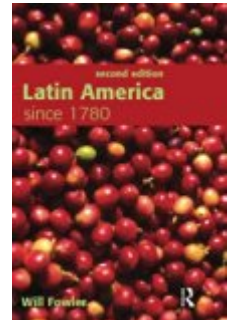


Will Fowler. *Latin America since 1780*. Eastbourne: Gardners Books, 2008.
Illustrations, maps. 208 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-340-95873-5.



Reviewed by Ralph Lee Woodward

Published on H-LatAm (June, 2010)

Commissioned by Dennis R. Hidalgo (Virginia Tech)

An updated version of the author's *Latin America 1800-2000* (2002), Will Fowler's new edition provides a convenient overview for the beginning student of Latin American studies. Fowler is professor of Latin American studies in the Department of Spanish at the University of Saint Andrews, Scotland. His credentials as a historian have been well established with his works on Mexico in the *Age of Proposals, 1821-1853* (1998); *Tornel and Santa Anna: The Writer and the Caudillo, Mexico 1795-1853* (2000); and *Santa Anna of Mexico* (2007). He has also edited anthologies, *Authoritarianism in Latin America since Independence* (1996) and *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America* (1997).

In a text of little more than 150 pages, Fowler provides a didactic and surprisingly comprehensive synthesis of the highlights of modern Latin American history. The book is well designed as a teaching tool for beginners in Latin American studies and could easily be used in either secondary school or university level courses. Following a chronological table of the main events from

1762 to 2007, six brisk chapters summarize events of the late colonial period and wars of independence (1780-1825), the early national period (1825-50), the rise of the neocolonial order (1850-80), the development and fall of the neocolonial order (1880-1930), reaction and revolution (1930-70), and dictatorship and democracy since 1970.

Each chapter contains a brief initial sidebar that describes the "world context" of the period examined within the chapter, providing a global framework for events in Latin America. This is followed by a brief paragraph summarizing the chapter before beginning its narrative. Another helpful feature includes sidebars along the way in each chapter describing Spanish or Portuguese terms common to the history of the region, including *mestizo*, *hacienda*, *criollos*, *pronunciamiento*, *estancieros*, and *caudillos*. Other sidebars accompanying the text provide brief biographical sketches of prominent personages, for example, Simón Bolívar, Benito Juárez, José Martí, Salvador Allende, and Rigoberta Menchú. A few illustra-

tions picture prominent people and provide useful maps. At the conclusion of each chapter, Fowler has included two historic documents, in their original Spanish. For example, at the end of the chapter entitled “Rise of the Neocolonial Order,” he has appended an excerpt from Juan Bautista Alberdi’s *Bases y punto de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina* (1852) and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s speech to a group of Argentineans, in Paris on July 4, 1868, on accepting his election as president. These documents are followed by a series of topics for class discussion and a separate list of topics for essays and presentations. A bibliography, organized by chapter, follows the text and includes an ample selection of general and monographic works dealing with each period.

Instructors wanting a detailed history may find this little book insufficient, but as a brief overview, which might be supplemented by more in-depth works on specific aspects of modern Latin American history, it has real merit. Fowler does an exceptionally good job integrating the common trends in Latin American history while pointing out the exceptions, differences, and unique characteristics of individual states. He does not concentrate exclusively on the large countries as do some heavier texts. Central America, for example, receives considerable attention throughout the book as do Cuba and other areas of the Spanish Caribbean. Although most of Fowler’s historical research and publication has focused on Mexico, that country by no means dominates this work. The author has demonstrated considerable balance in his coverage of all of Latin America and its relations with the United States and Europe.

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Citation: Ralph Lee Woodward. Review of Fowler, Will. *Latin American since 1780*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. June, 2010.

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