

**HUM 653**  
**DOCTORAL PROJECT I:**  
**FOUR BOOK REVIEWS**

Individual Directed Study  
Course [Instructor Info Here]

Book reviews in academic journals are important vehicles for academic exchange, as well as professional validation. Book reviewing also provides preliminary exposure to and practice within the realm of journal publication, and can assist students in building publishing profiles useful for later article submissions. Just as students must be guided through proper dissertation processes, so must they be guided through the protocols of book review preparation and publishing.

Book reviewing is not only evaluative but analytic. The reviewer writes not simply from a standpoint of opinion but a position of general expertise on a subject. The book review provides informed background on the general subject area and an overview of related writings on the subject, as well as discussion of the book's weaknesses and strengths.

Ph.D. students rarely follow academic book reviews on their own. Even when assigned book reviews as course reading, few acquaint themselves with academic journal culture until they attempt to publish in journals. Early guidance through the academic book reviewing process is particularly crucial given growing demands for shorter time to degree completion, and the increasing pressure of the academic job market.

In this individual directed study, the student explores the culture of the academic journal book review while writing four book reviews of 500 to 1000 words (approximately two to four pages). Book reviews may be submitted for publication.

**NOTES**

- *This syllabus provides general guidelines for this individual directed study course. Assignment dates may be scaled by instructor to fit Summer Session parameters, or otherwise adjusted as needed.*
- **Blackboard Shell:** *A shell will be generated in the Instructor's Blackboard page after the course is approved. The instructor needs to upload the syllabus on Blackboard and submit the final grade through Ulink.*

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 or Summer Session Equivalent: Introduction**

Discuss with instructor the general subject areas in which you plan to seek books for review; the relation of those subject areas to your prospective dissertation topic, or dissertation-in progress; and the suitability of this plan to your projected academic profile at large.

### **Week 2 or Summer Session Equivalent: Journal and Book Review Survey (5%)**

Read Gregory Semenza, *Graduate Study in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, "Publishing" (book available in Slavin Library). Locate six journals in your areas of general expertise (ex.: *Nineteenth Century Literature*) or specific expertise (ex.: *The Henry James Review*) that publish book reviews. Write a 150-word-minimum report on each, including: general makeup of editorial board (faculty from major institutions?); general makeup of contributors (both faculty and students?); frequency of publication (twice yearly? quarterly?); general nature of material covered (single-disciplinary? interdisciplinary? textual? historical? critique of other criticism?); intellectual scope, general nature and writing tone of reviews (surveying topic and related books in a broad manner? focusing on topic and related books in highly focused manner? highly theoretical? more fact-based? jargon-filled? approachable?); recommended practice for determining books for review (list in journal? independent choice?); general submission guidelines. In addition, choose two book reviews in each journal, and write a 150-word-minimum report on each book review, including intellectual scope, general nature and writing tone of reviews (surveying topic and related books in a broad manner? focusing on topic and related books in highly focused manner? highly theoretical? more fact-based? jargon-filled? approachable?); recommended practice for determining books for review (list in journal? independent choice?); general submission guidelines.

### **Week 3 or Summer Session Equivalent: Book Review Project Plan (5%)**

Choose four books *as if* for review, each aimed at one journal *as if* it was intended for submission. Determine final choices of books and projected journals with instructor.

### **Week 4 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 5 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 6 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 7 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 8 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 9 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 10 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

### **Week 11 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

**Week 12 or Summer Session Equivalent: Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

**Week 13 or Summer Session Equivalent: (5%) Writing Installment (5%)**

Writing installment due.

**Week 14 or Summer Session Equivalent: Reviews, with Cover Letters (10% each; 40% total)**

Completed versions of all four book reviews due. Cover letter for each review, *as if* for journal submission, also due for instructor feedback.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** To gain crucial background and skills for successful journal article writing and publication; to produce one article that informed by the nature of journal publishing.

**CURRICUAR REQUIREMENTS FULFILLED:** Required Humanities Ph.D core course. 3 credits.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN:** 12 short research and writing assignments, 5% each. Four completed book reviews of 500 to 1000 words (approximately two to four pages each), 10% each (40% total).