

GWST 325/HIST 325

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The Assignment

Reading diary

In this course, each student will keep a reading diary in which you summarize and react to the readings for each class. Entries should be completed before class so you can use your ideas to participate in class discussion. Compose your reading diary on a computer and add each new entry to the same document. Also print out each new entry and put it in a folder or binder with your name on it. Bring the complete folder or binder to each class. Each class Daniel will collect a number of reading journals for grading and comments. If you don't have your journal with you that day, you will receive a failing grade. On days that you cannot come to class, please email your reading diary file to me before class.

It is our hope that with Daniel's help, your writing will improve over the course of the semester. Those of you who are already strong writers can perfect your craft; those of you who find writing hard may come to write more easily as the semester wears on. In addition, coming to class having done the reading and writing will prepare you for strong class participation!

For each class, I want you to write 2-3 double spaced pages on the computer in which you

1. Summarize the reading (who, what, where, when)
2. Discuss the writer(s) major argument(s)
3. Discuss the sources used to make such argument(s)
4. Give a thoughtful evaluation of the reading – thoughtful means moving beyond such obvious statements as “this was really boring” or “this was really neat.” Always explain “why” you make a particular claim.

You may follow the format of having each point be a paragraph, particularly initially, or you may make your entry a bit more free-flowing. Some times you may have more to say as part of your personal reaction than other times.

At the end of the semester, on the last day of class, your complete journal is due for an overall grade that is worth 25% of your course grade.

Diary Checklist: Total of 22 for Semester

1. Rountree's "Powhattan Indian Women."
2. Berkin's Preface and Chapter Three.
3. Brown's "The Anglo-Algonkian Gender Frontier."
4. Berkin Chapter One "Immigrants To Paradise."
5. Wendy Ann Warren "The Cause of Her Grief."
6. Berkin Chapter Five "The Rhythms of Labor."
7. Berkin Chapter Two "Goodwives and Bad."
8. Rushforth's "A Little Flesh We Offer You."
9. Berkin Chapter Four "In a Babel of Confusion."
10. Moravian Memoirs.
11. Berkin Chapter Six "The Rise of Gentility."
12. Cornelia Dayton "Taking the Trade."
13. Berkin Chapters Seven and Eight.
14. Billy G. Smith "Black Women who Stole Themselves."
15. Woody Holton "Abigail Adams."
16. Rockman "Scraping By" 1-75.
17. Rockman "Scraping By" 75-194.
18. Rockman "Scraping By" 194-262.
19. Essays on Women's Suffrage.
20. Life of a Slave Girl, First Half of Book.
21. Life of a Slave Girl, Second Half of Book.
22. Reflection Essay.

Example Essay Used in Opening Lecture: Positive Example

In her intriguing essay, Helen C. Rountree has managed to present a new side to the traditional narrative of Native American life. As her title so pithily captures, Rountree's essay is a captivating look at the Native American women of the Powhatan people, who lived in the Chesapeake region, in the early part of the seventeenth-century. While traditional historians have focused their attention on the masculine world of the Native Americans—based upon compelling narratives written by men like John Smith—Rountree has managed to turn the tables and has successfully recreated the world that John Smith failed to see. As such, her essay is an invaluable source for the student who wishes to understand the lives, hardships, and joys that existed in the world of Powhatan women in the seventeenth-century. While life may not have been easy for these women, it certainly was far more interesting than has been previously imagined.

Rountree's point in writing the essay was to demonstrate that the women of the Powhatan tribe played an essential role in the growth, development, and stability of the tribe at the time of European contact. In essence, her putative goal was to break down the enduring ethnic stereotype that Native-American women stayed at home and "raised corn" (2). After breakfast, women joined "work parties" and toiled away at various tasks, which kept them busy throughout most of the day. At the close of the day, women—just like most individuals today—were able to relax and enjoyed chatting, dancing, and spending time with their husbands. After seeing all that these women did on a daily basis, it is hard to debate the fact that Rountree has proved her point: Powhatan women did live interesting and intriguing lives that were every bit as challenging as those led by the male members of the tribe.

