

## **Book Review Guidelines**

### ***Steps in preparing your book review:***

- 1) read these guidelines
- 2) choose a book that is appropriate to the class, clear book with the instructor to assure that it is suitable for the assignment
- 3) read the book! Use 'Post-its' to mark sections of the book you may want to refer to later in writing your review. Jot down pertinent phrases or sentences that you that you may want to return to when you start to write your review (don't forget to record the page number)
- 4) be sure to proofread and revise your review before turning it in.

### ***Purpose and Organization:***

The purposes of a book review are to give the reader a general overview of the book and how it is organized and to critically evaluate its contents. Book reviews are written to let the reader know 1) if they are interested in the topic and 2) whether the book is worth reading or not. Examples of how to write a scholarly book review can be found in any of the major academic journals (for geography examples see: *Annals, Association of American Geographers, Professional Geographer, Geographical Review, Progress in Physical Geography, Progress in Human Geography* among others).

A book review typically has four parts: introduction, description, evaluation, critique. These do not need to be discreet sections in your review, they can be integrated, but all must be present.

- 1) An introduction tells the reader who wrote the book, why the book was written, the intended audience, and the purpose of the book. (The book's preface, forward, introduction, and/or acknowledgements sections are particularly useful for gleaning this information.) Is this the author's first book, or is the author building on a long career of scholarship? Is it published by an established academic press, a popular press, or an alternative publishing house?
- 2) The description of the book includes an overall summary of what the book is about and how it is organized. You can also briefly summarize each chapter or section. Does the book include figures, tables, charts, or maps? What is the intellectual/theoretical framework or guiding philosophy of the book?
- 3) Evaluation of the book should comment on both the book as a whole as well as how the parts of the book fit together (text, organization, bibliography, index, figures, tables, etc.). Are the methods of analysis and information sources sound and reliable? Does the data and analysis support the text and the conclusions? Do the figures, etc., support or detract

from the narrative? Are the index and bibliography useful? Is the book well edited, or are there typographical errors? What are the books strengths and weaknesses?

- 4) Critique: what are the author's stated or implied goals and has he or she met them? Are there major gaps in the narrative or the analysis? Is the argument logical and coherent? Do the author's biases interfere with reasonable analysis? Is the work an original and significant contribution to the discipline and/or to geography? Finally, what is your overall recommendation to the reader (and why?)?

***Format:***

Put your name, the title of the course, and the term in the upper right hand corner. (Do not use a cover page.)

This should be followed by a complete citation of the book:

Author's last name, author's first name. Date. *Title of book (underlined or italicized)*. Place of publication: Publisher. Number of pages.

Example:

Cosgrove, Denis. 1993. *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and Its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Begin your book review after the citation.

Double space, 1 inch margins, 12 point font. Length should be about 1000 words (4 typed pages).