

HIST 407/507: ENVIRONMENT AND COLONIALISM

Winter Term 2018 – T 3:00-5:50pm – LIB 221 (wk 1-2), McK 375 (wk 3-10) – CRN 27181/27183

Version 1.00, 8 Jan 2018

Professor Lindsay Frederick Braun
Office: 311 McKenzie Hall
Telephone: (541) 346-4838, x64838 on-campus (voicemail only)
Email: lfbraun@uoregon.edu (email preferred by far)
Office hours: M 1000-1200, and by arrangement

Overview and Objectives

Environmental history has, in the last few decades, become one of the most vibrant new research fields. At the same time, the term “environment” has broadened greatly, in part because it is impossible to define that term in a truly exclusive manner against the backdrop of this globalizing age and our recognition of humanity’s ecological and environmental footprint around the world. Where does the “human” end and the “natural” begin? How do we understand, categorize, and interact with the non-human features of our world? What effect do we have on those features, and they on us? Why and how have these processes changed over time? Can we divide them by era or category meaningfully?

All of those questions have special resonance if we consider the context of colonialism, primarily from Europe and the US, between the 16th and 20th centuries. The advent of colonial domination led to global integration and inequity of a breadth and depth unknown before, with dramatic effects on the landscapes and people that integration touched. From the reckless integration of biological zones to attempts at “conservation,” not to mention the use and promotion of certain resources with the denial of resources to others, the exercise of colonial power and the expansion of a globalizing, and industrializing, order were indelibly written on environments. All over the world, and even at empire’s metropolitan centers, the arrival of colonial rule or its proxies had vast effects. Colonialism was a global and globalizing process, so our primary organization is really thematic despite the weight the British empire exerts in the literature. The permutations in the relationship between environments and colonial power varied widely around the world, which permits seminar members great freedom to pursue their interests and share their knowledge.

Seminar members successfully completing this course will, at minimum, attain the skills to:

- Display thematic and theoretical knowledge about historical intersections of colonialism and environment, via common readings and critical discussion;
- Devise an original and answerable research question about some topic related to that conflict, and present it in a way that demonstrates its value and feasibility;
- Familiarize themselves with the secondary sources regarding their topic of interest;
- Conduct research in primary-source materials, learn how to ask questions of such sources in their historical context;
- Work together with peers in discussing and refining their academic work; and
- Produce a major research paper (4500-6000 words for 407, longer for 507) presenting evidence and summarizing findings organized around a core thesis, following the stylistic expectations of the historical profession here in the United States (407) or in their academic field (for 507).

A Note About This Syllabus

Everything on this syllabus is important; you need to read it carefully and refer to it frequently. You are solely responsible for knowing and understanding its contents. The version on Canvas will normally be the latest one, embodying all updated schedules and changes. Make sure you check announcements, too.

Requirements and Grading

Participation represents 40% of your grade. This includes discussion in class and Canvas questions as well as group work connected to your paper drafts (see the schedule and the assignment list at the end of this syllabus, pp. 7-8). If you are silent and/or unengaged with the seminar, or disregard these exercises, you will receive a poor or failing grade no matter how inspired your other work may be.

The proposal for the major paper, due in the third week of classes, comprises about 10% of your final grade. This proposal is expected to identify a topic, propose a basic thesis, and identify at least ten separate sources (four primary), in proper style as per Rampolla (see page 6 of this syllabus). Although only a small part of the grade, a late or unacceptable proposal will receive only 50% credit. If your proposal is not tendered and acceptable before the next class session you will fail the course. I'm not kidding about this.

The biggest piece of your grade (~50%) is the major research paper based on primary sources, 4500-6000 words in length (not counting footnotes or bibliography). This paper **must** be a polished piece of writing that is correct in grammar and style to Rampolla's *Pocket Guide* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition) on which it is based, using footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography. No other styles will be permitted in HIST 407. Style matters, in turn, constitute 1/3 of the final paper grade. Failure to tender any of the paper's stages on time (draft in week 9, finished version during finals week) will result in an F for the seminar. A final paper that earns a grade lower than C- will also result in a failing grade.

