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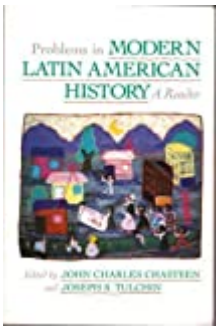

John Charles Chasteen, Joseph S. Tulchin, eds. *Problems in Modern Latin American History: A Reader.* Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994. xvii + 339 pp. $21.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8420-2328-3; $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8420-2327-6.

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Any professor who has faced the task of organizing a semester-long class which covers the eighteen countries and two hundred year time span traditionally understood as "Modern Latin America" knows what a daunting task this can be. Naturally, compromises and omissions are the result of any such endeavor. Chasteen and Tulchin have designed *Problems in Modern Latin American History* to complement a survey textbook in an introductory Modern Latin American History class. The stated goal of this book is to encourage the development of students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Rather than follow a chronological, geographic, or thematic approach, this reader contains primary and secondary texts organized around nine "problems." Although Chasteen and Tulchin are listed as editors of this volume, each of the nine sections was the responsibility of a scholar who wrote an introduction, compiled a bibliography, and selected the texts. The nine sections with their corresponding "unit authors" are:

Lyman Johnson, "Independence"; John Charles Chasteen, "Caudillos"; Mary Butler, "Brazilian Slavery"; Michael Conniff, "Populism"; Gertrude Yeager, "Women"; Leslie Bary, "Culture"; Peter Klaren, "Development"; Hugo Castillo, "Central American Revolutionary Movements"; Joseph Tulchin, "Inter-American Relations."

Tulchin published a reader over twenty years ago similarly titled *Problems in Latin American History: The Modern Period.* The present volume is not intended to be a second edition, but rather a new book which reflects changes in the field. Thus, this book does not only include political histories, but also discussions of social history, culture, gender, etc. The goal is to "present a wide variety of perspectives and a multiplicity of voices" (xvii).

Space is always an issue in textbooks, but what is striking about this reader are the themes that it does not discuss. Several of these themes could easily have been incorporated into existing sections of the book. For example, there is no discussion of environmental issues even though they could have been included in the section on development. Ethnicity is also largely ignored. The "voices" which this book presents are those "of guerrillas, poets, presidents, economists, peasants, philosophers, industrial workers" and scholars (xvii). Intellectuals, presidents, and traditional elites, however, take precedence over workers, peasants, and the disempowered. Indians appear only as one of these other categories rather than with their own identities. Aside from two excerpts from Rigoberta Menchu's autobiography, there is little here which a professor could use to help students understand the resurgence of ethnic identity in Latin America. Perhaps ten years ago this volume would have appeared

innovative; today it merely reflects past changes in the field.

Several of the book's nine sections present traditional perspectives of Latin American History. Unfortunately, this book begins with Lyman Johnson advancing a rather extensive defense of why Independence should be seen as a watershed in Latin American History. Emphasizing a break in elite political structures seems out of touch with a field which is moving increasingly toward an emphasis on social history in which the continuities of people's everyday lives are more dramatic. Similarly, the book ends with Tulchin's section on inter-American relations, a misnomer as it deals exclusively with U.S.-Latin American relations. Although scholars have largely ignored the topic, there are significant issues to be explored in the relations between Latin American states. Examining subjects such as the 1969 Soccer War or the recently-renewed Peruvian-Ecuadorian border dispute could be used effectively to help explore the complexity of Latin American identities.

Despite these shortcomings, other sections of the book are unusually well-done. In the chapter on slavery, Butler presents a good selection of primary accounts even though the literature on slave narratives in Latin America is not as extensive as it is in the United States. Her introduction is a good interpretive essay, and the section ends with a useful bibliographic essay. Likewise, Castillo also presents a good selection of documents on revolutionary movements in Central America. Given the richness of writings on this topic throughout Latin America, it is unfortunate that the section focuses on the small subregion of Central America. Castillo, however, compensates for this by including documents from Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Carlos Marighella which help place this history in a broader intellectual context. Similarly, Yeager's section on women and Bary's section on culture emphasize a range of primary source documents rather than simply excerpting sections from North American scholars' writings on the subject.

The unit authors had a large degree of autonomy in constructing each chapter. The result is annoying editorial inconsistencies such as different footnote styles. Nor is there consistency in the authors' introductions to each section. Several authors present a narrative introduction to or summary of the selected texts, whereas others write more sophisticated interpretive essays. Likewise, several sections end with simple bibliographies and others include more useful bibliographic essays.

Since survey textbooks attempt to synthesize the material contained in academic research, professors look to supplementary texts to introduce students to primary sources. Some unit authors in this volume include mostly secondary sources while others focus on primary sources and others present a mix of the two. Chasteen and Tulchin see this blend of primary and secondary sources as a bonus; others may see it as a liability. Given language barriers, some will certainly wish for more of an emphasis on primary source material in order to make such items accessible to students.

This volume would be difficult to adapt to a course which follows a chronological or geographic approach. How well it fits in to a class with a thematic approach would depend on how closely Chasteen and Tulchin's choices match those of the professor. Ultimately, the usefulness of such a reader will only emerge in terms of how well it is received in the classroom. As with any text, its omissions and structure will prevent some professors from using it. As a side note, an unintended but perhaps useful purpose for this tome would be to summarize significant works in the field for graduate students who are preparing to take their PhD exams.

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