

Advanced Placement United States History
Summer Reading 2008
Mr. Truesdell

All Advanced Placement United States History students will read:

Twenge, Jean M. *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. New York: Free Press, 2007.

This book is available at most Barnes & Noble and Borders locations. It is also available online for under \$15.00 (new)

This assignment is due to me (either being dropped off at school or sent via e-mail) by Monday, August 11th. **If any student has difficulty meeting the due date please contact me at the email addresses below to discuss alternatives.**

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arthurtruesdell@yahoo.com

All writing should be in your own words. You should not copy directly from the book or other sources without using quotation marks and citations. Failure to properly cite sources will be regarded as plagiarism and could result in an Honor Council offense.

Book Review Guidelines:

I am looking for a careful analysis of the author's arguments written in clear prose. You are to write your reviews in essay form. Please write in complete sentences. I am looking for an honest attempt at not only briefly summarizing the author's argument(s), but also at how you (as a student of history) can critique the book. Please address the following in your reviews:

1. At the top of your paper, give a complete citation (bibliographical, not as a footnote) as found on page 181(41C) in *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker.

Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

2. In the opening paragraph discuss your author(s). Briefly discuss other books he/she has written. Has the author written about the topic before? Is the author one of the most influential in his area/topic/time period? Is the author a teacher/professor? If so, where? A listing of other works by your author may be included before the introduction and preface. Also, use the introduction/preface to find personal information you may want to include. When all else fails, search the Internet to locate your author. You may also want to search the following sites to find information.

Amazon.com
Borders.com
BN.com

3. In your second paragraph, identify the author's thesis. Ask yourself, "What is the author's main argument?" "Are there any secondary arguments?" The thesis is generally located in the "Introduction" or possibly the "Preface." Identifying the thesis will become much easier once you have done one or two reviews. Look for key phrases such as, "this book is about", "the point of this book is", "my main argument is" or simply "my purpose of writing this book is".
4. In your third paragraph, attempt (as best you can) to identify how the author's work contributes to or alters the existing scholarship on the subject. Attempt to answer the question, "Why is the author writing this book?" Does the author believe he is adding something new to existing scholarship? Does the author's work disagree with other books dealing with the same subject? This is probably the most difficult (and totally new to you) part of your review. How has the time period in which it was written contribute to the author's thesis? What personal experiences has you author lived through that might influence his thesis? For example, would serving in the Vietnam War alter an author's point of view of Lyndon Johnson? Would someone who served in FDR's cabinet influence his ability to fairly judge the New Deal? Do your best. Consult web sites to find what other author's say about your book.
5. Next comes what will probably be the longest part of your review. Explain how the author's use of evidence advances his/her argument and supports the thesis. In other words, how do the separate parts fit together? Use specific examples to make your points. You must also cite portions from the book you choose to identify and discuss.
6. Finally, you must critique your book and author. There is no set way to critique a book, but you should consider some of the following questions. Does the author's evidence support his/her thesis? Is the evidence appropriate for the argument? Does the author omit evidence that might contradict his/her argument? For example, it would be hard to write a biography of Richard Nixon without including the Watergate scandal. Is it possible to make a contrary argument using the same evidence as the author? For example, an author might claim that Nixon's success in establishing relations with them in 1972 was due to the secrete negotiations between himself and the Chinese. On also might point out that his secretiveness, also caused his downfall with Watergate.
7. Briefly, discuss the reasons you would or would not recommend your book.

As you can see, this is a little more than a basic "thumbs up/down" analysis. I want you to have fun (yes, fun) with this assignment. Think of yourself as writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, and that scholars and students from around the country will be hanging on your every word. I will be available all week and photocopy examples for you. Good Luck.