

Completing a Scholarly Book Review for the Journal of Military Conflict Transformation

Scholarly book reviews provide a form of academic writing that shares the writer's opinion of a recently read book. The book review evaluates the content of the book by providing a thoughtful review and tells an audience why they should read the book or perhaps, not bother. Most importantly, in completing a book review you contribute to the scholarly conversation of the topic of the review. The experience will also help hone your writing skills as you prepare to publish articles or books of your own.

This guide for writing a book review for the Journal of Military Conflict Transformation is not intended to be prescriptive as there is no desire to cloud your creativity and honesty. Obviously, the JMCT seeks reviews that inform others and provide constructive criticism. We also seek creative writers who can convey enthusiasm, shock, disbelief, doubt, surprise, and reinforcement of ideas and who can basically convince others to read the book they reviewed, warn of the pitfalls they noted, or guide a reader in another direction. Simply put, *do not be boring!*

The JMCT would like reviews that are no greater than 1000 words long. The strategies listed below will help you get started writing your review:

First section: Make sure you have an attention-getting and interesting opening. Pull your reader into your review like a big fish on the hook. You may have personal experiences in life or work that relate to the topic or have other first-hand knowledge of experiences. Once you think you have firmly planted the hook, move on to the focus of the book.

Main section(s): As you discuss the book's central ideas remember to weave in relatable ideas and stories. Storytelling in all writing helps readers relate to the ideas being expressed and makes them more memorable. This section on central ideas should highlight the book author's claims, and you should be able to point out the strengths and weaknesses of those claims from your perspective. How unique is this book and why? If it is not necessarily unique, how does it contribute to the scholarly conversation of conflict transformation, mediation, and negotiation?

Conclusion: Summarize your critical evaluation of the book in this section. Remember that you are not an anonymous writer, and any undue or unfounded criticism is subject to libel law. Always extend basic courtesy in your review. Be sure to substantiate oppositional claims and be respectful, honest, and constructive in your review.

The JMCT is interested in reviews of books that address the spectrum of Conflict Transformation, Negotiation, Mediation, and Facilitation. Reviews on books outside of but related to this realm are also encouraged. Because these book reviews are meant to increase the professional conversation and inform students and advocates of Conflict Transformation, it is the relevance of a book that is more important than the date of publication.

There are specific aspects of a book review process that every reviewer should consider. You may find the following book appraisal worksheet helpful as an outline and memory aid for your book review.

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Basic Information

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Book Title | |
| Author(s)/Editor(s) | |
| ISBN | |
| Name and location of publisher | |
| Number of pages | |
| Price | |

Reviewer's Information

| | |
|--|--|
| Name and academic degrees | |
| Institutional Affiliations | |
| Statement of any conflicts of interest | |

Additional book information

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Type of Book | |
| Aim/Purpose | |
| Intended audience | |

Appraisal

| Items | Strengths/Weaknesses | Praise/Constructive Suggestions | Substantiation/References |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| The expertise of the Author(s) | | | |
| Format and Organization | | | |
| Completeness Accuracy Relevance to today | | | |
| Readability Chapter layout Illustrations Tables Clarity | | | |
| What is distinctive about this book? | | | |
| Usefulness to readers | | | |
| Did the author(s) achieve their intended goal? | | | |
| Overall Recommendation | | | |