

## RECENT TEXTBOOKS ON LATIN AMERICA

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- LATIN AMERICA: POLITICAL CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT.* Second edition. By RUSSELL H. FITZGIBBON and JULIO A. FERNANDEZ. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981. Pp. 374. \$13.95.)
- LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT.* Edited by HOWARD J. WIARDA and HARVEY F. KLINE. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979. Pp. 525. \$18.95.)
- LATIN AMERICA, A CONCISE INTERPRETIVE HISTORY.* Third edition. By E. BRADFORD BURNS. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982. Pp. 310. \$12.95 paper.)
- LATIN AMERICA COMES OF AGE.* By THOMAS J. KNIGHT. (Metuchin, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979. Pp. 325. \$17.50.)
- LATIN AMERICA, AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY.* Edited by BRIAN W. and OLWYN M. BLOUET. (New York: John Wiley, 1982. Pp. 300. \$18.95.)

By definition textbooks exist to provide an introduction to a particular body of knowledge. As such, texts usually emphasize breadth of coverage over great detail. Because even the largest texts must be limited in size, authors will stress what they believe are the most important matters. The responses of instructors to any text, in turn, is likely to be based on how closely their notions of priority match those of the author. The considerable range of views on what a student should learn about an area as complex and divergent as Latin America makes room for a large variety of texts.

The five recently published works examined here can be categorized by their disciplinary focus, their format of presentation, and the diversity of authorship found within a single volume. *Latin America: Political Culture and Development*, by Russell Fitzgibbon and Julio Fernández, and *Latin American Politics and Development*, edited by Howard Wiarda and Harvey Kline, are predominantly political. E. Bradford Burns's *Latin America, A Concise Interpretive History* and Thomas Knight's *Latin America Comes of Age* are historical. *Latin America, An Introductory Survey*, edited by Brian and Olwyn Blouet, is geographic. The formats of the five texts vary considerably. Again, the Fitzgibbon and Fernández

work and that by Wiarda and Kline are similar in that both take a country-by-country approach. Each country chapter in the Fitzgibbon and Fernández text is divided into sections titled "Political Culture and Environment," "Governmental and Political Structures," and "Developmental Prospects." The Wiarda and Kline country chapters follow a similar schema, with greater variation used in headings for material covering a general background, two sections on political history, political institutions and groups, public policy in the most recent period, and "Prospects." The two historical works differ more. While Burns proceeds more or less chronologically from Independence to the present, particular themes predominate in most of the text. Knight's work is more heterogeneous, with two sections providing a historical summary and broad background for South and Middle America, followed by a third section on Latin American influence in the world. The geography reader edited by Brian and Olwyn Blouet is probably the most diverse, employing the rather loose theme of "modernization" (which is mentioned only in the preface) to provide some unity.

*Latin America: Political Culture and Development* is an updating of a considerably longer edition that Russell Fitzgibbon alone published a decade earlier. The new version mentions events through mid-1979, with some material probably added by Julio Fernández after Fitzgibbon's death. To this reviewer, the book and its various country chapters present a largely accurate, if rather unimaginative account of the obvious political institutions and significant events of recent years. While describing institutions is unavoidable, the treatment here seems somewhat mechanical in its insistence on covering exactly the same topics for every country. Another traditional aspect of this text is its emphasis on individual leaders. But policy-making receives little treatment for individual countries except in terms of particular actions of specified governments, each presented in historical order. No real attempt was made to provide much overview of policy in terms of the seemingly fundamental questions of distribution and relative group influence. Some readers may find some of the personal views expressed to be rather offensive. For example, the early-nineteenth-century Mexican leader Santa Anna is described as appealing "mightily to the immature Mexican political mentality" (p. 24). The Colombian Gaitán is portrayed as "rabble-rousing, and opportunistic," as well as "charismatic" (p. 163). Cuba under Fidel Castro is characterized as having become "the dark and fateful ground of current revolutionary experimentation" (p. 101). One cannot help asking whether this type of interjection is really necessary.

The text edited by Wiarda and Kline, *Latin American Politics and Development*, is also based on relatively short country studies, but it seems to me considerably more informative and better executed. In

particular, most of the authors of the country chapters seem to have a much surer grasp of their material than that demonstrated by Fitzgibbon and Fernández. Many of the chapter authors are among the most respected individuals publishing work on the politics of their particular countries. Examples are Ken Erickson on Brazil, James Malloy on Bolivia, Scott Palmer on Peru, Evelyn Stevens on Mexico, Phil Taylor on Uruguay, Arturo and Samuel Valenzuela on Chile, Thomas Walker on Nicaragua, and Howard Wiarda on the Dominican Republic. In reading their chapter accounts, one gets an excellent sense of what is happening in each country, even if it is related briefly. As my comments on Fitzgibbon and Fernández have already suggested, I believe that some account of public policy in terms of the "outputs" of government is important in discussing politics at the national level. I was therefore generally pleased with the depictions in the Wiarda and Kline text as to what individual governments and regimes have been doing and the effects of their policies on the lives of the citizenry. The authors who contributed to the Wiarda and Kline text view political economics as important, and the history they present is more interpretative than merely chronological. If they share a common prejudice, it is the sympathy of most of the chapter authors for the typical citizen of each country. The sizable introductory section, which comprises about one-fifth of the text, seems genuinely helpful. Here the editors of the volume set out a succinct series of generalizations that form a context for the country studies. Institutions are balanced against what are perceived to be typical patterns of group interaction and significant cultural norms. The influence of the United States is discussed in what seems to me to be a nicely balanced manner. While not all readers will necessarily agree with Wiarda and Kline's conclusions, I suspect that most will consider their treatment reasonably objective. Given the wide variety of possible views on certain controversial aspects of U.S. influence, this evaluation is meant to suggest that the Wiarda and Kline work is worth taking seriously, even though it is an introductory text rather than a study meant for graduate students or academics.

