

Research Summary Prompt

A Research Summary will encompass the following:

- a one to one-and-a-half page single-spaced critical summary of the book to be discussed that day; o The summary will be organized around 3-4 paragraphs
 - What is the book about? (Locate the book in its particular historical context)
 - What is/are the argument(s) of the book?
 - Highlight a particularly key chapter (or chapters) and provide a summary, using appropriate quotes.
- a list of five relevant historiographical sources (books preferred but could be scholarly articles) related to the topic of discussion. Provide brief annotations for each of them (2-4 sentences each)
- five thematically-oriented and critical (i.e., not factually-oriented) questions to generate discussion.

The idea is that for most class days, we will have students who will each prepare a Research Summary and whose questions will help us organize class discussions for that class day. Research summaries are to be turned as a Word document by e-mail by 10:00 AM on the morning of class day. I will then circulate them to all the students so by the end of the semester, each student has a set of writings and bibliographies on a diverse set of topics on Soviet history.

THOMAS
A Useful Mnemonic for Reading Historical Scholarship

When reading works of historical scholarship, the following mnemonic is a helpful tool to keep in mind as you prepare for class. All the questions are key for understanding the book, but they are arranged in ascending order of importance, from least to most important.

Topic: The basic questions: When? Where? What is this book about?

Historiography: What are the multiple scholarly conversations in which this work participates? What does it add to these conversations?

Organization: what is the central organizing structure of this work? Chronological? Thematic? Geographic? Are there any narrative devices put to use? How does the organization advance the argument?

Method: What sources are used in this book? How is this evidence analyzed? Is there an overarching theoretical or conceptual approach? How does the theory intersect with the evidence?

Argument: What is this author's original thesis? What new thing does it explain?

So what? This could be rephrased as "significance" or "stakes." What is important or useful about this book, beyond the confines of the topic? Put differently, why would nonspecialists in the field care to read this book?

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<https://twitter.com/DannaAgmon/status/984087841813811200?s=20>