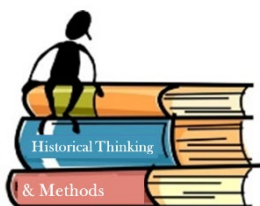


## Progress Reports Guidelines, Rubric & Samples



Dr. L. M. Stallbaumer-Beishline

**Goals of assignment:** to promote a dialogue between you and I about the progress that you are making on your historiography project; to engage in pre-writing.

"... knowing how to read something results almost automatically from knowing why we are reading, and without some purpose, reading is an aimless activity."<sup>1</sup>

### Directions for the Progress Reports

- Progress Reports do not summarize books or journal articles that you are reading. For a book, you would focus on the portions relevant to your topic (unless the whole book is relevant), and you will explain authors' theses, how authors' support interpretations, and discuss the plausibility of the interpretation relevant to your project. If an entire book is relevant, you will focus on chapters. You will also explain your progress and struggles throughout. As your reading deepens, you might also start describing patterns of interpretation.
- With each progress report, you are expected to show that you have studied two or more separate books or articles that are relevant to completing the historiography -- no tertiary sources, no primary sources, and potentially no amateur histories (discuss this issue with your professor).
- Throughout the cumulative progress reports, you must discuss at least five monographs by focusing on the portion relevant to your topic. For example, if my historiography question is to explore how historians interpret Hitler's role in the origins of the final solution, and I have read a biography of Hitler. My progress report would avoid discussing the biographer's description of Hitler's personal life, etc. My progress report would identify the author's interpretation of Hitler's role in the decision to exterminate European Jews and how they use evidence to support major assertions.
- Push yourself to discuss more than two secondary sources in each progress report. Doing only the minimum each week adds up to only 10 journal articles or books.
- Written in the first person, describe the progress of your research in 1-3 pages typed, single-spaced. Your progress reports are an informal writing assignment that will not be graded for grammar, etc., but informal is not an excuse for superficiality.

Partial Example of Unacceptable Submission:

Alex Alvarez's *Native America and the Question of Genocide* (2014) looks at several examples of the massacre of Native Americans and compares that to our understanding of genocide. He also examines US government policies towards indigenous people, how education as assimilation was pursued to arrive at conclusions about whether it reached the point of genocide. He supports his argument by sharing details of several massacres and compares them to the definition of genocide.

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj, *Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in all Disciplines* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 124.

- As you submit more reports, I would expect more comparisons to occur with earlier writings. The final report might even take the form of a draft!
- Submitted to instructor through **BOLT → Dropbox saved as .doc or .docx** (All students have access to Office 365, even Mac users.)

### Required Content of the Progress Report:

- Identify your project in the form of a historiographical question. If you have refined, narrowed, or expanded your question, please note that and explain why.
- Explain why you decided to select these particular readings for this week. It may be as mundane as the only thing available or you needed to make your reading load light in a particular week because of other course demands (don't use these reasons more than once or twice or you are falling behind!).

### For Each Book or Journal Article

- Type the citation as it would appear in your final bibliography.
  - Provide full bibliographic information according to the guidelines provided by Turabian, figure 16.1 (B=Bibliography, p. 151-153) offer the most common citation formats as a quick reference. Chapters 15 and 16 also discuss principles and variations (e.g. multiple authors, chapters within an edited collection)
- For each book or article, briefly describe anything that you have discovered about the author through their work that might shed light on their expertise or working assumptions.
  - These inferences might be made from rhetorical tone of writing, prefaces, acknowledgments, their explanation for why they embarked on their research, their historiography review, etc.
- Explain the authors' theses and their goals for writing within the context of your reading goals. Often an individual author, especially in monographs, may be advancing several interpretations. In the best practice sample below, the historiographic question is "how have historians interpreted Hitler's role in the origins of the final solution?" In reading the articles for the mini-historiography and comparing it to the sample below, you will notice that the student limited their analysis to how historians interpreted Hitler's role even though the historian's interpretations were not limited to this subject. Notice what is not discussed in the sample below.
- Identify **HOW** the authors' prove their thesis/theses or accomplish their goals (if they do). Be specific and focus on what is most essential to your topical interests unless the manner of proof reveals something about the author's working assumptions or quality of research.
- What is the author using to prove their thesis?
  - Primary sources ideally from a variety of perspectives that corroborate. Avoid making generic statements such as "they supported their interpretation by supporting government documents and newspapers." Be exact; sink rocks, don't skip stones.
  - How they use and arrange facts to appeal to the reader's sense of logic.
  - If the interpretation is controversial, the author may illustrate this by showing they understand alternative interpretations.
  - Use of language that brings value judgments to the arrangement of facts or the interpretation of documents.
- Evaluate whether you find the author's interpretation plausible and why. When you begin your project, making these judgments will be more difficult because of your novice status.

**Wrapping It Up:**

- The progress reports are intended to trigger dialogue between us, so you should also include in your progress report:
- ideas and questions that you may have; and
  - describe frustrations that you are experiencing or questions that you may have with which I may be able to assist you (no whining!).
  - After the first couple of progress reports, you should attempt to devote a few lines to comparing historians that you have reported upon in previous progress reports. You may compare their use of evidence, plausibility, etc.
  - After the first progress report, you could start identifying patterns in historical interpretations that may be emerging from what you have studied thus far.

