

Essay Question and Instructions for 2026 AO April Entry (Overseas)

Essay Question

This is a list of short passages quoted from different academic fields. Please select two of them and elaborate your own idea that examines these two viewpoints from one perspective. Also, please explain your academic interest that led you to choose these two passages and explain how your choice can be related to your future studies at SILS.

1. "History is the interpretation of the significance that the past has for us."
(Johan Huizinga, "Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance", Princeton University Press, 1984, p.58)
2. "Like the diverse old-growth forest, a richly differentiated neighbourhood with many kinds of shops, entertainment centres, services, housing options, and public spaces is, virtually by definition, a more resilient and durable neighbourhood ... Like mono-cropped forests, single-purpose districts, although they may initially catch a boom, are especially susceptible to stress. The diverse neighbourhood is more sustainable." (James C. Scott, "Seeing like the State: How certain Schemes to improve the Human Condition have failed" Yale University Press, 1998, p.138)
3. "Language [...] is less an instrument than an impediment. Language dissimulates and distorts as much as it expresses. Language betrays, in the two senses of the verb "to betray": it reveals and it repudiates. The supreme derision: it only reveals by repudiating!" (Vladimir Jankélévitch, Nils F. Schott (tr.), Alexandre Lefebvre (Introduction), "Henri Bergson", Duke University Press, 2015, p.138)

4. “Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.” (Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects”, Bantam Books, 1967, p.9)
5. “A general limitation of the human mind is its imperfect ability to reconstruct past states of knowledge, or beliefs that have changed. Once you adopt a new view of the world (or of any part of it), you immediately lose much of your ability to recall what you used to believe before your mind changed.” (Daniel Kahneman, “Thinking, Fast and Slow”, Penguin Books, 2011, p.202)

Instruction

- Write your essay of around 800 words in English.
- Your essay is a chance to explain yourself to the school and should be completed by yourself. Using generative AI to create this document and presenting it as your own work may be considered as cheating and could affect the evaluation of your application.
- We will not accept any inquiries regarding the essay prompt.

School of International Liberal Studies (SILS)
Waseda University