

Yovanna Pineda, History Department, WAC Fellow  
Low, Medium, and High Stakes Assignments

### **Low Stakes –**

#### **Conventions of the History Discipline: Citing Sources and Differentiating between Primary and Secondary Sources (Low Stakes)**

In the History discipline, your chosen sources are essential for the reader to understand how you (the historian) developed your interpretations and perspective. As you collect and organize your sources, use the Chicago Manual Style to format your selected primary and secondary sources.

Your assignment is to organize and list the primary and secondary sources you plan to use in your final paper. In a separate paragraph discuss which ones you think are primary and secondary sources, and explain why they fit in each category. Up to 50pts for completed assignment and 20pts for peer review participation.

### **Medium Stakes –**

#### **Conventions of the History Discipline: Discussing Sources in an Annotated Bibliography and Describing Methods**

Historians are naturally curious people. They are interested in the primary and secondary sources you used AND in the methods you utilized to find these sources. This helps them clarify how you came to your final argument. This is how historians can follow your work, and agree with or argue against you. Assume you are writing your annotated bibliography and methods section for a group of peer historians interested in your sources and how you obtained them. Use the Chicago Manual Style to format your selected primary and secondary sources.

Your assignment is to list the source, briefly describe it (one line or two) and explain how this source will be valuable to your research (2-3 lines). After you've completed your annotated bibliography, write a page on the methods you developed to find these sources. Up to 75 pts for a carefully cited, formatted, and discussed Annotated Bibliography and up to 25 pts for a discussion of your methods.

## **Writing Guidelines for Historiographical Essays**

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This guideline should assist you in developing the essays. A quick tip in most historiographical essays is to be suspicious: question interpretations and author's motives and understand their perspectives through the use of their sources (evidence).

### **General Guidelines:**

- \*Standard font and 1.5 to double spaced papers
- \*Do not summarize the author's words. Focus on the central argument of the book
- \*When you present and write, feel free to compare and contrast with previous readings
- \*Avoid black and white qualitative judgments
- \*Avoid long quotes: it's not only boring but this is your analysis so *own* your words
- \*Avoid colloquial language

### **What you should be doing when you read and prepare for class and for your essays:**

You should be actively reading: take notes, pause after each chapter to reflect on the reading, and take more notes. Make sure to keep your notes in one safe place because you'll be using these notes to write papers and prepare for exams.

#### ***Know your author***

Read the preface. In it, the author will tell you the grants she received, who she thanks, and who she knows. She might even tell you the name of her thesis advisor. In that event, you begin to scratch the surface of her potential bias. Also, it's important to know if this is the first book or the tenth book of the author.

\*TIP: In a historiographical essay, you want to highlight the potential bias of the author.

#### ***Read for Argument***

In the introduction, determine the author's major themes and main argument. Read the introduction with particular care because this is often where historians present their theses, set forth the questions they want to answer, and outline the structure of their argument. (I should say that publishers REQUIRE the author to be clear in the introduction.)

\*TIP: In the essay, sum up the author's argument in a sentence or two. Think about the strengths and weaknesses of the argument as you read the book. Which parts sound convincing, which are less so?

#### ***Evaluate the Evidence***

If you tend to fall asleep while reading, it's time to turn the book over and examine the appendices, bibliography, and endnotes. Ask yourself, what kind of evidence does the author provide to support his arguments? Does the author rely on quantitative evidence, written documents, material artifacts,

or other historians? Does the author borrow ideas or concepts from other disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, economics, or psychology? Do you think the evidence is reliable? Does it prove the author's major conclusions? Are there other conclusions you could reach from the same evidence? Does the author ignore evidence that you think is important? What might be missing in the author's presentation? What other questions might he have asked in the book?

***Determine the author's point of view and purpose in writing***

What was the purpose of this book? Why do you think the book was published? Why did the author take a particular point of view? How do the author's biases influence her argument? How is the author's point of view different from yours?

***Style***

Comment on writing style, was the book written in a persuasive style? Was it written in a clear manner or was it daunting and thickly filled with jargon? Could you tell if the author felt passionate about his topic of research?

Note: Style might be obstructed in translations; be a little forgiving when it's a translated book.

**Resources and Tools:**

***UCF Library Indexes and databases specific to Latin America and the Caribbean***

Contact the UCF reference librarian for additional information.

Are you stuck and can't think of anything to critique? Find the book reviews on your book to help you think about how to critique the work.

Chicano database, 1960-current

Clase/periodica, 1975-current

Ethnic NewsWatch

Handbook of Latin American Studies (Library of Congress)

HAPI (Hispanic American Periodicals Index), 1970-Current / This will be useful for searching citations to book reviews.

Informe!, 1994-Current