

## Historiographical Review

**What is an historiography?** While the book review assignment analyzed two individual works and their theses, a historiographical review identifies themes or developments among a number of works. For a helpful discussion of the historiographical essay, especially of the need to organize it around a thesis, see pp. 32-34 of Rampolla.

**Assignment: Write a historiographical review of 3-4 pages. In total, you must review *either* three books *or* two books and two articles. You may include the books/articles you reviewed for the book review.**

**Overview:** Core Assignment #3 has three major goals:

1. To discern, explain, and assess the arguments of individual historical works.
2. To identify themes or developments among a number of historical works.
3. To make an argument about the historical literature that relates to your topic.

Make sure you include *all* of the following components in your historiography:

**Relation to topic:** All of the works under review must relate to your topic of historical inquiry. They might represent different approaches to your topic, different aspects of the history of your topic, or examples of other scholars' approaches to similar topics. You must make clear how each work relates to your historical question.

**Thesis:** By contrast with the book review, a historiographical essay is organized around a thesis. The bulk of your paper will be devoted to proving this thesis. This thesis can take several forms. Possible forms include the identification of a *theme* in the historiography, the identification of a *development* in the historiography or the identification of common *approaches* to a particular topic.

- Theme: Since X book was published in [YEAR], the scholarship on [TOPIC] has been organized around [CONCEPT]
- Development: In the past Y years, scholarship on [TOPIC] has changed in the following ways...
- Approaches: Books [X], [Y] and [Z] each approach [TOPIC] from different perspectives, but are united by...

**Analysis of individual historical works:** Your historiography must include *brief* analyses (a few sentences) of the historical works under review. In these analyses, it is imperative that you identify the author's approach, argument, and relationship to a broader historiography.

**Compare/Contrast:** In order to illustrate how each work relates to the broader historiography, you must explicitly compare and contrast the approaches, arguments and evidentiary uses of the works under review. In doing so, you will discuss points of convergence among these works as well as points that are in dispute.

**Historical question:** Finally, a historiographical review should position your historical question in terms of other writing on your topic. You should clearly and explicitly explain how your historical question fills a hole or offers a new approach to your particular topic.