

Danny J. Anderson and Jill S. Kuhnheim, eds. *Cultural Studies in the Curriculum: Teaching Latin America*. New York: MLA, 2003. 249p.

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Although cultural purists may cringe, it is an increasingly well-recognized fact that Cultural Studies as a broad theoretical corpus which highlights the notion of integrating a plethora of popular—and, thus, often marginal—cultural manifestations into the mainstream of cultural analysis is gradually winning the battle over tradition, making serious inroads into the community of cultural critics who have embraced this discipline's insights into understanding a broader sense of culture in a culturally more integrated world. Thus, while traditionalists can still be overhead remarking that Cultural Studies is—or, perhaps, should have been—only a flash in the proverbial critical pan, *Cultural Studies in the Curriculum: Teaching Latin America* seeks to prove that this discipline is not only surviving, but thriving in the post-Cold War, globalized world. Their particular focus on Latin America as a yet marginal but prominent and important creator of cultural artifacts highlights the demand for such cultural production in the U.S. that can easily be noted for things culturally “Latin” over the last two decades and demonstrates the urgency for such a cultural primer in the U.S. college classroom so as to keep up with the cultural times.

Editors Anderson and Kuhnheim's introductory chapter, “Introduction: From Culture into Cultural Studies in Latin America,” serves as a broad treatise on the growth and validity of Cultural Studies as an all-encompassing discipline which readily embraces interdisciplinary approaches to a multitude of areas of cultural inquiry. Their historical survey, thus, traces the recent blossoming of Cultural Studies from its inception in the 1950s; its notably working class, Marxist roots at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the mid-1960s; the broad growth of interdisciplinary fields of area studies in the U.S. in the post-WWII era, as well as the critical contribution made by New Criticism vis-à-vis the Latin American “Boom” movement in the 1960s and 1970s; and its first formal manifestations in U.S. Academies—and later, academic presses—via the seminal Cultural Studies conferences held in the early 1990s at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Yet, not to lose focus—as their goal is to highlight Latin America and Latin American cultural production and its uses in the U.S. college classroom—the editors also note that a Cultural Studies tradition has existed in highly integrative and hybrid Latin American critical circles for ages, a point that links their historical survey of the discipline to their ultimate goal: to provide U.S. academics who teach “Latin America” with not only a tradition from

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which they may start on their paths towards bringing Cultural Studies approaches to their classrooms, but also specific pedagogical techniques with which they may more effectively incorporate the continent and its cultural production into U.S. academic curricula. To this end, Anderson and Kuhnheim posit highly cogent arguments in favor of the incorporation of Cultural Studies into the classroom—the need to examine culture and society at large, not only via conventional disciplinary means; to seek meaning in a variety of forms of cultural production to which students are now more accustomed given the highly globalized world in which they live; to shift the traditional notion of cultural analysis based on literary, historical and linguistic approaches by incorporating the expressive forms and social practices associated with marginal groups, and popular and mass cultures into the field of cultural analysis—via specific pedagogical projects related to Latin American and Latin American cultures. In closing their introduction, Anderson and Kuhnheim provide a broad selection of suggested Cultural Studies readings with which interested parties may engage to broaden their knowledge of the discipline as a whole before embarking on their own incorporation of Cultural Studies into their respective syllabi.

The remainder of *Cultural Studies in the Curriculum: Teaching Latin America* is a four-part proposal of how to meet the specific goal of incorporating Latin America into the college classroom via the study of highly topical and engaging subject matter. Part one, “Situating Pedagogy” offers specific reflections from Gustavo Verdesio, Jesse Alemán and Piers Armstrong on theoretical and pedagogical approaches to teaching Colonial Studies, Chicano Studies and Brazilian civilization within the Cultural Studies framework. Part two, “Thematic Practices,” offers a series of approaches from Luis Fernando Restrepo, Jill S. Kuhnheim, and Danny J. Anderson to teaching the Latin American city, Poetry and Cultural Studies, and Cultural Studies and Business Spanish from a standpoint that also offers a critique of imperialism. Part three, “Cultural Identities,” focuses on the intersection of cultures and identities in the Caribbean, Hawaii and in the fertile terrain of gender studies, in chapters by Kirwin R. Shaffer, Joy Logan, and Robert McKee Irwin. In a highly valuable appendix, the editors have brought together a sampling of six syllabi prepared by authors Verdesio, Alemán, Armstrong, Restrepo, Anderson, and McKee Irwin, which run the gamut of the Latin American concepts which they address in their individual chapters. While the previous sections offer great abstract rigor to the discussion of how Latin America and Cultural Studies can, indeed, fruitfully intersect, the appendix is, perhaps, the most useful to U.S. academics in search of bringing the continent and its cultural manifestations into focus for their own classrooms, as they are concrete evidence as to how it has—and thus, can be—done on a pragmatic scale.

As part of the MLA “Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures” series, one

would expect the theoretical, practical and overall scholarly rigor which is found in *Cultural Studies in the Curriculum: Teaching Latin America*. However, with the ever-increasing numbers of not only a “globalized” American populace but also a U.S. raised, but foreign-born Latin American population attending American institutions of higher education, this collection of reflections on—and practical guide to how to implement—Cultural Studies is also a highly opportune work that all people who work in the area of Latin American cultural production should consider perusing before preparing their next course syllabus on Latin America. ✱