



Southern California Christian College Guidelines for a Book Critique

- I. A book critique is a to-the-point summary/evaluation of the book. The material should be typewritten, double-spaced and should follow the MLA format for research papers. It should be 3-5 pages in length or according to the instructor's specifications. (Note: The length may vary with the course and the assignment/lesson within a course.)
- II. The book critique is to include (a) the biographical entry, (b) author information, (c) content summary, and (d) and evaluation.

Bibliographical Entry

Example, single author:

Krentz, Edgar. The Historical-Critical Method. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Example, book, edition other than the first:

Anderson, Bernhard W. Understanding the Old Testament. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.

Author Information

The purpose of this section is to identify the author (translator or editor) of the book. If available, present the author's background, academic training; and practical experience. You can help a reader understand a book by describing the author. Contemporary Authors or other biographical sources may provide author information.

Content Summary

This section should be no more than two pages in length. The first sentence should be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. Summarize the book in one sentence. The remainder of the summary will then be an elaboration of this sentence, sharing your understanding of what the book is all about.

Be sure the summary covers the entire book. Do not be so detailed about the first part of the book that subsequent sections are not adequately dealt with. To avoid this problem, organize the summary carefully and logically. Also, do not get bogged down in specifics. The task is to summarize the entire book, not to focus on selected details.

Evaluation

The evaluation is the most crucial part of the critique. This is not a summary of the book's contents but a critical evaluation of what the author has to say. React to the book both positively and negatively.

Because books, like people, are different, one cannot impose predetermined critical questions on the book. The following questions are often used for evaluation:

- What is unique, significant, or interesting about the book?
- Does it contain unusual historical, theological, or literary traits?
- What biases (theological, philosophical, denominational, etc.) are evident?
- What does the book/author teach us?
- What is good about the book?
- What is bad about the book?
- Who should read the book?
- What concepts can be implemented in ministry (teaching, etc.)?