

HIS2150 BOOK REVIEW OVERVIEW

The assignment is NOT a research paper. It is an exploration of the ongoing conversation on a topic relevant to this class.

The assignment is to compare one of the texts listed on the syllabus with one other book or movie. You may also compare two books or movies not from the syllabus list but NOT two that are on it. If in any doubt about your choice ask me or your TA.

Your review should be at least 900 words but not more than 1200. (We will stop reading at 1,200 and fiddling margins or fonts won't fool us about length.) In it explain:

- 1. What each author or director is trying to do**
- 2. How they try to do it**
- 3. How well they do it, technically speaking**
- 4. Whether you are persuaded by one or both, and what a curious person would learn from the two side-by-side that he or she would not have learned from either by itself.**

The goal is not a blow-by-blow summary of each text or a point-by-point comparison. It is to help an interested layperson understand what has been said on the topic.

In the 19th century Matthew Arnold said "Literary criticism's most important function is to try books as to the influence which they are calculated to have upon the general culture of single nations or of the world at large." That's what I want you to do, with books, movies or both.

After reading your review, a classmate or friend should be able to tell

- a) whether they should take the time and trouble to read or watch these books or movies, in their capacity as a student of British North America in particular and history generally but also as a citizen and a human being; or
- b) whether your summary is all they need; or
- c) whether some of them should be carefully avoided; and
- d) why.