

The final two chapters on historiography help students know better how the discipline of history operates.

The essays at the beginning of each chapter do a nice job of introducing students to the different elements within the field of history. The authors, however, face a serious challenge: making abstract concepts such as "sensitivity to context" understandable to undergraduates. Although the authors intend their essays to be "meaningful" to students, most of the essays tend to be dry and might only be able to hold the attention of the most passionate history majors. The exercises, though, are the least appealing aspect of the book for students. They focus far more on teaching the skills of history rather than inspiring interest in history. For example, in one exercise on historical context, students are provided with a description of an event (Oliver Cromwell's massacres of Wexford and Drogheda) and then five separate passages meant to provide additional historical context for the event. In the exercise, students are asked to write what specific pieces of information from each passage provide further understanding of the massacres by broadening the context. While the exercise will enable students to understand the importance of historical context, many students might see the exercises as busy work and be turned off.

The problem with the exercises is actually a larger problem with the book in that it would be difficult to use as a supplementary text for content-based courses. The examples discussed in the introductory essays and the exercises are mostly related to topics in both European and American history. The authors might have done this intentionally so the book could be used in both European and American history courses. However, there are so few examples and exercises related to any one period in European or American history that it would be difficult to incorporate the book into a content course. In this respect, the book appears best suited for courses in Historical Method, where it can be assumed students already have a background in both European and American history, and thus the exercises can be presented as a review of familiar material.

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**John P. Kaminski.** *The Great Virginia Triumvirate: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson & James Madison in the Eyes of Their Contemporaries.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010. Pp. 264. Cloth, \$27.95; ISBN 978-0-8139-2876-0.

John Kaminski has dedicated his career to studies of the Founding Fathers. In the process, he has collected a large database that he tentatively calls "The Founders on the Founders," a collection of contemporary descriptions and opinions voiced about the revolutionary elite. Many items come from little known newspaper and manuscript sources. Kaminski's subjects are three leaders seen through the eyes of contemporaries. His intent is to reawaken public interest in the first Virginia Presidents. Although he

calls them a triumvirate, he shows they actually engaged in a shifting series of partnerships during their political careers.

Kaminski's approach is to discuss a series of specific topics about each man, presenting fifteen to twenty short essays in each of the three chapters. Convictions and personal character predominate. Reading tastes, religious opinions, and the balance between private and public life receive special attention. Kaminski is particularly interested in the decisions that led each man periodically to enter, and then retire from, the affairs of state. Central to the study is the meaning of republicanism in the Revolutionary era. Threats, threat perceptions, societal obligations, and the mobilization of public support often assume center stage. The author is more interested in providing springboards for discussion than in offering neatly structured answers. He has a clear preference for topics that have received comparatively little attention from historians. The discussions of the content of Washington's library and the management of Madison's plantation are good examples.

Kaminski indicates that he hopes teachers will make use of this volume, both to explore the early American Republic and to gain a better understanding of the use of primary source materials. He is careful to include documentary treatments that permit comparison and contrast among the three men. Their attitudes toward slavery, both upon their own plantations and in the larger society, are carefully structured for this purpose. So are the sections of each chapter that deal with the subject's use of the sources and opinions of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Kaminski is also careful to offer a range of contemporary opinions about each man, inviting readers to judge and evaluate the quality and purpose of contemporary discourse.

The author's selectivity might post some classroom problems. He offers brief and effective summaries of some background issues but is silent on others. Washington's victory at Yorktown and Madison's Presidential years are examples of topics you will need to send students to the library or the Internet to develop. Perhaps most significant is the Virginia context. Readers will leave with a good idea of what plantation life was like but probably will be stretched to place the tiny plantation elite within the burgeoning democracy of the new republic. Resolving such challenges might prove exciting classroom exercises.

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**Tim Lehman.** *Bloodshed at Little Bighorn: Sitting Bull, Custer, and the Destinies of Nations.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pp. 240. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 978-0-8018-9501-2.

Lehman's new book on the most famous battle in the American West is a useful and extremely readable narrative of Custer's defeat and a fine introduction to the long conflict between the expansionist United States and the native tribes of the Great Plains. *Bloodshed at Little Bighorn* is a concise, clearly written account that deftly traces the