

## **BOOK REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **Mechanics:**

Reviews should be always be double-spaced with ragged right margin, and printed in 12 point type, preferably Times New Roman. They should be written in an awareness of style; that is, they should be well-organized and written in accordance with the rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

### **Author:**

To understand the book and its thesis, it is often important to know something about the author, his/her educational background, and the historical school to which he/she may belong. This sort of information is usually available in such publications as Who's Who, The Dictionary of American Scholars, The Dictionary of National Biography, and Contemporary Authors. An author's academic credentials, publications, and major interests can often reveal his/her prejudices and predilections and therefore the approach that he/she may have taken to the subject at hand.

### **Purpose:**

Book reviews are critical analyses of books. No good review merely summarizes a book. A good review assesses how well or how poorly an author accomplishes what he/she set out to accomplish. A good review addresses the following questions:

1. What is the author's thesis? Does the book even have a thesis?
2. Why is the author writing the book? How do his/her arguments differ from other scholars in the same field?
3. How does the author approach the subject? Is the book a highly analytical presentation or simply a descriptive narrative? How is the book organized? Chronologically? Topically?
4. Is the book biased or balanced in its presentation? (Again, knowledge of the author will be helpful here.)

### **Other Reviews:**

It is permissible to consult the opinions of other critics. But students should not rely too heavily on the perceptions of other reviewers. For scholarly reviews of historical works, see such publications as Book Review Digest, Review of Reviews, William and Mary Quarterly, Journal of the Early Republic, The English Historical Review, Journal of American History, American Historical Review, and Journal of Southern History.