Yet, it is also important to note how Rountree managed to extract this information. In other words, what methods and sources did she employ in order to uncover the lives of these women?

As is clear from the essay itself, Rountree relied upon a wide-range of sources to back up her ideas. Instead of merely reading narratives written by men living in the seventeenth-century, she chose rather to immerse herself in the field by exploring non-traditional sources. She talked to archaeologists, explored the region, drew maps and charts, and participated in living reenactments of village life. Interestingly, she even learned how to grow the traditional crops of the Powhattan people, in order to better understand what daily life was like. Unlike so many historians, many of whom merely read old books about people long since dead, Rountree managed to immerse herself in the culture of the Powhattan women. By doing this, she was able to craft an intriguing essay that led to many keen insights about a historically forgotten group of people.

On a slightly more personal level, however, I must admit that this essay changed my opinion on the way Native American women lived. Having grown up—like so many Americans—on Western television programs that stereotyped Native women in a negative way, it was refreshing to see how these women actually lived. Prior to reading this essay, I never would have imagined that Native American women often rode about in canoes, built houses, worked as barbers, and created pottery. For whatever reason, my own scanty knowledge of Native American life was generally confined to the activities of more famous males, while my knowledge of female Native American life was minimal. It is now clear that the women in the Powhattan tribe were vital members of the community who participated in a wide range of activities. It is nice to see that historians like Helen C. Rountree are taking these women seriously and are finally realizing just how important their work was to their own societies.

(Example Essay Used in Opening Lecture: Negative Example)

The essay written by Helen Rountree was very interesting. It was all about the Native American people who lived in the area of Virginia in the 17th century. These people participated in a wide range of activities and seemed to have had hard lives. Apparently, these women have not been written about much, and so the author has decided to write about what they did on a daily basis. Because of this, the author writes a whole lot of stuff about what these women did every day of the week. It certainly seems like these women did a lot and I know that I wouldn't have liked to have worked this hard.

Throughout the essay itself, Helen Rountree seems to have a fascination with the life and growth of plants. From this, I deduce that Rountree wanted to know about how Native American women grew plants in the 17th century. Her point seems to be that Native American women—who lived in some region on the East Coast—were experts at growing and cooking things. In order to figure this out, Rountree worked really, really hard and found herself becoming tired. I'm not really sure if this means that the work was hard or if it meant that she needed to exercise more often, but she seemed to think it was important to her essay to tell us all about it. On a side note, Rountree was also able to uncover the fact that these women grew their vegetables and things in the dark by working at night. This is clear—from the title—because it says when the ladies worked John Smith was unable to see them. I take this to mean that the ladies worked really hard at night; although, in all fairness, it could simply mean that John Smith was nearsighted. In all, then, it seems that Rountree has written to show us that Powhattan Indian women were talented and figured out how to grow thing's; this seems to be the point of the whole essay.

Rountree also utilized a lot of sources in her essay. It seems evident that she wanted to learn how to grow things and so she worked really hard to hang out with people who could tell her all about it. Anthropologists, ethnologists, and other people were able to help her to figure out how the work could be done and she used this information to write her essay, using a whole lot of really big words. Using a lot of sources is always a good thing as it would be really bad if you only asked one person about something; after all, that one person could be wrong, you know. By reading and asking a lot of question's, Rountree was able to tell us all a heck of a lot about how these people lived. Clearly, then, questions are important and having a lot of sources is really important too.

Finally, I must admit that I found one thing in the story to be quite amusing. It was interesting to learn that some women in the tribe were barbers. This reminded me of the time when I went to this lady barber who mistakenly cut off a rather large portion of my right ear. Since I was quite attached to that ear, I remonstrated forcefully and the entire affair escalated into a rather nasty incident; which, fortunately for me, was covered up by my brother-in-law who works in the police commissioner' office. This whole event has left me somewhat leery of women barbers and so I found it ironic that the Powhattan guys had their hair cut by them. I know if I would have been living in that time period, I probably would have cut my own hair, because I just don't trust barbers that much.

