Book Review Assignment

Directions: You are to write a book review for the book which you chose towards the beginning of the semester. If you don’t remember what book you chose, the list can be found on the course homepage. The review has to be at least 1,000 words.

Above all, a review makes an argument. A review is a commentary, not merely a summary. You want to explain the arguments and content of the book and then evaluate critically the author's arguments, thesis, and methods of analysis. The majority of your review should be an evaluation of how convincing the author's presentation of their thesis was, and a commentary on the book's contribution to your understanding of important issues in economics.

The review should have three key elements.

1. A summary of the book and/or its chapters/sections
   - Try to think how you might answer if someone saw you reading the book and asked what it was about. This is a good place to start.
   - What is the main idea(s) the author wants the reader to take away?
   - How is the book structured?
   - Summarize in your own words—only use quotes if you absolutely have to.

2. Analysis and Evaluation of the Book
   - This should constitute the majority of your review.
   - Think about the primary argument or thesis of the book. Are you convinced by the author’s presentation? Does the evidence adequately support the conclusion? Why or why not?
   - If the author has suggested policy changes, are you convinced that those changes would be good? Why or why not?
   - How, if at all, has the book helped you to better understand its subject matter?
   - The questions above do not have to be answered—they are just offered as guides or helpful tools to get your mind going.
   - To whatever extent possible, try to use concepts learned in class to describe and evaluate the arguments of the book.

3. Conclusion
   - This should be relatively brief. No more than one short paragraph, really.
   - Simply sum up or restate your thesis, and make a final evaluation of the book.

An essential feature of a good book review is the reviewer's ability to write concisely. So, do not write more, write more concisely—find creative ways to communicate your critical evaluation of the book in a short essay. The summary and analysis/evaluation do not need to be neatly separat-
ed either—you can summarize a chapter or two at a time, then evaluate, then go on to the next chapter, evaluate, and so on.

For some good examples of what a book review should ideally look like, and how they are typically structured, you can browse through the reviews at EH.net, the website for the Economic History Association:

http://eh.net/book-reviews/library/?searchby=chron_descending

Before you begin writing, I also highly recommend you read through the following guide on how to write a book review:

http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/book-reviews/

The grading scale is as follows:

A-range: Compelling exposition of the book, clearly presented, together with criticisms or comments that are substantial, thought-provoking, and which clearly demonstrate knowledge of any related material from the course.

B-range: Satisfactory exposition of the book, clearly presented, together with some original and substantial comments/criticisms of one's own, which demonstrate knowledge of any related material from the course.

C-range: Visible effort, but with significant misunderstanding of the book, or unclear presentation, with little evidence of original thought and minimal understanding of any related material from the course.

D-range: Visible lack of effort.

Formatting: Single-spaced, one-inch margins all around, 12-point type, Times New Roman font

Due Date: The final draft is due on D2L at the beginning of class on the due date listed on the schedule.

You are also welcome and encouraged to turn in a draft before the due date if you would like my input. However, make sure to get it to me at least a few days in advance so that I have time to read and comment on it.