Book Review Writing Guide1

Make sure that you understand not just the basics of the storyline but also the historical themes that the author may be connecting to in the book o For example – if a book is about a ship lost at sea, does the author also talk about sailing during the time period or the types of men who went to sea? - A review is not the same as a book report, a review requires you to “report on the content of the text and your response to it but also assess its strengths and weaknesses”2 o Be specific – if you did not like a book you need to explain your reasoning. Likewise if you enjoyed the book specifically explain why. Use examples from the reading (not necessarily quotes).

* For example – I enjoyed this book because it was interesting – is not enough – I enjoyed this book because the author brought to life the conditions of the poor in 19th century America by describing housing, work conditions, and diets --- is a much better explanation. - There is no right or wrong way to organize your book reviews. Suggestion
* Summarize the book and explain the thesis (main point)
* Briefly discuss the most important evidence or elements of the book – do not include every action or activity, it is up to you to choose only the most important details
* Explain the author’s perspective, why did they think this book was important enough to write
* Evaluate the historical sources that the author used, in your opinion were they appropriate and did they support the main points of the book
* You can also share who might find the book useful and why - The challenge of the assignment is to be thorough and brief at the same time – do not shrink the font or the margins etc… to make room for more words. - If you quote the book or another source please use the citation format of Chicago Manual of Style. I have provided you an example of that here – to show you where I got some of the information and the quote in this handout.

1 Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 7th edition, (Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2012), 27, 36-37. 2 Ibid. 36-37.