

Sophomore Scholars Seminar
Madrid Cohort
Fall 2022

Evaluating Secondary Sources:
Writing a Book Review

Regardless of your field of study, one of the components of your research project will be reading and analyzing the work of scholars who have come before you. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to approach those sources with a critical eye and not simply to take them at face value because they may have been written by authorities. It is always important to analyze a source for what it is rather than for who wrote it or the form that it takes.

For our final meeting of the semester, you will read your free-choice book and write a book review.

Just like an essay, a book review should not be a laundry list of comments and ideas but rather should cohere around a theme or an idea that you identify as important.

In your review, you might want to consider some of the following questions as they relate to your central theme, thesis or idea:

1. What is the overall purpose of the book? For what readership is it written? (The preface, acknowledgements, bibliography and index can be helpful in answering these questions.)
2. What is the author's thesis?
3. With what general problems or concepts does the work engage?
4. What kinds of evidence does the author use?
5. Are you convinced by the author's argument? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Who do you think might benefit from reading this book?
7. What are your own reactions to and considered opinions about the book?