REVIEWER GUIDELINES FOR MTO SUBMISSIONS

Revised April, 2021

We are extremely grateful for the uncompensated and under-recognized labor of reviewers. We encourage reviewers to think of their task as much about mentoring and collaborating with authors as it is about evaluation.

MTO allows scholars to sign their reviews. Some scholars will be uncomfortable signing, but scholars who can offer signed feedback are encouraged to do so.

Sample structure of a review:

The structure below is offered as an optional template. At minimum, we need a recommendation and a list of major concerns. You may also add comments for the editors not to be shared with the author(s).

1. Summary

2. Main strengths of the article

3. Major concerns

4. Minor issues (small errors and proofreading corrections; give par. #s or page #s)

5. Recommendation:

    a. accept outright.

    b. accept contingent on minor revisions

    c. revise and resubmit (article is promising but significant revisions are needed; you will be asked to review the revised version, although this review can be briefer than the initial review)

    d. decline (unpromising or unsuitable; please identify the problems that led to your recommendation)

Definitions of recommendations:

Accept. An article receiving an ″accept″ decision moves immediately to copyediting.

Accept pending revisions. An article receiving an "accept pending revisions" decision requires the author to respond to reviewers' reports, and the revisions and response are evaluated by the editorial team. In general, if the requested revisions require technical expertise to evaluate or pertain to issues that cannot be addressed at the level of the sentence or paragraph, "accept pending revisions" is not the appropriate recommendation.

Revise and resubmit. An article receiving a ″revise and resubmit″ decision invites the author to address significant issues in the original submission. Implicit is an understanding that if an author addresses each issue, then the article will be publishable. If a reviewer cannot exhaustively state the issues that stand in the way of acceptance, then ″revise and resubmit″ is not the appropriate recommendation. Framed differently, if the requested revisions would result in a considerably different submission, ″revise and resubmit″ is not the appropriate recommendation.

Decline. An article receiving a "decline" decision is rejected from the journal and cannot be resubmitted.

General issues:

Timeliness:

Please submit the review on time. Our quick turnaround is one of the most attractive aspects of MTO for authors—especially pre-tenure authors. If you need more time to complete your review, you may ask for 1 or 2 more weeks, but if you cannot do the review within that timeframe, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can reassign the submission without further delays.

Tone:

In your report, please be constructive, kind, and mentoring. Be specific and detailed about your recommendations, and give examples illustrating your comments. Whenever you can, identify possible ways to fix problems, not just the problems themselves. Avoid addressing authors directly as ″you;″ instead address your comments to ″the article." The editorial team at *MTO* silently edits reviews so that they remain constructive for authors and avoid bullying language.

Length:

We want authors to feel that their submitted manuscript was carefully examined and considered, even if the decision is to decline to publish the article. There is no set length for reviews, but around 2000 words is the norm. We not uncommonly receive reviews that are several single-spaced pages long, which are especially helpful to new authors.

Questions you may wish to consider:
(This list is optional and not exhaustive.)

Topic and introduction: Is the article appropriate for the journal? Is the article′s thesis clearly stated? Does this research make a new contribution to the field? Does the author make a convincing case for the usefulness, importance, and interest of this research? Do the title, abstract and introduction accurately reflect the article′s contents?

Scholarly context: Does the article engage with current research on the topic? Does the author clearly identify the article's new contribution in light of this research? Are there any conspicuous omissions of important and relevant works?

We especially encourage reviewers to make suggestions on citing and engaging with publications by scholars of groups historically underrepresented in our field.

Body of the article: Does the article's text bear out its thesis? Are the claims overstated or understated, and are they convincingly supported with evidence? Is the methodology appropriate? Are the analyses or other interpretations correct or at least potentially convincing? Are the conclusions justified? Does the author demonstrate the article's claims or merely assert them?

Supporting materials: Are there examples where needed? Are there superfluous examples? Are the citations adequate and appropriate? Are direct quotations or other specific information left uncited? Are the footnotes excessive or overly tangential? (We note that expecting musical examples to be typeset can be an exclusionary practice and discourage reviewers from basing their evaluations on the use of particular graphical styles.)

Organization and length: Is the article clearly organized? Does the order of topics make sense, or should anything be reordered? Is there a logical flow of topics, or are there large digressions that should be omitted? Is the article of sufficient length to treat its topic adequately? Should it be expanded or cut down?

Writing: Accepted articles receive two rounds of copyediting as well as proofreading. As grammar criticism can be a racialized practice, we discourage reviewers from basing their final recommendation on matters of grammar and tone. This, of course, presumes that the writing sufficiently enables the ideas, claims, and argumentation to be understood.