

Alan Brinkley and Davis Dyer, eds. *The American Presidency*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Pp. xv, 608. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-628-38273-9.

Authors and editors Alan Brinkley and Davis Dyer have woven the interpretive essays of thirty-nine scholars along with their own into a work that covers the abbreviated stories of the forty-two chief executives and how their tenure in office has collectively changed the institution of the presidency. This elite group of historians, which includes Jean H. Baker, Robert Dallek, Michael Kazin, Drew R. McCoy, Roger Morris, and Alan Taylor, offer a variety of perspectives along with some new insights that keeps *The American Presidency* fresh. As a collection of quality narratives, this work is of high value to a vast audience. Adding more than biographical information, the contributors have masterfully intertwined the social, cultural, economic, and political climates that each president faced. However, essays on William Henry Harrison and James A. Garfield focus more on biographical information due to the brevity of their terms as president. An unexpected surprise is how men such as Thomas Jefferson are depicted differently by historians who write about them as vice-president and those who write about them as president.

The battles to remove or tighten the restraints of the Constitution on the presidency are well chronicled. Nicely documented is the expansion of executive power in the twentieth-century (at least until Watergate) which in turn weakened the legislative branch. Most chapters include an analysis of each president's best traits and character faults, their optimism towards a bright future and pessimism about the current state, and finally their greatest accomplishments followed by their biggest blunders. No contribution encompasses the before mentioned more than Roger Morris's essay on Richard Nixon's rise to the presidency, eased by his most trusted and powerful aide, Henry Kissinger, and the character flaws that forced him to resign and end one of the nation's great political careers in disgrace.

Despite the various updates there are some drawbacks to this work. Some of the 608 pages could be eliminated if overlapping information was deleted. Yet, how can experts on John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, and Martin Van Buren accurately depict their subjects without mentioning the elections of 1824 and 1828 and how the outcome affected each of them individually? The lack of scholarly notes might bother those looking for additional sources, but the editors offer a "For Further Reading" section with some of those extra sources. Here the benefits far outweigh any of the work's drawbacks or limitations.

Already a rich reference source for anyone interested in the executive branch, this book would make an excellent companion text for certain American history courses, especially upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses on the presidency. It is not a presidential almanac, it is a serious yet abbreviated collection of essays written by leading historians who are experts of their chosen subjects. This work is about more than just interesting and obscure facts; some of the authors propose questions to the reader that would make for excellent class discussions. Nevertheless, the book is

constructed in a way that reaches beyond academia to an audience that would include the general reader who has an interest in the presidency.

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**Jorge Canizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman. *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500-2000*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007. Pp. 288. Paper, \$29.33; ISBN 0-13-192714-0.**

"The Atlantic world" has in recent decades become a widely accepted unit of study and analysis among historians. Many global history textbooks devote at least a chapter to the "Atlantic world," with such chapters often referring in their titles to "Europeans, Africans, and the New World." Courses in Atlantic history have become increasingly common, and publishers have been quick to respond with textbooks and readers. But how exactly does the "Atlantic world" fit into "global history?"

Jorge Canizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, the editors of *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500-2000*, point out the "narrative restrictions" that have, up to now, often limited the relevance of the "Atlantic world" for global historical studies. Works in Atlantic history, they suggest, have tended to be "organized along national lines," have "prevented historians from seeing the global dimensions of certain processes," and have generally focused only on "the early modern Atlantic." The essays in *The Atlantic in Global History* are intended to challenge the existing paradigm of Atlantic history by situating it more firmly in a global perspective.

Religion has been a relatively neglected topic in Atlantic history, and several of the essays in *The Atlantic in Global History* seek to redress this imbalance. In "A Catholic Atlantic," Alan Greer and Kenneth Mills take a transnational approach to relating the European Reformation to missionary efforts in the New World, while briefly suggesting as well comparisons and connections to missionary efforts in Asia. This essay makes an interesting companion piece to Patrick McDevitt's "Ireland, Latin America, and Atlantic Liberation Theology," which discusses a key development in twentieth-century Catholicism in an Atlantic context. Jorge Canizares-Esguerra compares how Puritans and Spanish clergy both used the concept of struggling against the Devil to understand the New World, while Erik Seeman provides a fascinating glimpse of how Jews maintained and modified their faith in the early modern Atlantic.

While religion has been a relatively neglected topic, the African diaspora has been a central concern of Atlantic history since the 1960s. Essays by Pier Larson, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, and Jason Young address various features of the African diaspora. The essay by Larson is the most successful of the three, making a convincing case that the Atlantic African diaspora must be seen in a global context, as part of a larger, transnational history that includes both the movement of slaves across the Sahara and the Indian Ocean and changes in the nature of slavery in Africa itself.