

**Assignment IV: Book Review (10%)**  
**HIST 1200/1201: History and Trump**  
**Due Tuesday, November 14th, by 5:00PM**

A historical book review analyzes and evaluates a scholarly monography. Like a précis, they succinctly summarize the book's content and the author's argument. But critical reviews encompass more than just a synthesis of a book; they offer an extended analysis of the monograph's argument, along with a frank appraisal of its effectiveness and significance. Not just *what* the book does, but: how well does it do it?

**Directions:**

Choose a scholarly monograph related to your research project and write a 4-page book review of the work (1,000 words). For this review, you should clear the title with me prior to beginning work. Be sure and read the book actively, taking notes on each chapter while paying particular attention to the introduction/preface and conclusion chapters. Refer to the handout "How to Read a History Book" for ideas and tips.

1. Introduce the author, the historical period, and the broad topic of the book. Set out the book's main argument.
2. Walk the reader through the book's structure/organization and its sources. How are the chapters organized (chronological, thematic, geographical)? What kinds of evidence do they use (ex. statistics, stories, illustrations, material objects)? What kinds of primary sources do they use? (ex. newspapers, letters, government documents, etc.)?
3. Tell the reader what genre of history this work belongs to or what approach the author has used.
4. What are the scholarly conversations that the author is a part of? Who else are they talking to? How do they position their own book in relation to this previous work? Include a footnote(s) **citing at least two other books or articles** that the author engages, either directly or indirectly.
5. Spend the majority of your review evaluating the book and its argument(s). You need to provide your *own evidence* to back up your particular "take" on the book – give specific examples from the book's text that support your points. You can take any position you want on the book: positive ("This book is great!"), negative ("This book is terrible!"), or in-between ("This book is good, but has some flaws), but you need to make your position explicit and provide the reader with evidence to support it. *Always be specific and give examples.* Each review will be different, but here are some potential ideas:
  - Is the argument and/or purpose of the book clearly stated?
  - Is the argument ultimately persuasive?
  - Does the author provide evidence to support their interpretation? Is that evidence compelling, well-chosen, and accurately interpreted? Is it presented clearly or is it interpreted in misleading ways?
  - How effectively does the author engage with existing scholarship? Does it add to their work? Take away from it? Could they have done more?
  - What's the scope of the book? Are the author's decisions to cover or not cover certain time periods, locations, or themes well-reasoned? Is anything missing?
  - Is there anything unique, unusual, striking, interesting, or new about the author's approach?
  - Is the author's writing compelling and engaging? Did you have an easy time reading it? Do they define any tricky terminology—or does their language devolve into academic jargon?
  - Is the book organized in a way that advances their argument and makes it easy to follow?

- Are there particularly strong or weak chapters (and why)?
- Is the author's argument important or significant? How well do they answer the question of: "so what?"

**Format Guidelines:**

- Evaluations must be submitted as Word documents and must be written in formal English essay form (no bullet points or question formats).
- Include your name and page numbers.
- Include footnote citations for all sources, formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style.