

makes a majority." Whalen's sections include the well known stories of Jackson's war against the Bank of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt's trust busting of J.P. Morgan's Northern Securities Company, and Franklin Roosevelt's foresight in aiding Great Britain against Nazi Germany's aggression. The author also gives detailed attention to describing the political factions and forces faced by chief executives such as Abraham Lincoln when writing and advocating the Emancipation Proclamation and Gerald Ford before and following his Sunday pardon of Richard Nixon after only one month in the Oval Office. Whalen is to be applauded for his efforts to include the lesser studied tribulations of Chester Arthur's civil service reform and Grover Cleveland's stand against forced Hawaiian annexation.

The book is at its best when discussing Harry Truman's dismissal of the insubordinate General Douglas MacArthur. Whalen also includes John Kennedy's decision to promote civil rights, yet falls short in his analysis for not fully exploring some of the president's missteps, such as wiretaps placed on leaders of the civil rights movement during that pivotal time. Although currently in the United States, only a minority of Americans approve of their president's handling of the war in Iraq, the associate professor of social sciences at Boston University's College of General Studies does not include President George W. Bush in these assessments of courageous chief executives. Instead he finds Bush to be of "personal recklessness."

The eloquent Whalen weaves together a brief biography of each president in their stories of political courage. The author's work appeals to a wide audience, including the general public, students, and educators. This work would nicely complement a textbook on American history or U.S. government for both advance high school courses or undergraduate survey courses. Professionals will be impressed with the eight pages of sources yet frustrated by the absence of academic source citations. Whalen's entertaining and well written study of presidential courage is best suited for an audience not familiar with these facts as specialists will not find any new information or insight. As with any list, Whalen's readers will question some of his choices and omissions.

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Blaine T. Brown and Robert C. Cottrell. *Modern American Lives: Individuals and Issues in American History Since 1945*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008. Pp. 384. Paper, \$32.95; ISBN 978-0-7656-2223-5.

Modern American Lives was conceived as a college text, meant to supplement the usual survey textbooks. It is composed of thirteen chapters, each focused on two individuals and a key issue. The chapters are grouped into three chronological sections (1945-60, 1960-80, and 1980-present) and cover a broad range of topics: national politics, foreign policy, social and political activism, popular and literary culture,

sports, and business. Each chapter is nicely set up by a two-page overview and ends with useful study questions and a selected bibliography.

An overall narrative is laid out succinctly in the introduction: The early postwar period is characterized as a time when Americans were fearful of the spread of communism; the 1950s as a time of stability and affluence, with a few challenging American prejudices and conformity; the 1960s dawns with "great expectations," then is followed by a conservative backlash, as the left "implodes." In the 1970s Americans struggle to come to grips with Vietnam and find their trust in politics undermined by "two failed presidencies." Conservatives win "newfound power" in the 1980s, which ebbs by the end of the decade. Bill Clinton's presidency initially promises a "renewed national covenant" but such hopes founder "in the midst of increasingly bitter political partisanship and scandals reaching into the White House." George W. Bush struggles to advance a conservative agenda, only to see his popularity plummet "due to divisions over the Republican domestic agenda, apparent government ineptitude and the seemingly endless carnage in Iraq." The introduction ends bleakly with the comment that Americans have entered the twenty-first century "as a nation divided, fundamentally at odds over the most basic questions that a people might face."

The chapters adopt different strategies but all share the same structure: a two-page introduction, followed by two separate mini biographies. Some chapters present individuals who are on opposing sides of an issue, while other chapters juxtapose individuals from different spheres of life. Some of the choices are inspired: like I.F. Stone and J. Edgar Hoover in "Fighting the Cold War at Home." Other pairs might raise eyebrows: Jackie Robinson and Allen Ginsberg as "Outsiders in a Conformist Society;" Tiger Woods and Clarence Thomas as examples of "New Horizons for Black Americans."

Teachers are bound to have questions about the selection and pairing of the biographies and might want students to discuss the challenges in this approach to studying history—by noting for instance that of the 26 individuals included, 21 are men, sixteen of whom are white. Interesting discussions could emerge out of the observation that the two athletes featured in the book are both black men while nine politicians and policy makers are all white men. The two other black men are Jimi Hendrix, described as a "Troubadour of Psychedelia," and Clarence Thomas, identified as a "Black Conservative in Judicial Robes." The four white women selected for treatment include Marilyn Monroe, "a symbol of sexuality," Gloria Steinem, "Feminist Icon," Phyllis Schlafly, "Counterrevolutionary on the Right," and Bernardine Dohrn, who is paired with Hendrix, to represent the "Collapse of the Counterculture and New Left." That being said, the individual chapters are carefully written and thought provoking. Whether this dense text will appeal to students is difficult to predict, but faculty will certainly be able to mine this book for interesting lecture material.