Moving to the more overtly historical texts, next comes Burns's *Latin America, A Concise Interpretive History*, here in its third edition. Its main focus is on the last two centuries, with only some sixty of its almost three hundred pages dealing with the period before Independence. This distribution is reflected in the subtitle, *A Concise Interpretive History*. What is being presented is not a strict year-by-year or country-by-country kind of history, but one that stresses the nature of socio-political change in Latin America. Of particular importance is the theme of Latin nationalist reaction to a growing U.S. economic and military involvement, often as an ally of the local oligarchs. Burns's purpose is to explain to a U.S. audience weaned on Cold War rhetoric that many

people in the United States have misinterpreted recent events in Latin America as a struggle between “the ideologies of capitalism and communism,” when what is at stake is “a local conflict between reformers and counterreformers” (p. viii). Burns’s chapter titles and subheadings illustrate his way of proceeding: “National Consolidation,” “The Emergence of the Modern State,” “The Popular Challenge,” “The Presence of the United States,” “The Middle Sectors in Politics,” “Mexico’s Violent Response to the Past,” “Nationalism as a Force for Change,” “A Flirtation with Democracy,” “The Revolutionary Option,” “Farewell to Democratic Reform,” “Military Models for Change,” and “United States Options.” Burns seeks to explain modern social upheaval as indigenous responses to traditional inequalities. On the whole, Burns’s text is well written, although in places it is marred by typos, factual errors, and odd interpretations (like the Somozas governing until 1978 [p. 158], Alfonso López Pumarejo being described as a “strongman” [p. 231], and General Líber Seregni as the “Tupamaro candidate” [p. 267]). The manner of presentation is not excessively taxing intellectually, but its message is of considerable importance.

While the Burns volume has an essential unity arising out of its development of certain interrelated themes, the same cannot be said for Thomas Knight’s *Latin America Comes of Age*. Knight’s text seems little more than a highly descriptive account of mundane historical and social facts. The chronological sections on South and Middle America are extremely compressed, with much important material simply omitted. Each region is also inadequately covered in the extremely brief remarks on such major topics as geography, demography, economic development, politics, social structure, and literature and the arts. In a similar fashion, the author concludes with a series of comments on Latin America’s ties to the rest of the world, especially the United States. The uninspired journalistic quality of presentation is exemplified by such comments as: “Shave off all of North America northward of a line from Jacksonville, Florida, to Fairbanks, Alaska, and invert the remainder. The rest is much like South America” (p. 33); or, “The direction race mixing is taking so far in most of South America is toward the whitening of the population” (p. 43); or, “The political order is presently disrupted by the struggle between the representatives of the landowners on the one hand and of the middle sectors on the other” (p. 57). Many similar observations could be quoted from this volume, which leads me to conclude that even for the most elementary students, this work is not a very good one.

The last work under review here is *Latin America, An Introductory Survey*, a collection of essays on Latin American geography edited by Brian and Olwyn Blouet. Most of its articles are of a more sophisticated caliber than one would expect in the typical textbook. If this volume is

meant as an introductory survey, as suggested by its subtitle, such a survey would seem intended for only the more sophisticated student. A wide range of geographical topics are covered, including the physical environment in Latin America, aboriginal and colonial patterns of economic activity, transportation systems, types of agriculture, demography and migration patterns, the development of urban areas, mining and manufacturing, and international trade. Many of the articles have a historical component, tracing the evolution of different conditions over time from the colonial period up to recent events. Chapters such as "The Latin American City" by Charles Sargent and "Mining and Manufacturing" by Alan Gilbert present a thorough summary of key issues and recent bibliographical sources involved in the topic under discussion. My major complaint about what otherwise seems to be an excellent collection is the lack of any common framework to link these pieces together. There are no chapter introductions by the editors, which leaves each essay to stand on its own. Most, however, can do so without any trouble. The brief preface by the editors, with its discussion of "modernization," unfortunately does not provide an adequate sense of unity or direction to this volume of mostly first-rate pieces.

In conclusion, I believe that one telling criterion for evaluation is whether I would consider using any of these textbooks in one of my own classes. If the class was an interdisciplinary undergraduate introduction to Latin America, portions of the works of Wiarda and Kline, Burns, and the Blouets might be of interest (although parts of the latter work might be beyond some students). Each of these three texts might also fit into a single-discipline introductory course on Latin America if supplemented by other texts and specialized journal articles.