**Using Case Studies in your Assignments**

**Aim:** This is very much a class on critically analysing what they’re reading as the foundation of them writing a case study assignment. Therefore, it focuses on the reading and thinking elements of using a case study rather than what a case study essay or report looks like as a piece of writing. Students are encouraged to apply a series of critical questions to a case so that they can start thinking about the type of reading that could be integrated with it to analyse further and draw deeper conclusions. To encourage some consideration of racial equity whilst developing these academic skills, the case study used is intended to expose and challenge unconscious bias and possibly negative and homogenised attitudes towards some cultures (slide 8 onwards). It can therefore encourage greater consideration of the diversity that exists within cultures.

**LOs:** Identify the purpose of using case studies

Apply critical questions to a case study

Integrate case studies and other reading

**Level**: All – differentiation can be through depth and extent of questioning

**Duration:** 1 hour (with suggestions for developing it into a longer session)

**Numbers refer to slides**

1. Explain the LOs.
2. 5 minutes to gather ideas with some response to what they say, maybe asking for a little more explanation if needed but no need here to say whether these are ‘correct’ answers or not. This is to get them thinking about the role of case studies in their academic disciplines. The ‘why’ makes it easier for them to use case studies because it becomes less abstract. Their initial comments could also be gathered on post-it notes, on a Google Jamboard etc., which can help more of the group to contribute as these are anonymous.
3. 5 minutes depending on how much they already have said. Maybe emphasise the difference between just a key example that may be referred to and a case study’s in-depth examination. Hopefully this will reinforce or extend their responses – if any of them have made these points, refer back to those students so that they can see that you were listening to them and they’re on the right path. It’d be very tempting to start talking about critical analysis here but launching into that now would miss the foundation of these key features of nature and purpose from which they will start to consider analysis once established. If one of them does refer to critical analysis, great but you could just say that yes, it is critical analysis and you’re moving onto that. Ideally ask them for examples of any types of case study they have already come across or could imagine using.
4. 3-5 minutes depending on how they respond to the question. Just a couple of minutes to move them from defining and explaining case studies to thinking about how they use them and to bring them into the role of critical thinking.
5. 5 minutes with a bit of exemplification for each element. Throughout this, though, ask them for examples of each either from their work or their daily lives (e.g. not trusting everything on Facebook and why, or listening to both sides of a some friends’ argument before deciding whether you should take a side) If they’re not coming through with many, just offer some yourself. If they do use some from their academic work, that’s great, and you could try to think of some relevant examples from their different subject areas, but the everyday is fine and, in fact, helps them see this is something they do already do, which takes some of ‘mystique’ out of critical analysis. It is so often referred to and then seen by students as something so high level that it is almost out of reach, which in itself puts up barriers.
6. 5-7 minutes depending on response levels. This is how to take that general explanation of critical analysis into the specific context of a case study by using the same questioning process. Keep asking the questions to encourage the students’ application of them but leading with some exemplification of your own works well of they’re less confident or if this is the first time they have started to use case studies.
7. 15 -20 minutes including feedback/discussion, asking them for any more explanations, comments, trying to draw out as much analysis as possible but relative to their level of study. Here the students can start applying some of the critical questioning that has been discussed. The case study used here as an example is a health-orientated one, but it has been selected to be accessible to students from all subject areas and because it can gradually trigger the students’ realisation of unconscious bias about Bangladeshi culture, and gender and marriage in particular. As they are working in pairs or small groups in answering the questions, there is also the opportunity for them to start challenging each other in their discussions if one of them considers bias to underly another’s comments. Depending on the specific students present, some lived experience may also be brought out.

The case and the critical questions are provided on the handout. Not all of the questions from the previous slide are included as they require more specialist learning on the topic, and can be considered through guided discussion later on, but the ‘**How** does this remind me of the theories, concepts and other information I have learnt about?’ is there as they could use some general knowledge or relate it to some learning in their own subject. This can all be made explicit to them.

1. 10 - 15 minutes (including showing suggestions on next slide after they have made their own). Get the students to suggest the type of information they may need to complete column 4 - there’s no expectation they will actually know anything yet, but they can work out what they might need to have a better understanding of. You could stress that any case study they really use will be related to a module and so they will have plenty to work with. This is just an exercise to get them thinking about how their analysis will be and needs to be supported by literature. This isn’t about actually writing up their case study at this point though – this class is still part of the ‘gathering and analysing information for your assignment’ stage in the process to get them thinking about their writing comes after this information gathering and analysis stage. It could be good if you live filled in the column as they give suggestions.

It could also be highlighted that when using a case study, just one main factor can be focused on, and so **the social/cultural possible ‘cause’** could be an appropriate one to develop. There are usually a lot of comments from students about the marital dynamic, the possibility of a controlling patriarchal family structure, the potential issues with and within arranged marriages and the fact that after three years, her English is still very limited, suggesting forced isolation. All of this, they often say, means that Shubha’s behaviour is due to depression caused by coercive control. If these are the sort of comments that dominate, explicitly ask them whether they are interpreting the information through unconscious bias. Could it be that although arranged, their marriage is a happy one and the husband is a caring and worried husband and father? We may assume there is dominance and abuse because of a negative and homogenised perception of Bangladeshi arranged marriages and cultural norms but there isn’t actually any evidence of this in the case. Is there possible evidence of the counter-interpretation? This is a chance to deepen their critical thinking – being aware of our own perspectives and biases when analysing a case/piece of research – while stimulating some reflection on where their initial reading of the situation came from. This can therefore expose such biases, challenge them, and encourage greater appreciation of diversity within a culture. It would also offer the opportunity, if relevant, for some students to use their lived experiences to enrich the discussion. Of course, the session is about using case studies and not about this theme but opening the questioning and discussion up exemplifies the thought process deep critical reading requires, modelling it through conversation.

1. 2 minutes to sum up. Stress these are only suggestions based on general knowledge. Ideas for the final column have also been added just to show them where they can go in analysing the case once they know the subject.

If the session is long enough and maybe if the students are at an appropriate level, this activity could be extended by another 15 minutes by providing them with some appropriate reading to push this stage of the process on further – they read and share their reading in groups and develop a fuller version of the grid.

1. 5 minutes as a plenary and to encourage thoughts of how they will apply their learning. Answers can be through a whole group Q and A, a post-it wall, or on something like a Jamboard.