Example: Student Essay for First Assignment

Entry #1

Helen C. Rountree's Powhatan Indian Women: The People Captain John Smith Barely Saw, was a realistic depiction of the daily life of Powhatan women. It answers the question why the Powhatan women are not greatly discussed in the journals of the European men. The daily tasks of these women are also discussed, these tasks ranged from mere berry gathers to childcare providers, to hard laborers such as those who build houses or canoes. Rountree makes it very clear in her depictions that none of these task go without the threat of danger or hard work. A positive and honest light was shined on these women who were discussed so infrequently. This piece is closed with the satisfaction and happiness the Powhatan women's lives were filled with.

Rountree's piece portrayed the women of the Powhatan tribe as strong, hard working necessities, to the survival of the Powhatan people. Rountree gave detailed examples of the steps these women had to take to carry out their tasks, as well as the dangers, and/or discomfort performing each task may have caused. Rountree discusses the reasons why there is not much information on the Powhatan women readily available to the world, such as the separate lives that Powhatan men and women lived and how European men's limited views on gender left out much information in diaries that were later discovered. Rountree ends her piece correcting the myth that Powhatan women lived boring, tedious lives filled with hard work, and a lack of autonomy. She points out the variations of work that these women performed, and the satisfaction that they received knowing they were needed by their people. She also discuss the many aspects of life where these women used their autonomy freely, such as their work schedules and choices, and as well as in sexuality.

Rountree used three main types of research to depict the life of female Powhatans; ethnographic analogy, "reconstructive ethnobotany", and "living history". Ethnographic analogy is a technique that focuses on the fact that similar cultures may share ways of life such as work assignments, child rearing, women's place in the tribe, and many others. Rountree's use of "reconstructive ethnobotany", consists of "compiling a list of edible, utilitarian, and medicinal plants in eastern Va that were both native and wild and that the Powhatan's either were recorded as using or could have used" (pg 2). When using "living history" Rountree surveyed Jamestown Settlement's Indian Village staff, where they described the plants that were used, the locations that were found and the work needed to collect and prepare them. Rountree also went as far as to attempt to perform these tasks herself to see what stress it put upon different body parts.

This was an interesting as well as informing piece of literature. It gave the reader a greater respect for the Powhatan woman. It was full of vivid information that engaged the reader. There were several astonishing facts such as, the extent of work these women were able to carry out, and how they took pride in performing the many tasks. The lack of contact between male and female was also very surprising as well as the lack of privacy. This piece shows the Powhatan tribe as the true hardworking survivors they were and gives their women the respect and acknowledgement they deserve.

Suggestions Handed to Student upon Reading Journal (Example One)

Summarization for:

In all, this journal does need a bit of work; however, with a few changes, this can easily move up a grade level before the end of the semester. The effort that you are putting into this is fantastic: you are addressing the main problems, touching on the sources, hitting the reaction, and summarizing. Nonetheless, there are far too many grammatical errors, incomplete sentences, and confusing run-ons that are lowering the grade of this journal. Remember to spend about half a page with the summary (instead of an entire page) touching on the major themes of the assigned text. Secondly, try to address the main point directly; avoid throwing out a plethora of ideas (under the idea of “main points”).

Suggestions:

1. Try to Pinpoint the main point in your second paragraph;

a. The main points for this article are the different racial groups and their battle during the revolution.

Be more specific than this; instead write something like:

a. In this article, Berkin argues that the Revolutionary War changed the lives of American women; women who supported the American cause often had greater freedom in their own lives, while women who did not, like African-Americans and Native-Americans, often found themselves with diminished opportunities.

