

The object of this exercise is to develop a critical eye for scholarly representations of historical events. Write a 3-4-page (**1300 words, minimum**) review of *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush*, the book by Aims McGuinness

Format: The book review must be typed in 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced; margins should be 1". No cover sheets please. The first page should include a header with your name, assignment identification, course number (HIST 3383), and date.

Guidelines: The review should not be a comprehensive outline of the book; instead, it should be a reflection on the themes, ideas, and arguments of the book. Use a critical point of view. As you write your review, be sure to include an introductory paragraph complete with thesis statement. Do not forget to add a conclusion.

To help you situate the book in its field and develop a critical opinion of it, here is a tip: you might look up some reviews but be sure to cite the source if you draw from any of them; lengthy direct quotes from sources without citations will be treated as plagiarism and dealt with accordingly.

The paper should engage with the following points, though not necessarily in this order, and students are welcome to discuss other aspects, as well:

1. State the central idea or hypothesis of the book, if you can detect one.
2. Summarize the arguments or points the book makes to prove the central idea or hypothesis but be relatively *brief* and concentrated in your summary—don't go on and on restating the argument or the evidence.
3. Describe the kinds of evidence the author uses to prove his points—e.g., is it quantitative (in the form of numbers), and if so, are the sources likely to be reliable?; is it contemporary testimony of historical participants or observers?; is it mostly drawn from modern (present-day) accounts by historians or other scholars (i.e., "secondary sources")?; or is it a combination of these and/or other types of evidence?
4. Discuss the logic of the arguments. Do the conclusions follow from the evidence? Is the reasoning clear? Do the arguments in fact prove the hypothesis, or not? Are the arguments convincing? If not, why not? Is the writing good?
5. Finally, state your opinion of the book. Did you like it? Do you think the book is original? Does it contradict any of what you have read elsewhere, or any ideas you may have held previously? Do any of the conclusions surprise you?