Exemptions or extensions in HIST 407 only apply for fully documented emergencies. Our deadlines are set out on day one, so you have all term to prepare for them. **Plan ahead.** If you upload or email your work, you alone are responsible for my receipt of it. If the email gets lost or you send the wrong file, it is late. Except for the Sunday questions (see pp.7-8), none of your work will receive credit if it is late.

Course Texts and Reading Suggestions:

There is only one required text, a general overview to writing history and Chicago style that I will provide:

- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* 8th ed. New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2015. ISBN 978-1-457-69088-4.

Our thematic interest and broad scope suggests that chapters and articles will serve us best. These are given on the following pages in connection with the relevant weeks. **All of these readings will be available on Canvas**, and should be obtainable electronically at the requisite time via the Files or Modules sections of the course site. Let me know as soon as possible if you have any problems. Printing out these selections and bringing them to seminar is your responsibility, and is your 'book cost.' I prefer paper to tablets/PCs.

Each "reading week" has three distinct (albeit relatively short) readings, and it is likely to be confusing if you simply read them in rapid succession. I strongly recommend that you schematize your reading. Structure your personal summary around these questions, or some variation, for each selection:

- What is the main point of this article or chapter? What is the author's central thesis?
- Does the author situate her or his work within a broader discussion among historians? How?
- What are the author's assumptions, and what evidence do they use or omit?
- What things are missing? What is weighted or slighted? (Does the author convince you?)
- How does this relate, directly or abstractly, with other readings for the week? With other weeks?

Considering these questions as you read will raise questions in your own mind that will interest the seminar as a whole, and they can help you to refine your own writing later.

THE PROPOSAL AND THE PAPER: THE HEART OF IT ALL

As you are all aware, terms at the U of O are extremely short. It is therefore essential that you begin devising workable research subjects as early as possible. With that in mind, I **require** each of you to meet with me personally in the third week of the term to discuss your ideas. Following that, you must tender a proposal by 5:00pm on Friday of that week that covers your subject, articulates a research question that will produce an original thesis and argument, and demonstrates the topic's viability for this seminar. I require this early start and approval process in order to prevent the scramble for hard-to-acquire resources or the belated discovery that a topic is unworkable. Your thesis and your focus within a subject area may (and likely shall) shift as you conduct research, but I want us to have a good starting point to prevent frustration, stress, and ultimately failing (or simply unfinished) work at the end of the term.

The proposal for the major paper **must** include the following elements, as far as you can elaborate them:

- Statement of the subject or problem, and your tentative thesis with a clear thesis statement, which may be in the form of the question or unknown factor you expect your research to answer;
- A discussion of the historical context and the importance of the subject; here you may draw on the secondary literature (history books, etc) and other historical interpretations of your subject; and
- A preliminary bibliography (annotation optional, depending on the strength of your introduction) of at least **ten** potential sources, including at least **four** primary sources (letters, novels, memoirs, speeches, government reports, and the like). **Divide the bibliography into two sections**, one for "primary sources" and one for "secondary sources." Annotation is not required. This bibliography may include material you have not yet received but which looks promising, and you need not have read everything yet. Fortunately, we can get a lot from around the world online, at Knight, or via ILL. You are to avoid internet-originated sources—digitized books and articles are OK, but check with me for anything that's not on Google Books or a journal website. This bibliography **must be stylistically correct** as per Rampolla (or Chicago). See me if you have any questions; David Woken (our reference librarian) will also be available to aid your search.
- **Your proposal must be at least 2 pages in length (600+ words), excluding the bibliography.** Much of that text may contribute to the final paper, so the effort is not in any way wasted. Text, as in all of your writing for seminar, must be double-spaced and stylistically sound.

It is important that you make clear what you understand about the subject you are proposing, based on your preliminary research investigations, and what your proposed subject might mean. At the very least, you are to make the case that your thesis is arguable and that materials adequate to investigate it are available in the time allotted. Beyond the requirements, you may want to write about anything else you've considered relative to the paper. Careful, informed thought will not only improve your grade, but also allow me to make more useful and thoughtful comments to put you ahead of the proverbial game. Proposals that are late or unacceptable are marked down 50%; if not tendered and acceptable by 6 February, you fail the seminar.