Now, my above example is a bit lengthy, but you really need to tie up the second paragraph. In nearly every example you write “The Main Points for this Article Are.” Instead try to mix up the language and instead focus on one overarching theme (for example, in the last entry you could write “By focusing on Abigail Adams, Holton demonstrated that women in the colonial period often had the opportunity to control the family finances”). I like the fact that you are hitting on the points (which is what I want), but I would like to see you really settle on one major argument and build your paragraph around that. Don’t just hit on the little points, look for the overarching theme and address that in your second paragraph.

2. If you quote from the book you need to cite a page number:

a. Personally, John Adams believed that speculators “wrecked the economy by diverting capital away from ventures such as shipbuilding and livestock raising that added to the nation’s wealth rather than simply redistributing it.”

Instead write:

“John Adams believed that speculators “wrecked the economy by diverting capital away from ventures such as shipbuilding and livestock raising that added to the nation’s wealth rather than simply redistributing it” (23).

3. Write a Clear and Concise Topic Sentence for Each Paragraph:

a. “The Main points of this article are the analytical responses of the reasons why slaves, both men and women, fled from their masters.”

b. “This chapter follows the story of Eliza Lucas and her progression through life as an intelligent, dignified, and courageous young woman”

c. “The author uses several stories of colonial women’s lives to show that gender differences are not the boundaries to which one can manage their finances and assets.”

Notice how all of these are highly confusing topic sentences. The first one, to be quite honest, is difficult to understand. The second one misses the main point (Berkin was using Lucas as an illustration; the chapter itself was not about her). And the third one is also ambiguous. Try to limit the language and write as clearly as possible. In all honesty, try to avoid fine sounding phrases or big words; instead make sure that your point is coming across loud and clear (so that the rest of your paragraph can build upon it).

Instead write something like:

“It was astounding to find that women were living such long lives during the colonial period in America.

“Berkin wanted the reader to understand that women had a significant amount of work to complete within a day, from gardening, to child rearing, food preparation, and the entertainment of guests.”

4. Watch for Sentence Fragments:

“As well as the court showing sympathy to the family and giving them some aid despite the color of their skin”

“Thus, causing ‘new cultural forms, creation sites of commonality, painful deceptions, bitter misunderstandings, and bloody conflicts.”

Example Two:

Summarization for:

Tentative Grade: This is still a relatively solid journal, but I really want to see you bring all the pieces together in the last couple of entries. Try to cut back on a couple of the grammatical errors (notice my markings on your last couple of entries) and really try to hone the first two paragraphs. At some point in your journal, you really need to figure out—and spend some time discussing—what the author is talking about. What is the main argument or point? You are kind of touching on this, but I really want to see you spend a significant amount of time looking at it. I wasn't disappointed by these last couple of entries, but they really were not significantly improved, in the sense that I didn't feel as if you really took my suggestions and tried to incorporate them.

1. Don't Spend Too Much Time Summarizing:

In your most recent entry, you discussed the relationship between John and Abigail for nearly a page and a half. Remember that the summary shouldn't last quite that long. You still need to figure out the "Main Point" and leave yourself enough time to give a personal reaction. In short, try to summarize the article in about half of a page. I just don't want you to spend the majority of your entry talking about what the author talked about.

2. Touch on the Main Point Directly:

I really want to see you discuss the main argument in your essay. You are kind of getting around to the "main point" in your entries, but I want you to be more direct. You can write something like:

a. "In this article, Holton argued that women in the Revolutionary Era gained a degree of power when their husbands left to fight against the British.

While this might not be the best example, I want to see you analyze the article (or chapter) by discussing the argument that the author is using. Try to settle on one (i.e. the "main point" and not the "main points"). This will come in handy in future classes when a professor asks you to figure out (or analyze) an article.

3. Always make the first sentence a topic sentence:

a. "I absolutely loved this chapter."

While this is a good opening, you probably want to explain why you loved it in the same sentence. Hence, write something like:

b. “I absolutely loved this chapter because I agree with Berkin that women were key players for both the Loyalist and Patriot causes.”

