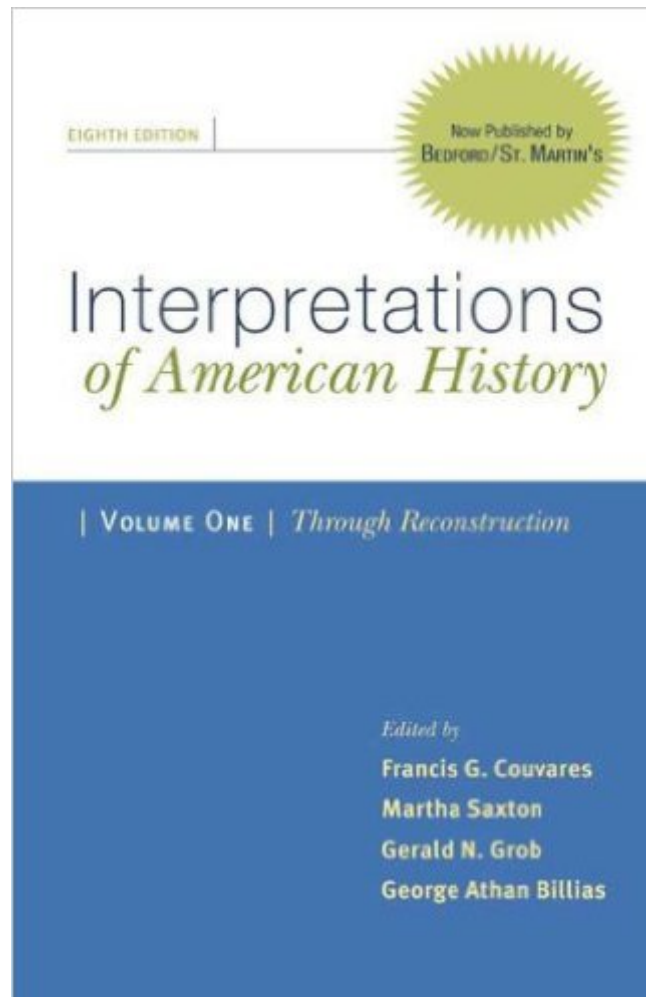


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Interpretations Of American History, Volume I: Through Reconstruction: Patterns & Perspectives



Synopsis

Now in a new edition from Bedford/St. Martin's, *Interpretations of American History* offers an essential collection of essays and readings on American historiography. Each chapter opens with an extended essay that explores the historiography specific to that chapter's topic, followed by two readings by preeminent historians that highlight different – although not always diametrically opposed – historical approaches. Fully updated for the next generation of scholars, the most respected historiographical reader now comes with all the care and quality that you expect from Bedford/St. Martin's.

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It is absolutely never easy to write a coherent work of historiography, and they are never much fun to read. Nevertheless, they can serve a certain crucial purpose within the field. One does not doubt that the authors have sincerely attempted to write an edifying work, but it is hard to characterize the text as anything other than cumbersome and frequently very confused. Some chapters are basically coherent chronological progressions through the relevant debate. Others, however, jump wildly from theme to theme in a way that thoroughly disorients the reader. The better part of one's time in any given chapter is dedicated to deciphering the development of history in that field. In most chapters, the period after the 1960s fragmentation of most fields results in a sudden profusion of works, and actual discussion of the works is reduced to almost meaningless blurbs. The authors would have done much better to have made more general statements with fewer authors and kept better sight of

the larger vacillations in the field. A critical editorial note should mention the frequent typos in titles and multiple dates given for a single work in different chapters (the date given should ALWAYS reference the ORIGINAL publication date everywhere in a work of historiography). Finally, a number of the author bios for the excerpts have not been updated. As a Europeanist I cannot say if better works exist on the subject, but my discussions with my Americanist colleagues all suggest that this work only barely fills the gap and needs serious revision to serve as a truly adequate text.

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