values:

a) It is unprogressive and anachronistic – suggesting that we must comply with a

single set of values, rather than a plurality of values.

b) The ruling consensus imposes its values on the rest – re. J.S. Mill ‘tyranny of the

majority’ in *On Liberty* e.g. 1947-56 Sen. McCarthy – House Un-American

Activities Committee.

Answer:

Your plan will no doubt be different from the one below. This is just one possible answer. But you should be able to see why I have edited out some items and how the plan works to produce a coherent essay that moves fluently from the simplest to the more complex arguments.

I decided to omit items 5 and 8 because as they stand they are far too broad to be used in this form in this essay. There may be parts of them that could be useful to quote, but you would have to select the extracts carefully to ensure they are strictly relevant to this question. The same is true of items 3 and 11. These are examples that could be very useful in illustrating points and supporting arguments, but as they stand in the notes they are broad descriptions of the cases, which would not be strictly relevant and would take up too much of the essay.

Plan

In the light of a number of recent high profile complaints about invasion of privacy, critically assess whether the press should continue to be self-regulating.

1. Private individuals who enjoy fame

a) If you seek publicity you should be willing to accept invasions of privacy

– the loss of privacy = the price paid for fame, power, wealth and influence.

b) But deference to the rich and famous may be important in a society –

publishing scandalous stories about their private life may result in

demystification, which may be socially destructive – deference may be an

important unifying factor in a society

e.g. Sports people who you may have admired found to be

cheating on their spouse.

2. Public figures have a public role and power for which they are accountable:

a) Whatever is covered by this public role is not private.

b) Public interest is served when it shows public officials to be corrupt, inefficient,

negligent or dishonest.

3. But what is in the public interest is not the same as what interests the public –

most stories are designed to satisfy the voyeurism of the public, self-indulging

in the frailties of others.

a) The only purpose = enjoyment at someone else’s expense.

b) Most disclosures are sexual – nothing to do with their public role:

But,

(i) Any kind of private immorality should disqualify a person from public

office.

(ii) Reveals hypocrisy in what public figures say in public and the way they

act in private

e.g. a politician who stands for family values, yet commits adultery.

But how important is it to learn that he/she is a hypocrite?

(I) may not be a hypocrite in all matters.

(II) few of us live up to the ideals we espouse.

(iii) An adulterous government minister – distracted.

But then so too is the family man or those that have all-consuming

hobbies e.g. golf.

(iv) A man who deceives his wife will also deceive his country.

But you need to be able to show this to be true.

4. Most is mere gossip.

But gossip performs a valuable social purpose:

a) Helps define a community and maintain its unity in its shared values.

(i) It tests and rehearses values by exposing conduct that they proscribe.

(ii) It acts as a deterrent by exposing the wrongdoer to publicity, shame

and ridicule.

b) Egalitarian – it demystifies the pretentiousness of public status.

c) We learn the true values of our society – by learning that people cannot live by

these values we are led to re-evaluate our values and ideals – plays valuable

role in the debate about the values our society should have.

But this suggests that a community shares a single set of values = dangerous

to suggest this:

(i) It is unprogressive and anachronistic – suggesting that we must

comply with a single set of values, rather than a plurality of values.

(ii) The ruling consensus imposes its values on the rest – re. J.S. Mill

‘tyranny of the majority’ in *On Liberty* e.g. 1947-56 Sen. McCarthy –

House Un-American Activities Committee.

Now do the same for the following essay question – edit the notes and then organise the remaining notes into a plan for the essay.

Essay question:

Is democracy always compatible with individual freedom?

Notes:

1. Democracy in narrow sense = a system of government – merely a mechanism for

decision-making.

2. Democracy in broad sense = a type of society, embracing certain social ideals e.g.

equal political influence, individuals not alienated through social barriers, class

background, schooling, race, religion or wealth.

3. Democracy = a mechanism for protecting the freedoms of the individual to form

and express opinion and exert influence. Essential freedoms =

Speech, assembly, association, movement,

Freedom from arbitrary arrest, particularly if individuals’ opinions embarrass

or conflict with the government,

Freedom of information – restrictions on the extent of official secrecy.

4. Essential to the protection of individual freedom = the work of the European

Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 1951 and the

United Nations Declaration 1948.

5. Society = loose collection of isolated individuals freely competing with each other:

a) Free competition.

b) Free competitive elections – freedom to vote, freedom from interference at

elections, secret ballot.

c) Multi-party politics – parties free to compete with each other – freedom of

choice.

6. Universal adult franchise ensures that in democracy all individuals have the

freedom to vote to protect their freedoms.

7. Freedom = negative and positive:

a) Negative – freedom ‘from’ restraints – restrictions on power of government and

protections for the right of individuals.

b) Positive – freedom ‘to do’ – liberates the individual from socially created

restraints – from ignorance, poverty, ill-health, social deprivations.