The final paper itself must be 4500-6000 words, not counting footnotes, bibliography, cover sheet, and so forth; it must make use of no less than ten relevant and significant sources (including primary sources), but successful papers generally employ many more. The paper is to be a piece of formal writing, in clear and concise college-level English; style counts for 1/3 of the overall paper grade. For the final proposal and the paper, *Chicago Manual* documentation style (footnotes & bibliography, also laid out in Rampolla's *Pocket Guide*) must be used for citations—not APA, MLA, or any other style guide. **Using the wrong style, or using no discernable style at all, will earn you a style grade of F.** Following a style guide's prescriptions are more than just a matter of cosmetics; being assiduous about documenting your research can save you from inadvertent failure to cite sources (plagiarism) and the pain that attends it. General writing help is available from the Writing Labs at the Teaching and Learning Center; see <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/> for more information. Regardless of anything else, the final draft is due to me **no later than exactly 5:00pm PST on Wednesday, 21 Mar 2018; I will accept them early, but I will not accept them late. Plan ahead!**

Graduate Students in History 507 (CRN 27183)

Graduate students enrolled in History 507 will have modified requirements, most notably a longer paper (6000-8000 words) that deals more heavily with a particular subject's historiography or that engages in comparative or broader contextual analysis. The finished paper should be of publishable quality, but may employ the prevalent citation format and writing style in your field. There will also be additional readings and meetings that we will arrange at the relevant time, and collaboratively tailor them to your own research strengths and interests. Graduate students are however still beholden to all HIST 407 assigned work.

Other Policy Statements (the fine print)

100% Attendance: Because this is a participatory seminar that depends on your input, attendance is required at all class meetings and events; missing a session for any but the direst reasons will **strongly** damage your grade. We meet only once per week, so even one absence affects the whole seminar; naturally if you are missing for reasons beyond your control (health, weather, family), document it. Please inform me immediately if you anticipate an absence, documented or not, so that I can at least keep you abreast of developments in the seminar and collect any work that is due on time. Late arrival and early departure have a similarly detrimental effect on the seminar, and potentially upon your grade.

Special Needs and Gizmos: Although I'm otherwise a technophile, gadgets in class can be annoying and distracting, whether through peripheral screen movement, typing noise, or phone beeps. Laptop screens can also create a physical barrier that stifles conversation. Thus, I prefer paper, but we use a lot of PDFs and it can be very useful to have these, along with your own typed notes, just a few tab-switches away. If you use a device, I ask that you be judicious and mindful of the potential perils. I reserve the right to rescind this permission if it becomes necessary. Final grades will consider disruptions, whether directly or indirectly.

If you have physical or learning differences that require other kinds of special accommodations, official notice from the Accessible Education Center (see <http://aec.uoregon.edu>) is required. I will do everything in my power to address all documented needs, but I cannot fairly make exceptions without it.

Academic Honesty: The information in this subsection should be unnecessary for 99.9% of history majors, but unfortunate experience and surprisingly uneven familiarity with issues of academic honesty among students has prompted me to include it in all of my syllabi. I refer you, for your information, to Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:

<https://dos.uoregon.edu/academic-misconduct>

You will find there a number of relevant headings to policies on academic honesty and conduct. In our case, inadvertent plagiarism will be the greatest source of peril. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, you can consult Rampolla's relevant selections (pp. 103-110), or the UO's own particular guide to the subject:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

It is a gross understatement to say that academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic failing mark for the course. However, my personal view of the matter is that plagiarists have no place in an institution of higher learning, and certainly not in a capstone seminar. Therefore I will press for the *maximum* penalty for offenses of this nature, which means suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any concerns or you're not sure if something is plagiarism, ask me as soon as possible, *before* you turn it in for a grade. At the 407 level, there is no wiggle room.

Everything Else: In all other matters, I default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental policy. If you're not sure of something, please ask!

