

### **Critical Review Assignment**

Your critical review should be of about six-eight pages' length on books (around 1,500 words) on topics covered in the course. In each essay you should choose two (or more) books on similar topics to review. Your review should either cover politics in Mexico or politics in one of the other countries being studied in this course. In a review you should provide brief summaries of the works under review, but more importantly, you should make clear to your readers the significance of the issues under consideration by the books and the key issues on which they agree and disagree, and you should render your assessment of the contributions of the works to our understanding of the issues they explore. You are not reviewing these books for stylistic devices, but for the substantive contributions they make to our knowledge and understanding of key issues. Perhaps the best way to learn what a critical review should do is to read some examples. Critical reviews differ depending on the audience for which they are intended. Some critical reviews are written to the intellectual community broadly conceived. Examples of these can be found in journals of criticism such as *The New York Review of Books* and *The New Republic*. Others are written to a more specialized scholarly audience. You might look at reviews of this type in the *Latin American Research Review* (to cite one such journal dealing with Latin American topics). The examples I am citing will typically review more works (as many as a dozen in a single essay) than you have been asked to consider, but the manner of organizing those essays will be similar. I have written a sample review which is posted on Kenyon's website at <http://www2.kenyon.edu/depts/psci/review.htm>. A review written by a student for my course on Mexico and Central America is available at [http://www2.kenyon.edu/depts/psci/psci48/guatemala\\_review.htm](http://www2.kenyon.edu/depts/psci/psci48/guatemala_review.htm). The critical review will be due on either October 22 (if on Mexico) or December 3 (if on one of the other countries).

I would be delighted to give you advice about books to review. Please send me an e-mail (klesner@kenyon.edu) or come to visit me during office hours (MWF 10-12) to discuss your ideas.