



Progress Reports Guidelines, Rubric & Samples

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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."¹

Directions for the Progress Reports

- Progress Reports do not summarize books or journal articles that you are reading; they explain authors' theses, how authors' support interpretations, and discuss the plausibility of the interpretation relevant to your project. You will also explain your progress and struggles throughout. As your reading deepens, you might also start identifying 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 love life, etc. My progress report would identify the author's interpretation of Hitler's role in the decision to exterminate European Jews and how s/he uses evidence to support major assertions.
- Push yourself to discuss more than two secondary sources in each progress report.
- Written in the first person narrative, 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 slipshod work.
- 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**

Required Content of the Progress Report:

Section I :

- 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.

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

- Provide full bibliographic information according to the guidelines provided by Turabian (pp. 135-161 entries # 15.1-16.4.2 and pp. 166-185 entries # 17.1-17.2.6). Type the citation as it would appear in your final bibliography.
- 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!).

Section II:

- For each book or article, briefly describe the authors' points of view, working assumptions, expertise.
- This can be accomplished by demonstrating knowledge of his/her education or historical training; how events that are occurring at the time of the publication may be influencing the author; genre of history (political, gender, social, Marxist, etc); subject of other publications. Please **DO NOT** cut and paste from a website: read and paraphrase authentically or else you are plagiarizing! If you do get biographical information from the internet or a publication, cite that.

Section III:

- Identify the authors' theses and his/her 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 her analysis to how historians interpreted Hitler's role even though the historian's interpretations were not limited to this subject. Notice what I have 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 his/her thesis?
 - Primary sources ideally from a variety of perspectives that corroborate.
 - Use and arrangement of facts to appeal to the reader's sense of logic.
 - If the interpretation is controversial, the author may illustrate that s/he understands alternative interpretations.
 - Use of language that brings value judgments to the arrangement of facts or the interpretation of documents.
- Evaluate whether or not you find the author's interpretation plausible and why.

Commented [LS1]: When you initially begin your project, making these judgments will be more difficult because of your novice status.

Section IV:

- The progress reports are intended to trigger dialogue between us, so you should also include in your progress report:
 - o ideas and questions that you may have; and
 - o describe frustrations that you are experiencing or questions that you may have with which I may be able to assist you (no whining!).
 - o 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.
 - o 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

This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail scale. Either you earn the 5 points or you do not. If you submit a report, and it fails to earn the 5 points, you can resubmit two reports once (i.e. you get two do-overs). The resubmission must occur within five days of when grades were assigned.

To pass the assignment (i.e. earn five points), you must demonstrate a good faith effort to complete all sections of the progress report with thoughtfulness and depth (sink rocks, don't skip stones). This will be evident if you have:

- selected relevant secondary sources given historiographic topic;
- correctly cited source with full bibliographic information;
- explained why these sources were selected for the progress report;
- identified or logically inferred authors' working assumptions and qualifications;
- recognize authors' interpretations of relevant topics;
- explain HOW he/she supports those interpretations;
- attempt to evaluate how plausible the authors' interpretations are;
- able to make comparisons (after the first couple of progress reports);
- analysis raises questions, knowledgeable;
- able to focus on the historiography, not the history; and
- met the page limit.

SAMPLE OF A PROGRESS REPORT: Best Practice

Section I:

Historiographic Question: **How do historians interpret Hitler's role in the decision for the "final solution"?**

Browning, Christopher. "The Euphoria of Victory and the Final Solution: Summer-Fall 1941." *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (October 1994): 473-481.

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

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.

Section II:

Browning is a professor of history at UNC-Chapel Hill; he earned his masters and PhD from UW-Madison in 1968,1975. Students were more willing to challenge convention back then. 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 military records in the Third Reich. 1994 – what's happening then? ? ? ? End of the Cold War, collapse of the USSR, Holocaust a more distant event, more research now completed.

Richard Breitman has a BA and MA from Yale (1969, 1970) and a PhD from Harvard (1975). He and Browning attended university about the same time. **Students were more willing to challenge convention back then.** Breitman is a professor 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? ? ? ? End of the Cold War, collapse of the USSR, Holocaust a more distant event, more research now completed.

Commented [LS2]: Know this from the history of historical writing.

Section III:

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)

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.

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 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)

Commented [LS3]: NB: because this article began as a conference paper, the editors of the German Studies Review may have decided that footnoting common knowledge was unnecessary.

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

Commented [LS4]: NB: Some of this comparison could be included in section IV. Where you place it is less important than making the effort.

that Breitman finds some dude named Friedlander convincing.

Section IV:

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 42.398. 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.

Commented [LS5]: My advice on this topic: shift focus now!!!!