

Book Critique Guidelines

Text requirements. Any of the books I brought in, or which are on the class list, are acceptable. For any other book, please ask me in person or by email whether the choice is appropriate. The chosen text should be relevant to one or more of the topics discussed in class, and needn't necessarily be non-fiction (A fiction book must pertain specifically to class discussion, and you must tie it in to course readings.)

Length and formatting requirements

- Times New Roman, 12 pt font, double spaced, no spaces between paragraphs, include page numbers
- 8-12 pages, 10 pages preferred
- Use parenthetical citations for quotes [for example: (Brown 27)], and include a bibliography—if your text is not directly related to material covered in class, be sure to supplement your analysis with direct and cited references to material read in class.

Content Requirements. Unless you have an alternate format that you pre-approve with me, you should follow the following general format. All of the following page numbers are approximations intended to help you pace your paper—feel free to deviate a bit.

- Page 1 (First 1-2 paragraphs): introduce the book's historical and political context, and outline the topics you will be focusing on (and your evaluation of those topics)
- Pages 2-4: outline the book, using both your own language and short quotes from the text. This is intended primarily to demonstrate that you read the entire book. Be sure to connect at least some of the themes or content from your book to material covered in our class.
- Pages 5-9: analyze 1-3 specific chapters, themes, or topics in greater depth. Feel free either to agree or disagree (or agree in part, etc.), but be sure to back up your claims with evidence, either from the text, in your own words, or from other sources.
- Page 10: conclusion. Reconnect the topics raised in your book to some of the recurring themes we have discussed in class

Grading. This will to some extent be contingent on the book you choose and how you address its arguments. Generally, however, I will use the following template to grade your papers

- 30%: grasp of the book's main arguments, and a clear sense that you actually read and engaged with the book intellectually
- 30%: critical analysis of 1-3 specific themes in the book. (If you choose to analyze only one theme, chapter, or topic, a greater level of depth is expected. The inverse is also true.) Specifically, what I'm looking for here is for you to lay out the author's arguments, and examine them one by one relative to what you've learned in class
- 30%: use of material from class to connect your book's arguments with the topics discussed in the readings. (this % may be less, depending on how directly related your text is to the material discussed in class—the more directly related your book is, the less you need to draw on material from class—although you are still encouraged to do so.) This can be done either in its own section of your paper or, preferably, interspersed throughout your analysis
- 10%: fluidity and coherence of your overall paper and argument