Introduction to Article Summaries

Each summary should be no more than one typed page in length, single spaced. If you want to make more extensive notes, do it elsewhere. If you quote directly, be sure to place in quotation marks and give page. E.g. “Quotation” (93).

The summary should include the following information:

- Citation
- Question presented
- Main point(s)
- Prior literature
- Source of Data
- Argument or Findings & Conclusions
- Comments

PLACE DIRECT QUOTES IN QUOTATION MARKS AND GIVE PAGE NUMBER.

**Citation:** Use ASA format.
Author Last, Author First. Year. “Title of article.” Journal Title X: y-z.
Where X=volume number, y=first page of article, z=last page of article.

**Question Presented:** Each article will be written by an author trying to make a contribution to the literature by examining a problem. This is just one or two sentences capturing the purpose of the article.

**Main points:** This is the author’s answer to the question. Very short, not more than four sentences. Obviously, your answer should be more than “yes” or “no.”

**Prior literature:** Each article will discuss some of the works already written on the subject. You should note here only the works discussed at some length. It is enough that you cite the author and year along with the major point for which the work is cited. Separate citations with a semicolon. E.g. Smith 2010 [family authority in wartime]; Jones 2011 [population changes following civil wars]. Be sure to choose the most significant works. Your ability to discern these will affect your grade.

**Data:** All articles assigned to you are research articles, and will contain data. In some of the articles, the data are quite diffuse and anecdotal, used more for the sake of illustration than to test a hypothesis. Briefly state these sources. Data can be quantitative and qualitative. It can be harder to find the source of qualitative data, but it is always given one way or another in the articles assigned for this class.

**Argument or Findings & Conclusions:** The papers assigned may be theoretical and/or empirical, but in every paper the author is trying to convince us of something. A theoretical paper will be trying to show us a different way of thinking about the problem, and this section is a summary of the author’s “argument.” Empirical papers add to our body of data. If the paper is an
empirical study, either quantitative or qualitative, the author presents “findings and conclusions.” In any case you will label this section: “Argument, Findings & Conclusions”.

This will be the main part of the summary, consisting of two to three paragraphs. You need to read the chapter carefully in order to be able to condense it adequately for the purposes of this summary. If you want to take more extensive notes, you should do so, but in another document. Here, you are showing that you understand the chapter well enough to be able to express a complex argument in a few sentences, but with enough specificity to be able to explore the article’s depth.

If you use the author's words, be sure to put them in quotes and give page numbers in parentheses.

**Comments:** This is your opportunity to comment on the paper. Do you agree or disagree, and why? What use can you make of this paper? How might it help you in your analysis of family? Be sure to keep your opinions in this section, and not in the body of the summary. Although, in general, your opinions are your opinions, sometimes the comments may show that you did not understand the article, and you will receive a lower grade. Be as careful here as in the rest of the summary.