

Book Review Guidelines

Men & Masculinities

Book reviews are an opportunity to explore one or more books on a topic in a well-defined, but necessarily limited way. The goal of any well-written book review should be to take the reader of the review through the major argument or arguments of the book with a critical eye, enabling readers of the review to locate the book within scholarly traditions.

Reading for a Book Review

Every book has its own architecture—some more standard than others. A large argument is based upon the coherent linking together of several smaller arguments, each of which is argued through the exposition of some findings or theoretical analysis that prove the point. As you read, it's a good idea to keep track of a few things that will be helpful in writing a review.

1. What is the really big argument that the author is trying to make?
2. What are the small arguments that the author claims add up to the larger argument? Are you convinced that the larger idea the author is forwarding is held up by these smaller arguments? Why or why not? (This is also a good place to consider any key terms that the author uses or has coined to address a given issue or phenomenon. How do they add to our existing understandings?)
3. Does the book have a clear and significant argument and methodology?
4. What types of evidence does the author rely on to demonstrate his or her central claims? Are you convinced? Why or why not?

As you read for these elements in the book(s) you're reviewing, a good book review is already taking shape. Summarizing these central elements of a book is the essence of a great book review.

Writing a Book Review

While it's not always true, many successful book reviews roughly mirror the organization of the book or books being reviewed. Consider how the book is organized and why the author might have chosen to organize the text in this way. This practice can help you consider how to organize your review of the book. A typical book review is approximately 700 words (*Men & Masculinities* requires book reviews to be 600-800 words). Below is rough guide to writing book reviews. The guide is not intended to be used verbatim necessarily (though you are welcome to if you find it helpful); rather, it is better thought of as a list of best practices.

1. **Introductory Paragraph**—Situate the author and the book within larger scholarly frames of reference. What is at stake here? Why should scholars of men and masculinities be interested in this work? Grab the reader's attention right away, locating the book in established debates and controversies.

2. Get to the point right away. Within the first 2 paragraphs, it's important to try to explicitly state the primary argument of the book. E.g., "Smith's main argument revolves around/centers on/is..." What is the larger point of this book and why should readers care?
3. Within the third and fourth paragraphs, you should be getting at the scaffolding of the larger argument of the book. Answering these questions can help you fill out the middle of the review: What are the lesser arguments (key findings, terms, theories, or ideas) that lead up to the larger argument in the book? What is the evidence that the author relies on to make her/his/their case? How do these smaller arguments relate to the larger issue or idea with which the book is concerned? Ensure that as you answer these questions in your review, you are enumerating them in a way that readers will be able to follow the plan of the book. A good rule to try to follow is to present authors' findings in ways that you believe the author would find fair.
4. Does it add up for you? Within the 4th or 5th paragraph—and after explaining to readers what the book is actually about—you can write about whether or not you are convinced by the author's arguments? Presenting critiques in fair and kind ways goes a long way here. But, it is a chance for you to disagree with the claims of the book if you feel they are inaccurate, overstated, misguided, or something else. Conversely, this is also a space in which you can explain why you loved the book, and what specifically you found so interesting, convincing, or revolutionary about the argument or idea.
5. Concluding Paragraph—Exit a review by returning to the biggest issues at stake in the book. Suggest what is yet to be done in this field or stress the accomplishments of this book in particular within one corner of studies on men and masculinities. Readers ought to finish your review with a good sense of where this book fits with other work in the field. You provide this information to help the reader situate the book relative to ongoing theory and research.

A Note on Anthologies and Edited Volumes: We suggest that you summarize the overall theme of the collection, emphasizing what you find most significant about it. Avoid simply listing chapters and contributors. Instead, look for themes/methods that are common across the collection, and indicate the worth of particular chapters as well as the volume as a whole. So, it is perfectly acceptable, for instance, to focus your review on a few select chapters that highlight the theme of the book more generally and provide a sense of the range of work within (perhaps the introduction and 2-3 chapters). This might help you discuss the general contribution and argument in better detail, while tying this to some of the key themes throughout other chapters.

Editing Your Own Review

Because book reviews are required to be relatively short pieces of writing, editing your own work can go a long way toward ensuring that the material you've included accomplishes the task of reviewing the book (or books) you were asked to review. While these are probably good strategies for editing any work, they take on a great level of importance in book reviews because of the extremely limited space in which you must review the book:

- ✓ In reading over your review once it is written, ask yourself, “Is this necessary to review this book?” throughout your reading. Getting rid of unnecessary words, sentences and paragraphs can often free up space to help you more clearly articulate the central premise of the book.
- ✓ Is my review clear? Ask yourself whether you have offered a fair summary of the book early on in the review in plain language.
- ✓ If you did present a critique of the book, take note of how much review space your criticism offers compared with a summary of the book itself. You were asked to review this book because of your expertise in the area of study; so your criticism is valuable. But, reviews that are primarily about the reviewer and less about the book being reviewed are less valuable. Give readers a lengthy explanation of the book and its argument first so that they can evaluate your critique as well.

Format & Style

- ✓ Your review should be double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1 inch margins on all sides.
- ✓ Your review should begin with a bibliographic citation of the book(s) you are reviewing, and this ought also to be double-spaced. If you are unaware of the price of the book, you can typically find this information at the publisher’s website. Follow the format of the example below:

Mark Anthony Neal

Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities. New York, NY: New York University Press.

2013. 207 pp. \$24.00 (paper). ISBN: 9780814758366.

- ✓ Instead of italics, please underline book titles, and other text you wish to appear italicized in your review.
- ✓ Please adhere to the assigned length limits for your review: 600-800 words for a single book review and 1000-1200 for a two-book review essay. The word limits for essays comprising more than two books will be negotiated with the author. Should you exceed the word limit, the editors reserve the right to edit your review to fit the space available.
- ✓ Citations to work not under review is discouraged. When absolutely necessary, include the cited references at the end of the review.
- ✓ Use direct quotes sparingly, and avoid quoting sources other than the book under review. When quoting the book, be sure that the quote appears exactly as it did in the original and include the page number(s) as in the following example (note the underlined word, indicating an italicization in the quoted work):

“There is very little to endorse any overall masculinity in crisis thesis other than to say that Masculinity is perhaps partially constituted as crisis” (p. 24).

- ✓ Your name and affiliation will appear at the beginning of your review beneath the reference for the book being reviewed (see above) and with left justified alignment. Your name should be underlined and in ALL CAPS, and your institutional affiliation should be underlined as well. Please also state the word count at the outset of your review as in the following example:

BETSY H. ACADEMIC

University of Anywhere

(723 words)

Submission Guidelines

If you are invited to review a book and agree, an online account will be made for you and you will receive an email indicating the book you are assigned to review, the deadline, and details about the submission process. Once you have completed your review, you will need to upload it using the Sage online submission system (Manuscript Central).

If you are submitting a review of a book that is unsolicited, please submit it electronically at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jmmx>.

In either case, when we receive your review, the book review editors will edit it for clarity, length, and grammar. Minor edits will be returned to the author for your approval. When major revisions are necessary, the editors will return the review with a list of requested changes. Once the editing process is complete, the editorial office will contact you with page proofs, and a written contract between you and *Men & Masculinities* requiring your signature.

If you are unable to complete the review within 90 days of receiving the book, please let us know promptly so that we can arrange an extension with you or find another reviewer if appropriate. If, for any reason, you decide that you are an inappropriate reviewer, please let us know as soon as you are able.

If you have any questions, please contact us at MenandMasculinities@ucsb.edu, or contact the Book Review Editor directly (see below).

Thanks very much. We look forward to reading your review!

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