

# History 307 Historical Problem Paper

Professor Chad Black

Due Tuesday, February 28. In hard copy or email by the start of class.

3–5 pages maximum, double spaced

The purpose of this assignment is to enable you to begin to build your secondary source base for the research proposal you will be preparing this semester and the research paper you'll be writing next semester.

Choose a secondary source (monographs required) related to your general topic, identify the historical problem(s) it grapples with and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the book with respect to structure, argument and standards of evidence. What is the book's object of research, what is the subject of its argument, and (how) does it narrate its claims? The task at hand is to turn those questions on a piece of scholarship that bears directly on your own research interests.

This is a critical review, not a descriptive recap. You need to characterize the work that the book does, assess its successes and limits, and offer an analytical argument about its accomplishments. Your essay should end with a paragraph on how the book is useful to you as you think about shaping your own possible research topic.

We have no class on February 21 so that you have some breathing time from the course readings to do this assignment. I expect that what you turn in on the 28th of February will not be a first draft. You have been assigned a writing group from our class (see below) to whom you will give a first draft of the paper, from whom you will get feedback, and for whom you will do the same.