Y‌‌‌‍‍‌‍‍‌‍‌‍‌‍‍‌‌‌‌ou are required to write a 6 page or 1500 words comparative book review for this class. Please follow the guidelines below and those listed in the syllabus. The choice of books is up to you, but they should be related in some way and written by noted scholars (preferably historians) for an academic audience. Time-Life, Facts on File, textbooks, coffee table books, young adult, or similar books are not acceptable choices, nor are novels or other works of fiction. Most memoirs fail to meet these criteria. Your instructor must approve your choices. Please see the list of preapproved book pairs for this course. You may not choose books already assigned for this course. You may not read two books by the same author. The key to choosing good books is to choose books by noted authors who make specific arguments and advance the field of military history in some way. This will give you something to write about and critique. Books that offer bland overviews of broad topics will not give you much to write about in your review, and your grade will suffer. Remember that you can also order books through interlibrary loan at your local or college library and that [Amazon.com](https://amazon.com/) sells used books at reasonable prices. Do not wait until the last minute to choose your books and expect your instructor to approve a poor choice. Reviews of unapproved books will receive a failing grade. Your comparative book review should conform to those found in academic journals such as the American Historical Review, Journal of American History, Journal of Military History, Diplomatic History, Reviews in American History, War and History, etc. If you have never looked at an academic history journal, you should acquaint yourself with the format. For each book, you should address the following four areas: [1.Provide](https://1.provide/) an overview of the book. What is it about? Identify the major events and personalities examined, the key concepts employed, and so forth. Try to cover each book within three or four paragraphs. [2.Analyze](https://2.analyze/) each book's thesis. What is the author's main argument or arguments? Is the author trying to demonstrate, prove, or refute something? Is the author involved in any historiographical debates? If so, what position does the author take, and what does the author add to the debate? [3.Offer](https://3.offer/) a critical assessment of each book's strengths and weaknesses. What do you think of the authors' theses? Do they do a good job of proving them? What sources did they use: personal experience, unpublished government documents, private manuscript collections, published primary or secondary works? If relevant, did they consult sources written in the appropriate foreign languages? Do you think they addressed all the relevant issues? What (if anything) did they leave out or ignore? What were the authors' qualifications for writing such books? Did they have a particular bias or ax to grind? How do the assessments of each historian differ from one another? Do they reach similar or divergent conclusions? How do you explain their different opinions? How do they compare with your perspective, that of the textbook, or other books that you have read on the subject? [4.Appraise](https://4.appraise/) the books' historical value. What do these books contribute to our understanding of the subject? How useful would an interested historian find these books? What makes you‌‌‌‍‍‌‍‍‌‍‌‍‌‍‍‌‌‌‌ think so? Try to place the books within the context of one or more of the main themes and concepts discussed in the course. [5.And](https://5.and/) of course, you must compare the books in detail, not just in the material they cover, but in the approaches the authors take, their methodology, their theses, conclusions, and importance to the historiography of their subject. Obviously, this is not an all-inclusive list, and other topics are likely to come up as you write your review. The most important point is that you concentrate on ideas rather than a historical summation. Structuring your review is up to you. Some writers discuss one book in its entirety, then the other, and then compare them. Others focus on particular topics and discuss the books together. This is generally the best way to proceed as it forces you to focus on the authors' ideas rather than simply summarizing the books. Do not turn this assignment into a conventional term paper! You must critique and compare the books. It never hurts to consult other sources or to consult published reviews to see what other writers thought of the book, but do not copy them (that is plagiarism!). Book Review Digest and Book Review Index (found in any good library) will help you find reviews. You may want to find journal articles written by the author or that discuss the author's work. Important books often stimulate discussion in historical journals. Also worth looking at is Contemporary Authors, which may give you some biographical information on the author. You may also be able to find information about the author on the Internet. You must provide a full bibliographic citation for the books you read and for any other sources that you used. This should appear at the top of your paper for both books in the following format: Archibald Turnbull and Clifford Lord, History of United States Naval Aviation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949. Pp. ix, 345. Format & Quick Suggestions: Your paper should be neat, grammatically correct, and well written. It should adhere to the above structural guidelines and contain solid introductory and concluding paragraphs that are in agreement with one another. Papers lacking these will be penalized. Focus on ideas rather than a historical summary. We all know who won particular wars. Your review needs to focus on the question 'why' and the arguments the authors make. Be sure to illustrate your points with specific examples. Avoid using too many quotations, and quote only when absolutely necessary. Be sure to mention who you are quoting. You may use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations (Author, page #). The latter is best for quotations from the books you are reviewing. Avoid contractions. Keep a copy of your paper (in case it is lost). Avoid overwriting (using several sentences when a single, short sentence will do). Avoid the passive voice. Avoid using phrases such as "seems to," "maybe," "appears to," and similar phrases that weaken your writing. Write with confidence. Write about history in the past tense. Do not play games with fonts and margins. If you are using a word processor that has spell check or a grammar checker--use it. Be careful, though, because their suggestions are not always correct. Submit your paper in Microsoft Word ([--.doc](https://--.doc/)) or Rich Text format ([--.rtf](https://--.rtf/)). Ask if you have questions‌‌‌‍‍‌‍‍‌‍‌‍‌‍‍‌‌‌‌.

**THE BOOK**

Diamond, Jared M. ***Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies***. 1st ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company; 1997. 480 p. A biologist of breath-taking interdisciplinarity, Diamond set out to explain the global mal-distribution of advanced industrialized states. He found that the world’s most advanced civilizations, concentrated in the Eurasian Ecumene and North America, enjoyed advantages of climate, natural resources, geography, social and political organization, and technological development that reinforced one another.