Start off the paragraph with something you can build upon and always include the main point in the sentence. This is really the key to solid writing in any academic setting. You want to lead off with what you will be discussing and then use the rest of the paragraph to discuss it.

5. Avoid certain words and phrases:

a. “It was this early sign of gender discrimination that ‘lit the fire,’ so to speak”

b. “and truly helped kick-start the Women’s Rights Movement.”

While these phrases are fundamentally correct, they do lessen the quality of the journal. Whenever you write, try to avoid—whenever possible—phrases like these. Individuals should not “kick the bucket” they should “pass away.” In short, always try to avoid writing that sounds as if you are carrying on a conversation. You did a really good job of this throughout—and it was really only in this one sentence that you dropped these two—but this is an important thing to keep in mind. Teachers—and graders—really don’t want you to use idioms or commonly-used phrases. We will allow you a great deal of leniency in the final paragraph—where you put forth your own opinion—but you always want to avoid, especially in the middle of the journal, writing words or phrases like the ones above.

Handout: How to Summarize a Book

1. When you read, either use a highlighter or take notes so you can remember the key facts:

A good thing to do is to utilize a highlighter—or use your computer to take notes—whenever you read a portion of text. This allows you, after you have read the assigned portion, to look back through the chapter and focus on what was important. Try not to highlight every page—or randomly mark up passages—but rather highlight those portions of text that can be used when you write your journal. It can be difficult to remember the main point, or know where to find it, so always jot down notes or highlight your text; it will make writing your journal that much easier. This especially comes in handy when you are trying to summarize 100 pages of text for an assignment.

2. Use One Solid Paragraph to Summarize:

Unless you are really confident in your writing skills—that is if you are easily on pace for an “A” with the journal—it is best to focus one paragraph on the summary. Use the first paragraph, which should take up about one half of a written page, to examine the main details of the story. In the last batch of journals I received, too many of you were trying to spend the entire journal retelling the story; this really is not necessary, because both Dr. Kars and myself have already read the assigned texts, and because we want to know what you thought of the text. Hence, use about 5-7 sentences—a solid paragraph—to discuss what the assigned text was about.

3. Try to Paint the Picture with a Broad Brush:

For example, in writing your first entry on *Scraping By*—in which you are summarizing nearly 100 pages of text—do not add in a plethora of tiny little details. You do not have to state that Baltimore’s population grew from 13,503 in 1790 to 80,620 in 1830 (27). In addition, you do not have to write about the going rate for African-American slaves in the early nineteenth-century (61). Instead, try to put the story into a larger background. For example, to begin your summary you could write something like:

“In the first three chapters of his work, Rockman examines the growth of the city of Baltimore, in the nineteenth-century, and the role that poor whites and enslaved blacks played in its development.”

As I wrote in many of your journals, try to answer the larger questions—who, what, when, where—in your summary. When you are dealing with the main point, in your journal, you can pick apart a specific section of text, but the summary should be broad and should provide a casual overview of what the chapter was discussing. In all honesty, you can probably save yourselves a lot of time if you learn how to properly summarize: writing up a lot of facts can be tedious, and time consuming, and will probably not earn you a high grade. Just try to answer the basic questions in your summary and then move on from there.

4. Don't Panic:

The bottom line is that I really want to see you try to analyze Rockman's *Scraping By*. Don't worry about writing a perfect entry. Instead, focus your attention on addressing the major points—summary, main argument, sources, reaction—and doing your best. I really just want to see you try to tackle this; I do not expect a perfect entry—although I'm sure many of you are planning on writing one—but I do want to see you engage with the text. This is the largest assignment of the semester and is a hefty bit of reading for a seven-day period. Just try to take the advice I have handed out, follow the instructions, and I'm sure you will do fine. Again, if you are worried about this please come and talk to me about it. I am more than happy to deal out what little advice I can.