

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Marc Jason Gilbert, ed. *The Vietnam War: Teaching Approaches and Resources*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1991. x + 300 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-27740-5.

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This book is composed of 14 separately authored chapters and an appendix of syllabi. Most of the chapters deal with the teaching approaches referred to in the title, while the final three chapters are primarily resource-related.

This is a book that deserves to be reprinted regularly. And, with one exception, it is useful for its variety of approach, its accuracy, and its authority. What is perhaps most worthwhile about it, though, is its ideological balance. There are chapters about both sides of the conflict—non-American perspectives are not ignored as is usually the case—and the of the various teachers doing the writing affords a degree of dignity and pedagogical authority to the subject of Vietnam War studies. A book of readings that includes the kind of ideological diversity represented by Earl H. Telford, Jr. on the one hand, and Kali Tal on the other, is as much a tribute to the intellectual vigor of this interdisciplinary field as it is to the astute judgment and scholarly courage of Marc Jason Gilbert, the editor whose own three chapters are clearly among the best in the book, and possibly in the field as a whole. Gilbert is effective in linking the necessity of teaching the complex pedagogical issues of the war by way of political, literary, historical, and sometimes unselfconscious ideological analysis. In fact, if there is an identifiable theme to the readings, it is precisely that this

war cannot be properly comprehended without such an array of perspectives. This is a fine and worthy text.

There is one weakness to the volume and, unfortunately, it is a serious one. In the chapter by Joe P. Dunn entitled *Texts and Auxiliary Resources*, even a superficial reading reveals at least four recommended bibliographic citations to be misleading at best, and in two cases, just plain dubious. The “recommended” bibliography by Louis A. Peake was suppressed by its own publisher when it was protested to have plagiarized sections. This sort of source ought to be used with clear forethought. Recommended as well is an “annotated bibliography” by F.C. Brown. This self-published, unbound list of citations is clearly an amateur’s attempt at bibliography, replete with bibliographic ghosts, non-fiction titles mistaken as fiction, vice-versa, misspellings, and other infelicities that ought to disqualify it as a recommended source for students, let alone as an “excellent” one for anyone. And finally, to place Wittman’s bibliography next to Newman’s is outrageous—Wittman’s bibliography having been systematically criticized for its extensive degree of inaccuracy and error in, among other places, the *Journal of American History*. It is not that these sorts of items should not be mentioned, but to mention them as “recommended,” places a student in a very vulnerable position.

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