HIST 407: ENVIRONMENT AND COLONIALISM

Meeting and Reading Schedule (subject to modification until one week before a session)

Complete all session readings before the meeting assigned, and be ready to discuss them. All readings will be found on Canvas, at least in the form of links to e-journals. It is up to you to print them out and bring them to class for discussion! First-week readings will be distributed by email.

- T 9 Jan (Week 1) Introduction to, and Requirements of, the Seminar (in 221 LIB)**
 Reading (emailed): Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2005), 3-22.
 Douglas R. Weiner, “A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History,” *Environmental History* 10 (2005): 405-420.
 Activities: Introduction of seminar members, backgrounds, and interests
 Discussion of scope, goals, ambitions, and expectations
 Library resource orientation with David Woken (History reference librarian), 4:45-5:50pm (144 Knight)
- T 16 Jan (Week 2) What’s At the Intersection of Colonialism and the Environment? (221 LIB)**
 Rampolla: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 1-50 (ch. 1-3); skim at least, & use for reference.
 Reading: **(Catch up on Osterhammel and Weiner if necessary.)**
 Georgina Endfield and Samuel Randalls, “Climate and Empire,” in James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O’Gorman, ed., *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 21-43.
 Corey Ross, *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1-21.
 Richard H. Grove, “Colonial Conservation, Ecological Hegemony and Popular Resistance: Towards a Global Synthesis,” in *Ecology, Climate, & Empire: Colonialism and Global Environmental History, 1400-1940* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1997), 179-223.
 Discussion: historical research, types of sources, and refining your topics.
 Discussion: Devising a clear thesis/question and roadmap for research.
Assignment Due: Five possible paper topics, each with a brief description of broader aims or questions the paper might answer. See assignment list.
- T 23 Jan (Week 3) Biological Integration, Transformation, and Interpretation (375 McK)**
 Rampolla: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 51-61, 82-102, 118-50 *passim* (for citation models).
 Reading: Andrew Wear, “The Prospective Colonist and Strange Environments: Advice on Health and Prosperity,” in Christina Folke Ax et al., ed., *Cultivating the Colonies: Colonial States and their Environmental Legacies* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 19-46.
 James L. A. Webb, Jr., *Tropical Pioneers: Human Agency and Ecological Change in the Highlands of Sri Lanka, 1800-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 4-75.
 J. R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 15-62.
 Activities: Discussion: Basic style and citation standards (Rampolla).
 Discussion: Devising a clear thesis/question and roadmap for research, pt. II.
‘Assignment’ Meet with me on M, T, or W about your research subject; have some ideas!

- F 26 Jan (Week 3) Paper Proposal due by 5:00pm. See the proposal/paper description, p. 9.**
- T 30 Jan (Week 4) Colonial Ideas of Nature: Science, Exploitation, & Conservation (375 Mck)**
 Rampolla: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 61-81, 103-10.
 Reading: Corey Ross, “The Tin Frontier: Mining, Empire, and Environment in Southeast Asia, 1870s–1930s,” *Environmental History* 19 (2014): 454-79.
 Helen Tilley, “An Environmental Laboratory: ‘Native’ Agriculture, Tropical Infertility, and Ecological Models of Development,” ch. 3 in *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 115-68.
 Christian Pilegaard Hansen and Jens Friis Lund, “Imagined Forestry: The History of the Scientific Management of Ghana’s High Forest Zone,” *Environment and History* 23, no. 1 (2017): 3-38.
 Activities: Discussion: Evaluating sources for value, content, bias, et cetera.
 Primary source reading/viewing. (In-class exercise)
 How and when do we cite sources? Why? (In-class exercise)
- T 6 Feb (Week 5) Contests Over Spaces and Resources (375 Mck, from here on forward)**
‘Do or Die’ date for proposals that require revision.
 Rampolla: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 111-150 (relevant from here on out, for quotes/cites).
 Reading: Jan Bender Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 169-99.
 Cynthia Radding, *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests of Amazonia from Colony to Republic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 89-116.
 Nancy Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148-72.
 Activities: Discussion: How to think about revising your research focus and when.
 Discussion: How does that footnoting feature work, anyway?
Assignment Due: Short review (2-3 pp.) of the major book on your topic. See assignment list.
- T 13 Feb (Week 6) No regular seminar meeting. Individual meetings required.**
 Activities: Every seminar member must meet with me *at least* once between 20 Feb and 3 Mar to consult on paper progress. You may arrange more than one visit, but one (expect up to an hour) is required.
Assignment Due: Paper outline and revised thesis statement (Canvas). See assignment list.
- T 20 Feb (Week 7) No regular seminar meeting. Individual meetings required.**
 Activities: See prior week’s note for requirement.
- T 27 Feb (Week 8) No regular seminar meeting. Individual meetings required.**
 Activities: See prior week’s note for requirement.
- T 6 Mar (Week 9) Rough Draft Exchange (Short meeting)**
Assignment due: Draft papers due for exchange at class time. Bring 3 copies; see assignment list.
 Activities: Discussion of the current state of your work, problems and issues, and any other relevant matters that have arisen.
- T 13 Mar (Week 10) Small Group Critiques (Short meeting?)**
Assignment due: Peer Critiques. Bring two extra copies of each critique. See assignment list.