8. Outline the protections designed to ensure free and fair elections:

a) The Boundaries Commission ensures that all constituencies are roughly the

same size, so that all voters have equal influence.

b) Equal broadcasting time is given to each major party at elections.

c) Limits are set on how much a party can spend on campaigning and records

must be kept, which are then published to ensure transparency.

9. Competitive individualism leads to concentration of wealth and political influence

– compromises the democratic values of the system:

a) Open membership.

e.g. Selection of parliamentary candidates restricted to certain social class

based on wealth and social connections.

b) Intra-party democracy

e.g. Political parties and pressure groups tend to be oligarchic organisations

in which the middle class tend to dominate and there is restricted

movement up and down the organisation’s structure.

c) Individual involvement in politics.

Modern government is complex, demanding time, interest and effort to

have intelligent participation. Few working people have the time to

participate intelligently, making sure they are well informed and taking part

in discussion.

10. Democracy in the narrow sense has no effective safeguards against the ‘tyranny

of the majority’ (J.S. Mill) – popular appeals to prejudice and emotions that

lead to the persecution of minorities.

11. The doctrine of the Separation of powers ensures that the three branches of

government – the executive, the legislature and the judiciary – are kept

separate to ensure that the government of the day cannot infringe individual

liberties and abuse its power.

12. Democracy is more than a set of institutions:

a) It’s a type of society promoting the full humanity and potential of the

individual by ensuring greater equality of wealth and income and of

political influence.

b) State = the means of liberating the individual from ignorance, poverty, ill-

health, etc. ∴ no need to protect the individual from the state by restricting

the powers of the state – to do so would restrict the capacity of the state to

liberate the individual.

13. Broad sense of democracy involves redistribution of wealth and income from

the affluent to the poor ∴ for those who are wealthy, educated & self-reliant =

reduction of freedom as the poor and disadvantaged increase their freedom.

Answer:

This is an essay question that hinges on the analysis of two interdependent concepts: freedom and democracy. This means that we need to analyse the two concepts and then tackle the essay by using one of these analyses, in this case ‘democracy’, as the overall structure of the essay and then, within each part of this analysis, discuss its impact on freedom as seen from the perspective of each of its interpretations.

I have omitted items 4, 6, 8 and 11, because they are concerned with the practical means by which we ensure freedoms are protected. This question raises conceptual, rather than practical, issues. To use any of these items could lead us to discuss irrelevant issues, which would divert us from the main issues and cloud our arguments with distracting material. The only way to use any of this material would be to select very carefully those points that we can use to illustrate or support our arguments.

Plan

Is democracy always compatible with individual freedom?

1. Democracy is a concept used in two ways:

a) Democracy in narrow sense = a system of government – merely a mechanism

for decision-making.

b) Democracy in broad sense = a type of society, embracing certain social ideals

e.g. equal political influence, individuals not alienated through social

barriers, class background, schooling, race, religion or wealth.

2. Freedom = negative and positive:

a) Negative – freedom ‘from’ restraints – restrictions on power of government and

protections for the rights of individuals.

b) Positive – freedom ‘to do’ – liberates the individual from socially created

restraints – from ignorance, poverty, ill-health, social deprivations.

3. Democracy in the narrow sense:

a) A mechanism for protecting the freedoms of the individuals to form

and express opinion and exert influence. Essential freedoms =

Speech, assembly, association, movement,

Freedom from arbitrary arrest, particularly if individuals’ opinions

embarrass or conflict with the government,

Freedom of information – restrictions on the extent of official secrecy.

b) Society = loose collection of isolated individuals freely competing with each

other:

(i) Free competition.

(ii) Free competitive elections – freedom to vote, freedom from interference

at elections, secret ballot.

(iii) Multi-party politics – parties free to compete with each other – freedom

of choice.

c) But competitive individualism leads to concentration of wealth and political

influence – compromises the democratic values of the system:

(i) Open membership

e.g. Selection of parliamentary candidates restricted to certain social

class based on wealth and social connections.

(ii) Intra-party democracy

e.g. Political parties and pressure groups tend to be oligarchic

organisations in which the middle class tend to dominate

and there is restricted movement up and down the

organisation’s structure.

(iii) Individual involvement in politics

Modern government is complex, demanding time, interest and

effort to have intelligent participation. Few working people have

the time to participate intelligently, making sure they are well

informed and taking part in discussion.

d) Democracy in the narrow sense has no effective safeguards against the

‘tyranny of the majority’ (J.S. Mill) – popular appeals to prejudice and

emotions that lead to the persecution of minorities.

4. Democracy in broad sense:

a) Democracy is more than a set of institutions:

(i) It’s a type of society promoting the full humanity and potential of the

individual by ensuring greater equality of wealth and income and of

political influence.

(ii) State = the means of liberating the individual from ignorance, poverty, ill-

health, etc. ∴ no need to protect the individual from the state by

restricting the powers of the state – to do so would restrict the capacity

of the state to liberate the individual.

b) But broad sense of democracy involves redistribution of wealth and income

from the affluent to the poor ∴ for those who are wealthy, educated & self-

reliant = reduction of freedom as the poor and disadvantaged increase their

freedom.