

# H-Net Reviews

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Robert H. Holden, Eric Zolov, eds. *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. xxiii + 414 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-538568-7.

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## Sources and Interpretation: U.S. and Latin American Collection

Historical documents are the primary material of the historian's craft; carefully analyzed threads woven together on the historian's loom to create richly patterned interpretations. Reminiscent of the guild system, historians work through apprenticeship (undergraduate) before becoming journeymen and journeywomen (graduate students) and finally master craftsmen and craftswomen (PhDs). Young apprentices are introduced to key skills such as a close reading both of the lines and between the lines, critical thinking, and comparing documents in undergraduate survey courses, which often assign primary sources. Frequently students apply primary sources to historiography. For instructors of survey courses in Latin American history, the second edition of Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolov's *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History* will serve as a valuable teaching tool.

Books of primary sources have been published in nearly every historical field, many created for introductory courses. Each compilation reveals the editor's interpretation of what sources are worthy of attention, reflecting historiographical trends at the time of publication. Early collections for United States history survey courses, for example, concentrated on political and intellectual history, with documents authored almost exclusively by men. Over the past decades, however, documents focusing on social, cultural, and gender history

have been introduced into anthologies.

Robert Holden and Eric Zolov's *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History* successfully integrates documents illustrating traditional historiography with primary sources exemplifying new currents and fields of historical inquiry. Even the title, placing Latin America first, reveals a crucial non-U.S.-centric point of view or, as the editors note in their preface to the first edition (reprinted in the second edition): "the multidimensional and interactive character of the relations between the United States and Latin America is what now seems to stand out in the historical literature" (p. xix). All the classic U.S. diplomatic and historical documents are present in Holden and Zolov's anthology of primary sources: the Monroe Doctrine and, eighty-one years later, Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine; the Ostend Manifesto; the Teller Amendment and the Platt Amendment at the turn of the nineteenth century; the Clark Amendment; Franklin Roosevelt's announcement of the Good Neighbor Policy; and, more recently, the Alliance for Progress.

In the realm of pure diplomacy, Holden and Zolov include the iconic treaties, some between the United States and Latin American nations and others between the United States and European powers shaping Latin America. Some treaties such as the Clayton Bulwer

Canal Treaty between the United States and Great Britain and the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty between the United States and Panama were negotiated during peace. Other treaties such as the U.S.-Mexican Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which expanded the territory of the United States, and the Treaty of Paris, which gave the United States possession of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, ended wars. Included also is the multinational Rio Treaty, negotiated and completed during the Cold War. The authors incorporate some diplomatic correspondence: the Zimmerman Telegram and memorandums from international conferences as well as policy statements and plans from U.S. government agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency.

All the above-mentioned documents are traditional political and diplomatic primary sources of foreign relations. But Holden and Zolov also venture into the integration of diplomatic history with cultural and social history. As the chronologically listed sources enter into the twentieth century new voices are heard: poets, novelists, journalists, songwriters, political activists, and even one historian. Acknowledging that history is not solely the realm of the historian, and that perception of historical events is as important in shaping foreign relations as formal diplomacy, the authors' inclusions eloquently argue that the reflections of artists and academics live vividly in the public consciousness and influence the decisions of policymakers.

Holden and Zolov present, for example, the lyrics to the song "Rum and Coca Cola" popularized by the Andrews Sisters in the 1940s. This document also includes the words of a 1906 version of the song written by Trinidadian Lionel Belasco, which was plagiarized by North American songwriters. Not only does the song, and its imagery of North American-Caribbean relations survive in our digital age on YouTube, which lists over a hundred versions of the song including Belasco's original version performed by Lord Invader, but it is an integral part of the Paul Taylor Dance Company's signature dance "Company B," which invokes the home front during World War II. In Taylor's dance representation the sexual politics of Caribbean-U.S. interaction is vividly illustrated, and sanitized, as a beautiful young woman dances and entices the ghosts of North American young soldiers who died in the war. The sexual exploitation evoked in the lyrics of the jaunty song—"Drinkin' rum and Coca-Cola; Go down Point Koomahnah; Both mother

and daughter; working for the Yankee dollar"—gets lost in the vivacious Andrews Sisters version.

A brief narrative written by the editors introduces each of the documents. Their one-paragraph introduction to "Rum and Coca-Cola," which outlines the musical history of the song including the fact that the Andrews Sisters version was pirated from a Trinidadian songwriter, raises questions concerning Holden and Zolov's pedagogical strategy for annotating their book. The introduction includes no analysis of the social and cultural import of the lyrics. While this can be perceived as encouraging students to interpret the document with, of course, the potential guidance of their instructor, some interpretative frameworks or questions by the editors would help guide students. In the case of "Rum and Coca-Cola" the issue of sexual tourism could be suggested for consideration. Another example can be found in the introduction to the iconic document of U.S.-Latin American relations—the Monroe Doctrine—where the authors could direct students to consider some of the extensive historical interpretative analysis. Many historians take their cue from Sherlock Holmes's insight in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Silver Blaze," when Dr. John Watson notes that the dog did nothing in the nighttime. In Holmes's case the fact that the dog didn't bark is the crucial evidence that solves the crime. In a similar manner, what the Monroe Doctrine doesn't state is as critical as what it does say; many historians note that the fact that potential intervention by the United States in Latin America is not noted is as important as the warning concerning European colonization. Rather than leaving interpretation solely in the hands of instructors and students, some guidance on the historiographical issues generated by the documents would be useful.

Notwithstanding this recommendation, it must be reiterated that this is a richly varied set of documents. Both Latin American and U.S. voices are heard (though a few more female authors would be useful). The second edition of the book brings Latin American-U.S. relations into the twenty-first century. While there are few additions or deletions in the first four sections of the anthology, the final section, "After the Cold War: Conflict in Search of Common Ground," adds nine documents written between 1998 and 2008. Here contemporary concerns such as the war on drugs and illegal immigration are addressed. In sum, this book is a perfect supplement for survey courses in Latin American-U.S. relations.

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