

Book Reviews – Revolutionary Russia

Each essay should be a short two-page assessment of the book's argument, methodology, and evidence used. Ask yourself what kinds of questions does the book attempt to answer, why, and how? What can we learn (or not learn) from the author's approach to the given historical question? What kinds of questions does the author ask about his or her sources, and why? What do you find particularly convincing or unconvincing about the author's arguments? Is there anything that strikes you as particularly effective/ineffective about the author's methodology? Finally, include at least two or three interesting questions you feel the book raises.

Your review should include some summary of the author's important theses, but the more analytical your approach the better. Weaving narrative and analysis together is more art than science. The best guideline is to think carefully about the questions you ask about the material. Answering "what" questions yields description. Answering "why" questions yields analysis. If, when you answer a "what" question, you follow by explaining "why," then chances are you're doing this right!

Students looking for an example of a good book review are better off looking in publications writing for a broad audience than in scholarly journals (which expect readers to have highly specialized knowledge). There are a lot of good examples online and at the bookstore. Pick one up and read a review about something – anything - that interests you. Here are a few:

- The Los Angeles Review of Books (free, online, and open-access)
- The Marginalia Review of Books (free, online, and open-access)
- The Sunday book supplement to the NY Times
- The Times Literary Supplement
- The London Review of Books
- The New York Review of Books

You are free to read the scholarly reviews available on J-Stor, Project Muse, and elsewhere, but doing so should never substitute for reading the book itself. If you do use another source, be sure to cite it. If you rely on other reviews for your analysis I will likely be able to tell that you are doing so.

I expect all papers to have footnotes and to use the proper citation method for history – **CHICAGO**.

Finally, don't forget about my writing guide. Read it, read it again... then read it again.