

HIST 498C – Guidelines for Comments on Student Papers

Beginning next week we will be discussing paper drafts produced by students in the class. This sheet is designed to give you some guidelines as to things you should look for in the papers you read and the most productive ways to provide feedback.

We will cover two or three papers each of the class sessions devoted to reviewing paper drafts. The time allotted to each paper will be around 30-40 minutes divided as follows:

- 10-15 minutes for the author to present the paper
- 20 minutes of general discussion and commentary on the paper
- 5 minutes of response from the author of the paper

In addition to the oral comments, all students are required to provide written comments on every paper draft. At the end of our discussion time on each paper we will all hand our comments to the author of the paper. Please remember to sign your name to the paper so that the author can know whose comments they are reading.

In terms of what to look for in making your comments – oral and written – it would be helpful to pose the following questions to every paper you read:

1. What is the main argument or thesis of the essay? Is it articulated at the beginning of the essay in a clear and concise way?
2. What is the basic structure of the essay? Is it effective and clear? Can the reader follow where the paper is heading from the very beginning of the essay?
3. Are the introductions and conclusions adequate? Do paragraphs follow one another in logical fashion throughout and do they all pertain to the central argument?
4. Is the thesis supported by adequate evidence? Is the evidence presented and analyzed in such a way as to support the argument? Does the author make effective use of the available evidence?
5. Is the thesis convincing? Why or why not?
6. Are there sections of this paper that you find difficult to follow and/or understand? Please mark these clearly in your comments and think about ways in which they might correct these issues.