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From the Reference Desk-Reviews of Reference Titles

Tom Gilson

Against the Grain, gilsont@cofc.edu

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From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*, and Head of Reference Emeritus, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29401) <gilson@cofc.edu>

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 America 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 there is a general index that is well-constructed and thorough. The *Companion* is grounded in solid scholarship with strong bibliographies, signed articles, and a complete list of contributors with their affiliations provided.

According to **Oxford**, the “Companion” titles are designed to provide “the functionality of a subject dictionary with the breadth and scope of an encyclopedia.”



The *Oxford Companion to American Politics* meets the mark, and in fact, veers more toward what seems a subject encyclopedia with

extensive articles overshadowing the briefer, more descriptive entries. Of course, all of the entries provide background briefings informed by facts that clarify and lend definition to the topic. While objectivity is maintained, many 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 large 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>).

The *Encyclopedia of Global Studies* (2012, 978-1412964296, \$595) is another reference work from **Sage** that attempts to “map an emerging field.” In this case, editors **Helmut K. Anheier** and **Mark Juergensmeyer** along with their contributors have assembled a resource that examines a field that has gained scholarly status as global studies programs have emerged in numerous college and universities during the last twenty years. It is a rising interdisciplinary area of study that embraces a variety of topics that are either transnational in nature or taken from a transnational or global viewpoint. This encyclopedia attempts to reflect this perspective throughout.

Although this four-volume set utilizes a traditional alphabetical arrangement, a look at the topical Reader’s Guide offers a real idea of what is covered. Entries range from those dealing with concepts and themes, like globalization to specific issues resulting from demographic change and the transnational effects of media, like television and the internet. Global perspectives are also provided by articles discussing issues related to topics like transportation, environmental and energy concerns, and conflict and security. Other entries cover equally relevant topics springing from broad categories like health and nutrition, religion, culture, and legal concerns. As you would expect, the articles are written with a scholarly attention to fact and details. Many of the essays provide historical context as well the current status of the topics being discussed. While the *Encyclopedia* is text-rich, some articles are illustrated with tables and charts.

Lists of further readings, the majority from within the last 10-15 years, as well as related Websites accompany each entry.

The *Encyclopedia of Global Studies* lends definition to growing field of study while at the same time offering students and scholars a firm foundation on which to build serious research. It is unique in that it gives the reader a global, transnational perspective on a wide diversity of topics ranging from abortion to gender identity to outsourcing to waste management, as well as on broader concepts like civil society and social capital. It is an obvious choice for academic libraries that support transnational and global studies programs.

Like other **Sage** titles, this set is available electronically via **Sage Reference Online**. Anyone interested in pricing can email <librariansales@sagepub.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

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literary works, as well as lists of literary awards and media adaptations, round out the value-added enhancements. Much care has been taken to make the set compelling and attractive with impressive use of color illustrations, maps, and charts as well as black-and-white photos. Interesting sidebars are also provided throughout. In short, the production values in this set are top-notch.

The Literature of War is a thoughtfully designed and impressively executed reference work for which those involved should be commended. Quality content combines with strong production values resulting in a set that should find a home in a variety of libraries from high school to public to academic. This title is also available in eBook. For pricing information you can call **Gale Cengage** at 1-800-877-4253 or e-mail <gale.galeord@cengage.com>.

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 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 uninitiated 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 • Politics • Primary Documents and Campaigns for the 27 Amendments to the Con-*

stitution of the United States (9778-1-59237-999-6, 1,200 pages, \$225) that "provides a ... examination of each of our nation's 27 Constitutional Amendments. From the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, to slavery, to the voting rights of women, this text illustrates how the U.S. Constitution has changed since its adoption in 1787."

- *This is Who We Were: A Companion to the 1940 Census* (978-1-61925-007-9, 600 pages, \$150).

Offering a direct tie in to the recently released 1940 census, this reference "describes 26 families who lived in the 1940 era... using both original material from the 1940 Census (reprinted here in a different color), profiles written from first-hand interviews and original sources, and dozens of images from the time, this edition provides a ... way to study a unique time in America, as well as a ... comparison of 1940 America to 2010 America."

Berkshire Publishing has released *The Future of Sustainability*, (978-1-933782-63-8, \$150) "the tenth and final volume of this first edition of the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of Sustainability*, brings together essays from a group of ... scholars and well-known environmentalist thinkers. Crucial topics are considered in terms of the future of humanity and its relationship with the natural world, from aging and world population to the future of nuclear energy, cities, energy, agriculture, water, food security, mobility, and migration; the role of higher education; and the concept, unique to our species, of collective learning..."

Salem Press is adding a new title to its Salem Health series entitled *Salem Health: Addictions & Substance Abuse* (978-1-58765-959-1, 703 pages, \$275) a two-volume set that is "designed for general readers and offers a unique perspective on this growing and constantly-changing field... The set contains 400 alphabetically-arranged essays on a variety of topics, including substances of abuse, treatment and addiction overviews, organizations and foundations dedicated to treatment and prevention, physiological and psychological issues and behaviors, trends and statistics, and social contexts and concerns..."

McGraw-Hill has released the *Chase's Calendar of Events for 2013 with CD-ROM 2013* (9780071801171, \$78) with more than 12,500 entries covering special events, national and international holidays, federal and state observances, international and religious celebrations, astronomical phenomena, major sporting events and more.

Princeton University Press has announced the fourth edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, (9780691154916, paper, \$49.50; hardcover, \$150), edited by **Roland Greene**. According to the publisher, this standard reference work has been revised and updated by a new editorial team with more than 250 new entries covering recent terms, movements, and related topics, an expanded coverage of poetries of the non-Western and developing worlds, and updated bibliographies and cross-references. 🌿