REVIEW OF A BOOK BY A NONPROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN

Due: February 6
1. This assignment involves writing an essay of 3-5 pages (double-spaced, typed or printed) about a memoir or popular history by a nonprofessional historian that is relevant to your research. Check with me to be sure that the book you have chosen is appropriate. Be certain that you have either an extra hard copy of the final essay or access to a computer version just in case something happens to the copy you give me.

2. After reading the book, check the sheet on questions for primary and secondary sources to see which would be most helpful in evaluating the kind of book you have read. You do not have to answer the questions directly, but you might want to use them as a preparation for writing by summarizing in a list the answers to any questions you considered relevant.

3. Summarize as concisely as possible the basic focus and main points of the book, including its primary thesis (if there is one). Be sure to include a version of all of this in your essay at some point for the benefit of a reader who has not read the book. Think about what such a reader would need to know to understand what you are saying about the book.

4. In the essay, consider the following questions (in whatever order and whatever way you wish):
   A. What are the main “factual” conclusions you can draw from the book about the family/ies and/or community/ies it covers? What questions does it raise about them?
   B. What is your general opinion of the book, including its strengths and weaknesses for use by professional historians?
   C. What research would a historian wanting to write about the same family and/or community need to do to check on the facts mentioned in the book and to add supplemental information?
   D. How might you be able to use the book or some of the information in it for your own research? If you think it is not useful at all for your work, say why.
   E. Do you have any new thoughts about researching and analyzing the history of “families” or “communities” after reading this book?
   F. Is there anything else you think a potential reader should know about the book and/or your opinion of it?

5. You may give personal reactions to the book or any aspects of it as long as you do so in the voice of yourself as a professional historian.

6. Email or call me if you have any questions or problems concerning this assignment.