W 21 Mar

Final Papers due by 5:00pm via Canvas, email, and/or in my office at 311 McKenzie Hall. No extensions or incompletes will be permitted, barring documented emergencies. See the full paper description on p. 3.

Recapitulation of Major Due Dates (all should be tendered to Canvas as well):

Sunday, 14 Jan, 21 Jan, 28 Jan, 4 Feb	Canvas postings (2 questions) on readings by midnight
Tuesday, 16 Jan, 3:00PM	5 paper topics due
Friday, 26 Jan, 5:00PM	Paper proposals due
Tuesday, 6 Feb, 3:00PM (same)	'Do or Die' date for proposal revisions (if needed)
Tuesday, 13 Feb, 3:00PM	Short review of the major book or essay for your paper
Tuesday, 6 Mar, 3:00PM	Revised thesis statement and outline due
Tuesday, 13 Mar, 3:00PM	Rough drafts due (Bring copies for small groups)
Wednesday, 21 Mar, 5:00PM	Peer critiques due (Bring 2 extra copies)
	Final research paper due (NO EXTENSIONS)

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS: LIST & DESCRIPTIONS

Weeks 2-6 (Each Sunday prior): On 14 Jan, 21 Jan, 28 Jan, and 4 Feb, **before midnight**, I expect you to post two questions relevant to the readings on Canvas, in our course forum for that week. This question **may not** be a simple request for information, but rather a question of some intellectual and analytical substance regarding the readings or the big issues they raise connected to colonial environmental history or the historian's craft. Your post may be a couple of sentences to couch one question, or it may be a long paragraph (or more) if you have a lot of interrelated questions to ask about one idea that's piqued you. Besides forcing you to get the reading done early enough to digest it, devising a question also permits you to raise issues or questions that we can touch upon in seminar and so serves an important role in your participation grade. I also expect you to read over your fellow students' questions before seminar, and not to ask the same question someone else has (although you may build upon their thoughts). Even if you must be absent, I expect you to tender these questions on time, as with all the weekly assignments.

Week 2 (16 Jan): Bring five potential research topics, with a once-sentence statement for each with a possible question or research direction for the topic. Of the five topics, you must include the following: 1) An individual; 2) an event; 3) a social, cultural, or economic theme; 4) a historiographical topic. The goal of requiring this "spread" is to get you thinking in a variety of ways about devising topics and questions. Use Pretorius, Nasson, and any other relevant readings to help push you along. This is a brain-storming exercise, but try your best to choose topics you think may be new, or might offer new insights. Submit to Canvas too.

Those seminarians in African Studies or using this for Africa/Middle East credit must assure that most, if not all, of these are suitable, that is to say not dealing primarily with topics outside the relevant region.

Week 3 (22-24 Jan): Meet with me about your proposal, with topic/question ready. Plan on a half hour.

Week 3 (25 Jan): Paper proposal due. See page 3.

