

Book Review Guide

History 1301/1302

M. Little



**Lamar State College-
Orange**

The assignment is to write a "critical" book review (NOTE: Critical does not mean, necessarily, negative. What is meant by a "critical" book review is that, in addition to summarizing the book, you will also identify the author's thesis in the book, and evaluate the success of the author in arguing that thesis.)

Each review should be a MINIMUM of 1200 words and a MAXIMUM of 2400 words in length, typed, and double-spaced (papers below the minimum cannot earn an A on the assignment, and papers far below the minimum will have their grade on the assignment capped at what portion of the minimum length requirement is met. For example, a paper that is only 600 words long will receive a maximum score of 50.

Use a standard 10- or 12-point font and use 1" margins. The book review should be carefully written, thoroughly proofed, and represent your best college level effort.

Students will review the book of their choice from the list of accepted titles owned by the Ron E. Lewis Library at Lamar State College-Orange.

Suggested paper organization

Thesis: Identify the thesis or theses of the book. NOTE: The thesis refers to the author's argument, and generally goes beyond the topic or subject matter. What point is the author trying to make? Demonstrate that you understand the author's purpose in writing the book. (This portion of the paper should be 100-300 words in length. If you wish to think of this assignment in terms of a traditional essay, think of this as the introduction.)

Synopsis: Present a brief overview/summary of the book. Discuss the methods, sources, strengths and weaknesses of the book. Did the author propose new approaches, use any major new documents, propose new interpretations, challenge existing interpretations, rehash old information in new ways? (This portion of the paper could theoretically be anywhere between 600 and 2200 words in length, depending on the length of the other sections; realistically, you should aim for the middle of this range. If you wish to think of this assignment in terms of a traditional essay, think of this as the body.) This portion of the paper should consist of several paragraphs, not just one big paragraph.

Evaluation: Did the author accomplish what he/she set out to do? Was the thesis adequately supported? Was the evidence powerful enough? Of what value or use is the book? Did you enjoy or like the book? Give your judgment of the book: interesting, boring, provocative, significant, or whatever, and explain how or why you came to that conclusion. If you did not like the book, say so, and support your opinion with solid evidence. (This portion of the paper should be 100-300 words in length. If you wish to think of this assignment in terms of a traditional essay, think of this as the conclusion.)

Note: Do not put these formal section headers into your paper. Instead, make the entire paper flow like an essay.