How Points Will be Determined
<p>This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail scale. Either you earn the 5 points or you do not.</p> <p>To pass the assignment (i.e. earn five points), you must demonstrate a good faith effort to complete the guidelines with thoughtfulness and depth (sink rocks, don't skip stones). This will be evident if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selected relevant secondary sources given historiographic topic</li> <li>• correctly cited source with full bibliographic information</li> <li>• explained why these sources were selected for the progress report</li> <li>• describe the authors' interpretations/thesis of relevant topics</li> <li>• explain HOW they support those interpretations</li> <li>• attempt to evaluate how plausible the authors' interpretations are</li> <li>• able to make comparisons (after the first couple of progress reports)</li> <li>• offer analysis that raises questions, knowledgeable</li> <li>• able to focus on the historiography, not the history</li> <li>• met the page limit</li> </ul>



<b>SAMPLE OF A PROGRESS REPORT: Better Practice</b>
<p>Historiographic Question: <b>How do historians interpret Hitler's role in the decision for the "final solution"?</b></p> <p>I found these two articles when searching for journal articles that specifically addressed the origins of the "final solution". The journal made the topic a forum subject and there are three other historians who commented on it. So, I thought this might help me get focused on the issues at least as it existed in 1994. I also was able to get it quickly off the internet.</p> <p>Browning, Christopher. "The Euphoria of Victory and the Final Solution: Summer-Fall 1941." <i>German Studies Review</i> 17, no. 3 (October 1994): 473-481.</p> <p>Browning is professor emeritus of history at UNC-Chapel Hill; he earned his masters and PhD from UW-Madison in 1968,1975. He has a bunch of publications on the Holocaust, and from the titles it appears that many of them address origins. In looking at his footnotes in the journal article, he reads German and has used Moscow Special Archives, Berlin Document Center, and Yad Vashem Archives. This article focuses largely on political developments and maybe some biography. His evidence comes from state and</p>

military records of the Third Reich. 1994 – Browning is self-described “moderate functionalist,” a school of historians, who believe that policies in Nazi Germany were partially shaped by circumstances, that Hitler did not intend the Holocaust from the time that he came to power.

With respect to Hitler's role in the final solution, **Christopher Browning's** overarching thesis is explicitly stated in paragraph two. Hitler initiated the killing plans. (p. 473) Later in his essay, after he has explained the timing of the decision and others involved, Browning says that he had to speculate about Hitler's role (p. 478). He points out that Hitler kept three types of secrets, one of which “are problems of the future that I have not yet completely thought through” (p. 478). This is a quotation from Hitler but I am not sure what the source is since it is in German [see footnote 27, p. 481]. Browning suggests that the final solution was this type of secret. He speculates by appealing to the logic of the timing of events and what major decision-makers are doing. He does not believe that Hitler ordered anything before late 1940, “expulsion and resettlement” were the solution. But with plans to invade the USSR, expulsion would not work. Browning points out that “in late February and March 1941, Hitler openly and repeatedly called for a ‘war of destruction’ against the Soviet Union involving considerable Wehrmacht participation.” The fact that at the same time Himmler's SS were being formed for systematic murder suggests that they got the message from Hitler’s talk of “war of destruction”. (p. 478-479) Browning is reviewing facts here and does not offer any footnotes. But he seems to be suggesting that Hitler gave verbal commands that others like Himmler and Göring brought to fulfillment. Browning assumes based upon what he knows about Hitler's personality is that he did not have “basic decisions” or “secret plans” reading to enact. (p. 479)

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Is Browning plausible? Tough call since the evidence is minimal for any historian. When I compare Browning to Breitman, both assign Hitler an important role in the decision-making but they seem to disagree on the timing.

Breitman, Richard. "Plans for the Final Solution in Early 1941." *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (October 1994): 483-493.

Richard Breitman has a BA and MA from Yale (1969, 1970) and a PhD from Harvard (1975). Breitman is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of history at American University. He has a large number of publications on the Holocaust; seems to be an expert like Browning. 1994 – what's happening then in the field of Holocaust studies??? This was when historians were defining themselves on the scale of intentionalist and functionalist. Not sure where Breitman falls on this.

**Richard Breitman's** article is largely about the timing of the final solution, and it is difficult to locate a clear thesis. With respect to Hitler, he seems to assume that Hitler played a key role but so did Himmler, Eichmann, etc. when he writes “the murderous intentions of ...” (p. 483) He is largely examining state/military documents. When I look at the footnotes, he reads German, he has made use of the National Archives which have German records. He also made use of International Military Tribunal Records. He wrote a biography of Himmler. He appeals to the timing of events and knowledge of Hitler's hatred of Jews to say that Hitler's plan to invade the USSR made known in December 1940 point to his intentions to kill Jews. (p. 484) So, he seems to date Hitler's influence to a few weeks earlier than Browning. He offers no footnote trail here. Others implemented Hitler's intentions and so he analyzes Himmler and Eichmann's actions more so, which brings him to point out that the day after Hitler announced Operation

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Barbarossa (18 December) Himmler began meeting with Heydrich, Pohl and others who were directly involved in the extermination squads called Einsatzgruppen. Breitman implies that this cannot be solely coincidence; that Hitler must have given an order even though Breitman does not say this. (p. 488)

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With respect to Hitler's role largely being to define goals, there is little if any difference between Breitman and Browning. Both have to speculate and neither assign Hitler sole responsibility; they just don't seem to think that one man has that much power and influence. They differ on the timing of the decision by perhaps a month unless you consider that Breitman finds some dude named Friedlander convincing.

**Wrapping It Up:**

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If the evidence is soooooo slim on Hitler's role, how am I going to be able to research this topic through primary sources when top scholars are left only speculating. Will I be able to take this topic into History 390. If not, I may want to Shift focus now. Obviously, I need to select the major monographs by these two historians to examine in more detail how they develop their interpretations. But again, I may just want to shift focus or change topics!