Week 5 (6 Feb): You are to write a review of the most important book (secondary source) on your topic as proposed, about two to three pages (500-800 words) in length. In this review, I want you to describe the book's topic, its thesis (that is, what is the book trying to prove or to say?), the main points of its argument, and assessment of its effectiveness as well as its use of sources. The purpose of this exercise is for you to think critically about historical writing and to begin to evaluate others' work. Submit to Canvas too.

Week 6 (13 Feb): Thesis statement and paper outline. By this time you should have an idea of generally where your paper is going. You are to tender on Canvas a one-sentence thesis statement (the answer to your research question!) together with a tentative outline in this classic "nested" format:

- I. Happy things
 - a. Warm donuts with good coffee on a winter morning
 - b. Pigs in mud
 - i. Wet mud
 - ii. Dry mud
- II. Unhappy things
 - a. Sending risqué text message to a parent by mistake
 - i. Worse: a sibling
 - ii. Worst: a grandparent
 - b. Startled rock hyraxes
 - i. They're already really, really ill-tempered
 - c. (et cetera)

You can annotate your points more fully with text if you wish, but the primary goal is to be clear. No, I don't know what thesis this outline could possibly address. Submit this to Canvas, too.

Week 9 (6 Mar): Tender of draft research papers. In addition to submitting your paper on Canvas for my commentary, bring three copies of your research paper drafts, whatever state they may be in. You will be organized into complementary groups of three or four writers (depending on seminar size) as peer groups for critique and commentary. Ideally you will be well along in your writing; matters of style will not be graded at this point. If you have not progressed significantly beyond your outline, your final paper will at the very least be denied the full value of the peer critiques the following week. In any case, be sure to continue your research and writing between weeks 9 and 10. Submit your draft to Canvas as well.

Week 10 (13 Mar): Peer critiques. Meet to exchange printed comments and talk about draft papers in small groups. One author will talk about their paper a bit, and then the readers will each present their individual commentaries/critiques, and discussion will follow. Every 25-30 minutes, I will signal the groups to move to the next paper and author. **Final papers are due 20 March, during finals week; see page 9.**

Format for the Commentaries/Critiques:

Your comments for each paper in your 4-person group **must** be typed and 2-3 pages (400-800 words) in length. Bring two extra copies, one for the paper's writer and one for me, but submit to Canvas as well.

At the outset of your commentary/critique you must briefly, in a sentence or two, **identify the subject of the paper and state its thesis as you, the reader, see it.** This seems elementary but it is hard for writers sometimes to distance themselves and read their work as an outside viewer might. If a thesis is hard for a paper's commentators to divine, that is a valid point for discussion.

After that, segue into talking about the paper itself, its strengths and weaknesses, any issues you might have about its approach, things you think might strengthen the paper or that you feel are superfluous, and the like. Keep these questions (and perhaps others) in mind as you write your evaluation:

- Is the core thesis clear, and does the author adequately support it?
- Is the organizational framework reasonable and logical? Can you follow the narrative or argument?
- Are key questions left unanswered or unaddressed? Does the approach presume or omit anything problematic?
- Is any portion of the paper particularly strong or weak?
- Do you think primary sources used judiciously, and in a way that contributes materially to the strength of the paper?
- Is the paper fair to other potential ways to read sources on its subject, if any?
- Does the paper adequately deal with the seminar context, that is, the interplay of colonialism and the environment?

In all of these cases you must assure that your comments are constructive, meaning that you should offer a solution to the issue at hand (which may be implicit in your comment, for example in corrections). You should also feel free to praise the author at strong points of the paper, and perhaps consider why those parts were so impressive and how to expand that strength. More specific comments, such as names or terms that are not defined, are at your discretion as to whether you wish to include them in the written comments or communicate them orally.

Generally you should avoid making comments on the prose in a draft unless it is exceptionally difficult to read or needs reorganization. We expect draft citations to be imperfect or tentative, so they should not be the subject of commentary. If you wish, you may also return a marked draft of the paper to the author, but that is entirely up to you as the reader and I do not require it.

(Thanks to Dr. Alex Dracobly for his input and inspiration in refining the assignments and critiques. –LFB)