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Guidelines on how to analyze a social science article (or social science documentary film)

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GUIDELINES ON HOW TO ANALYZE A SOCIAL SCIENCE ARTICLE (OR SOCIAL SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY FILM)—keep this and use it regularly as you read, study for exams, write papers

1. What group of people, in what geographical area, are discussed in article?
2. What time period is covered in article?
3. What is the major point or argument of the article? What intellectual problem is addressed?
4. Does the author make more than one point? If so, which are the primary arguments and which the secondary ones? How do primary and secondary arguments relate to each other?
5. What conclusions does the author reach? Are any conclusions implied but not stated?
6. What kind of data does the author use to demonstrate his/her point? Is there more than one kind of data involved? Observational? Statistical? Questionnaires? Historical?
7. Does the author cite the work of others? If so is it used to bolster the author's own argument? Or to refute others and their viewpoints? Don't confuse the author's arguments with those of others being cited, whose ideas may differ.
8. Is there any indication of how that data was collected? Discussion of methods?
9. Does the author make any cross-cultural comparisons between the people/area/problem under study and other groups/areas elsewhere, or is that comparison left to you?
9. Do the author's points and conclusions have any relevance beyond the immediate group or location under study? Does the work touch on issues you recognize? Are its conclusions generalizable?
10. How could you use this article's ideas if you were writing a paper, doing a research project or applying for grant funding on a similar or related topic?