

## Essay #4: A Blog Post Response

**Final Paper Due:** Monday, 5/1/2017

- Post an electronic copy to BB Course Blog before the start of class on Monday.
- No hard copy necessary

**Length:** 1500-1800 words (c. 5-6 pages)

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### What am I supposed to Do?

In your last paper you combined the very different histories of England in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, making an argument for how the texts might be read together, what perceptions of history might spring from that intersection. For this assignment, written as a blog post, you will continue to consider these texts, in writing a response to a classmate's paper.

You will receive one of your classmate's papers, and your job is to write a response to its argument. Your essay should have 2 main components:

1. Summary of the essay to which you are responding. This summary should take up no more than 300 words (c. 1 page) of your essay, and should serve to situate your audience within the original author's argument.
2. A response to the original argument. This can take a variety of forms: if you agree with the original essay then your response may build on its argument. If you disagree with your peer's work, then your essay might offer a different reading of the author's evidence. In either case, the bulk of your essay must be given over to critical analysis of the original paper's argument and evidence.

Things to keep in mind:

- **DO NOT** simply rewrite your own original essay. Work with the argument that you have in front of you, and address it on its own terms.
- This is not merely a review of the original; you must provide an argument of your own. It is not enough to simply agree or disagree with your classmate's claims and then add additional evidence. Your argument, even if it complements the original, must provide a different way of thinking about or approaching the topic.

This response takes the form of a blogpost, so you may write in any style or level of formality that you choose. Your grade will be based, in part, on how consistent you are within the parameters of your choice.

### Why? What's the point?

There are three main reasons for this assignment:

1. This is the way that academic (and often professional) discourse works: ideas and projects move forward when different people come to tough questions with different approaches, and build on each other's work.
2. Critical analysis of secondary literature is an important part of historical scholarship. We have been working on skeptical reading of professional historians; this is a chance for you practice skeptical analysis in a topic area you now know well.
3. This is a chance for you to experiment with a less formal style of argumentative writing. Blog posts and other types of self-published online writing are gaining respect as a way of presenting serious historical scholarship while also opening up academic discussions to broader

audiences. Producing scholarly, but publicly digestible writing is a skill that historians need to master.

### **How do I do it?**

- Unlike in academic writing, in a blog post personal experience may count as evidence. It may **not**, however, account for all of your evidence
- As with all papers for this class, you should use the Turabian or Chicago citation styles, and include a Works Cited section.
  - I would encourage you to write your blog post in Word, Google Docs, or your writing program of choice, and then copy/paste into Blackboard. This will let you use Zotero for citation management. Footnotes will copy into Blackboard from Word as endnotes with in-text links.
- Your essay must be between 1500 and 1800 words long, **not** including your Works Cited or footnotes.
- You are encouraged to schedule an appointment with me to discuss your paper prior to the deadline if you have concerns about your progress, or you would like a second opinion about your work before you turn it in for a grade.

### **How am I getting graded?**

Your paper will be evaluated for the following elements:

- Effectiveness of your summary of your classmate's paper
- Engagement with the argument in your source material
- A compelling original argument of your own, either building on or disagreeing with your classmate's paper
- Logical and coherent presentation of evidence and claims
- Proper citation
- Consistency of tone, voice and style