

Book Review Criteria

There are three books assigned for this course. Each one deals with a different part of the Southwest, a different aspect of life or culture, and each is written from a different perspective. They are intended to be a sample of the diverse literature on the region. None needs to be digested and/or "studied" in-depth for any exam. They are all "easy reading" as well as being informative.

Each student is responsible for reading the books and writing a **critical assessment** of the content of each in terms of how it relates to the focus of the course, "land and life" historically in the Southwest. Certain things should be emphasized in the review.

Discuss the extent to which the book achieves the course goal. How **sufficiently** does the book portray people and their relationship to the land (land being defined loosely to include territory, water, flora, fauna, etc.).

Critique the **authenticity** of the book. Here, you should pay special attention to the writer's goal, audience, background (educational as well as ethnic), and perspective. Biases should be discussed.

State how **your understanding**, attitudes, or perception of the Southwest has been changed by the book.

Integrate information, ideas or materials discussed in class or with which you are personally familiar from other courses, experiences, etc.

Be **creative** in your writing. Please do not simply write one paragraph each on sufficiency, authenticity, understanding, and integration. Give your reviews some thought, and use this as an opportunity to be personally expressive and professionally convincing.

This is not necessarily an easy assignment. These are **NOT** "book reports." They are "critical assessments." The literary definition of *critical* is: "Characterized by careful, exact evaluation and judgment." Being critical in this sense does not mean to find fault with or to denigrate. Judgment is the key term here. One definition of *judgment* is: "The capacity to form an opinion by distinguishing and evaluating." Another is: "An opinion formed after consideration or deliberation." Being judgmental in this sense does not mean to cast dispersions upon. The operative here is "*opinion*." Opinion is defined as: "A judgment based on special knowledge and given by an expert; a judgment or estimation of the merit of a thing; and a conclusion held with confidence but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof." Opinion should not be confused with some visceral emotion, whim, or caprice. In sum, the assignment is for you to render your opinion, to evaluate each book carefully, with deliberation, using your special knowledge, before passing judgment in regard to the theme of this course.

Each review should be 500-700 words in length, or approximately 2-3 double-spaced pages in 12-point font with normal margins.

Do not take up a lot of space with unnecessary information. *Do not use a cover sheet.*

Head each review with one line containing the book's title and your name, nothing else.

Submit your reviews in pdf.