From the Reference Desk-Reviews of Reference Titles

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Oxford University Press has added another title to its series of “Companion” publications. The two-volume *Oxford Companion to American Politics* (2012, 978-0199764310, $395) explores the institutions, policy issues, and strategic overseas relations that make up the fabric of American politics. Editor-in-Chief David Coates of Wake Forest University draws content and direction from the well-received *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* published in 2001, but of course pays far more attention to politics in the U.S. The *Companion* also attempts to reflect “the economic, social, and cultural conditions” in which our politics is played out.

Given the intent and design of this work, coverage includes entries that discuss institutions ranging from the Federal Reserve to the AFL-CIO as well as those that deal with seminal issues like civil rights and gun control and more recent concerns like reproductive politics and border security. A number of essays are also devoted to key concepts and ideologies as diverse as executive privilege and separation of powers; fiscal conservatism and Keynesianism; and civil liberties and patriarchy. Regarding foreign relations, countries from Israel to Iran, Russia to Korea, and Mexico to Sudan are given individual entries. However, in an interesting omission, a number of countries, i.e., those of Western Europe, are not covered under the assumption that American relations to those nations are well known. There are also selected articles that center on relevant actors, for the most part, past presidents. While there is also a survey article on the First Ladies, the only other people given their own entries are Martin Luther King and Osama Bin Laden. While both men have had undeniable impacts on American politics, they are not the only non-presidents who have. Why they were singled out is somewhat puzzling. In addition, essays that discuss influential pieces of legislation from the Glass-Steagall Act to the War Powers Resolution are included. Considering the variety of topics covered, readers will be glad to learn that the editors provide a Topical Outline of Entries that organizes entries by subject and of the entries in the *Companion* also contain a needed element of interpretation as it relates to impacts and results. While one may quibble with some of the entry selection, the essentials are more than covered and done so in a very thoughtful and scholarly fashion. The *Oxford Companion to American Politics* is a resource that will reward students, scholars, and lay readers who will turn to it when needing facts and analysis on the key topics that dominate American politics. Academic libraries, as well as public libraries, where there is need for resources discussing American politics would be well-advised to add to their collections. Advanced high school students will also find it of value.

Given its recent publication date, *Oxford Companion to American Politics* does not appear to be available online yet. However, if it follows the pattern of other *Oxford Companions* it will be made available in the *Oxford Reference Online* database (http://www.oxfordreference.com).

Published by St. James Press, *The Literature of War* (2012, $400, 978-1558628427) is a three-volume set that provides critical evaluations of some 300 pieces of war-related literature. Including works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, this set covers a range and volume of literature that may surprise some readers. From the epic poems of Ancient Greece to Dexter Filkins’ *The Forever War* about Iraq, this set attempts to evaluate war literature in its multiple forms through centuries of world history.

Each of the three volumes concentrates on a specific theme. The first volume deals with what are defined as approaches to the literature and encompasses theoretical works, war histories, eye witness accounts, propaganda, satire, and experimental innovations in the literature. Volume II consists of works that look at the actual war experiences of combatants, prisoners and refugees, the home front, and women at war. The final volume concerns itself with the impacts of war ranging from those on the body and mind to those on family and community to those on future generations. The diversity of the individual titles discussed is truly impressive, and each essay contains thoughtfully constructed descriptions, contexts, and evaluative insights that will be welcomed by both students and lay readers alike. Highly useful bibliographies containing sources, further readings and in some cases media adaptations complement each entry.

Each essay utilizes a set format with an overview, the historic and literary context, the themes and styles embodied in the work and lastly a critical discussion. The entries are written in an academic and informed style that will be valued by researchers. Those interested in exploring the larger threads within the corpus of war literature will find the thematic outline and the genre index highly useful tools. A visually impressive chronology/timeline, an alphabetical list of conflicts and their related websites accompany each entry.
It is hard to believe that boxing was once one of the premier sports in America followed by millions of fans. That it has been has been marginalized by a variety of factors is undeniable. But it is just as true that the sport has one of the longest and storied histories of any in America, a fact that is amply borne out by a recently-published reference work entitled *Boxing: a Worldwide Record of Bouts and Boxers* (2012, 978-0786460540, $195).

Published by McFarland and written and compiled by Herbert G. Goldman, former editor of *The Ring, Boxing Illustrated*, and *Boxing Digest*, this four-volume set is arranged in six separate parts. First there is coverage of the boxers themselves in two sections, the bareknuckle beginnings and 1895-today. Then there is a registry of other personnel like referees, judges, and timekeepers, followed by a listing of world title bouts, records and champions, an explanation of the organization of the sport, and finally a section on boxing in history and culture. As you would expect, the vast majority of the set (three volumes) is taken up with biographical entries for the individual boxers. The uninformed may find that the format of the entries takes some explaining. But fortunately, there is a discussion of the entry formats in the introductions to both the bareknuckle and gloved era sections. Generally, an entry contains each fighter’s birth and death dates, place of birth, height and weight, nicknames, a list of fights, and overall career statistics. The other sections continue the cavalcade of facts with information about supporting players from referees to boxing historians, records of world title bouts in various divisions, a list of world champions and records, histories of the weight divisions and world titles, and ending with an overview of boxing’s impact on history and culture.

While this is nowhere near a totally comprehensive listing of all of the boxers who have ever practiced the “sweet science,” the over 2,600 fighters who are included represent the most complete list that researchers have available. Mr. Goldman has taken obvious care in researching and assembling the information found in *Boxing: a Worldwide Record of Bouts and Boxers*. In doing so he has created a resource full of detailed information and provides a handy reference set that will be valued by both devoted fans and serious historians. Public libraries where sports is a serious interest and academic libraries that support sports studies will want to give it serious consideration as well.

### Extra Servings

Berg Publishers published a couple of titles earlier this year you may have missed including:

- A six-volume set entitled *A Cultural History of Food* (9781847883551, 1600 pages, $550) which “covers nearly 3,000 years of food and its physical, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions. Each volume discusses the same themes in its chapters. This structure means readers can either have a broad overview of a period by reading a volume or follow a theme through history by reading the relevant chapter in each volume.”

- *Textiles: Critical and Primary Resources* (9780857850355, 1,600 pages, $995) is “a multi-volume reference work that draws together 93 seminal texts on textiles… The contents are gathered into four thematic collections dealing with history and curation; production and sustainability; science and technology; and identity, each supported by an introductory editorial essay that serves to critique and supplement each textual collection and theme.”

*Sage* has just released a couple of new works.

- *Social History of Crime and Punishment in America: an Encyclopedia* (9781412988766, 2712 pages, $620) is a five-volume work that in its first four volumes “surveys the history and philosophy of crime, punishment, and criminal justice institutions in America from colonial times to the present. It covers the whole of the criminal justice system, from crimes, law enforcement and policing, to courts, corrections and human services…” These volumes “are supplemented by a fifth volume containing annotated primary documents.”

- The three-volume *Encyclopedia of Global Warming and Climate Change, Second Edition* (9781412992619, 1720 pages, $375) is an “academic yet non-technical resource for students and teachers to understand the importance of global warming, to appreciate the effects of human activity and greenhouse gases around the world, and to learn the history of climate change and the research enterprise examining it…”

*Grey House* is releasing a number of titles including:

- A two-volume set entitled *Constitutional Amendments: An Encyclopedia of the People • Procedures • Parties • Primary Documents and Campaigns for the 27 Amendments to the Constitu-