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Latin America: Its Problems and Its Promise: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. (5th edition). Jan Kippers Black ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 2011 Maps, tables, figures, illustrations, bibliographical references and index. ix + 608 pp.

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Now in its fifth edition, *Latin America: Its Problems and its Promise* has joined the ranks of venerable standbys for university courses on the region. Pitched to upper level undergraduate and to graduate students, the book will also interest general readers. Editor Jan Knippers Black has kept the volume current by recruiting fresh authors, covering new trends and assuring that case studies have been updated.

The editor's introduction identifies the successive schools of thought that have guided scholarly analysis and informed policy. These include cultural approaches, modernization theory, dependency and world systems theory, and neoliberalism. Interwoven here is a concern for justice that foreshadows the political perspective of the book, which is critical of neoliberalism, skeptical about globalization, and sympathetic to the poor.

The remaining chapters are evenly divided between case studies and thematic material that applies across the region. The thematic section covers physical and human geography, colonial history, the independence process and foreign relations in addition to contemporary concerns such as environmentalism and globalization. Among case studies, the Caribbean islands are treated as a group, except for Cuba, as are the Central American states but for Panama. Uruguay and Paraguay are paired, but larger South American countries are covered individually.

Contributors grounded in geography, anthropology, ecology, political science, history, economics and sociology add scope unmatched by competing introductory texts on the region. The roster favors veteran case specialists such as Nelson Valdés (Cuba), Steve Ropp (Panama), Cynthia McClintock (Peru), David Fleischer (Brazil), and Anthony Maingot (the Caribbean). A mix of old hands (Jane Jaquette on women in politics) and newer ones (Wendy Muse Sinek on Latin American activism) tackle issues that have come to the fore in recent years. In a gesture that pays compliment to the book's longevity, emeritus faculty pass the scholarly baton by teaming up with a new generation of scholars (Thomas W. Walker writing with Christine Wade on Central America; David Stea partnering with G. Shane Lewis on the environment).

Progressive politics inform most authors' interpretations, but with the partial exception of the concluding chapter and treatment of Cuba, this edition is not unduly burdened by ideology. Some authors have been policy practitioners, including former Paraguayan senator and ambassador to the Organization of American States Diego Abente (chapter on Paraguay), former U.S. ambassador to Cuba Wayne Smith (U.S.-Latin American Relations), and current U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela (Chile). Contributors rightly blame the George W. Bush administration for squandering the sympathy that Latin Americans offered after the 9-11 attacks, securitizing hemispheric politics and dragging U.S.- Latin American relations to a new low.

At over 500 pages, the volume is a comprehensive introduction to Latin America. Its copious prose is minimally relieved by maps, tables, black-and-white photographs and illustrations. Some entries (Peter Blakewell on colonialism) are more accessible than others (Jorge Nef on globalization), and undergraduates may find the denser sections heavy going, but the chapters are short and the quality of analysis is consistently high. Chapters can be understood in isolation, allowing faculty to match assignments to students' capacities and omnivorous readers to graze freely. For example, the chapter on social movements might usefully be paired with the case study on Bolivia to understand how the indigenous leader of that country's *coca* growers syndicate rose to the presidency.

As William P. Glade notes in his chapter on economic restructuring, the volume is of necessity "a quick romp through the centuries" (pg 101). Making judicious decisions on what to exclude, authors deftly sum up complex histories in order to emphasize more recent developments. Some chapters appear minimally updated to acknowledge changes in political leadership, but many have undergone deeper revision to cover events such as

the 2008 constitutional reform in Ecuador and the regional reverberations of the U.S. economic slump.

Some contributors include endnotes and suggested readings, but this is not a research enterprise. The chapters do not follow a common format or answer a predetermined set of theoretically driven questions. Authors employ elements of the frameworks expounded in the opening chapter but make no pretense of formally testing theoretical propositions.

Instead, the case studies provide accurate political histories and highlight distinguishing features in an engaging tone. Thematic chapters are also largely descriptive. Yet along the way, the authors identify the main dilemmas of Latin American development, teach essential concepts for understanding them, and tease out underlying socio-political contradictions. Is Panama best thought of as a nation-state or a transnational global city? Has oil wealth privileged Venezuela and primed it for democracy, or does commodity dependence undercut institution-building in ways that encourage authoritarian leadership?

Contributors emphasize causal dynamics rather than just relating events. Thus for example the chapter on the environment does not settle for lamenting deforestation but instead links it to monocrop export agribusiness that uses irrigation and chemical fertilizers. It then digs even deeper, explaining that squatters in the Amazon tend to be recent arrivals less familiar with local ecology, and their insecure land tenure drives them to plant annual crops rather than sustainable perennials.

In her conclusion, the editor revisits the relationship between the United States and Latin America in light of the 2001 terrorist attacks, Iraq war, and 2008 financial meltdown with its ensuing global economic crisis. She argues that while Latin America has begun to recover, the United States is in a protracted decline, as indicated by the massive U.S. foreign debt and persistent high unemployment. She identifies convergences between the United States and Latin America, not necessarily of interests but of problems such as narcotics trafficking, immigration, environmental degradation and weakening of the rule of law. This parallel is somewhat forced as differences in political culture and economic development still outstrip similarities, but the author astutely recognizes that the United States can no longer credibly claim primacy in the U.S.–Latin America relationship. International relations texts routinely urge regional cooperation to solve shared problems, but Dr. Black proposes that in light of past U.S. hegemony, Latin America might benefit more from inattention.

The book is largely directed to a U.S. audience and Black seizes the opportunity to comment on failed U.S. policy, tracing it to a degraded democracy and depicting U.S. elections as a sham intended to disempower the working class. Hers is a radical critique but it reflects a desire to renovate the U.S. political system rather than a dismissal of politics as superstructure. Through social movements as well as the ballot box, Latin America has entered an exciting period of political innovation that the volume's contributors understand as a corrective to neoliberalism's exclusion of poor and indigenous citizens. The editor surmises that the United States may now have more to learn from Latin America than vice versa.

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