



New Approaches to Latin American History

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New Approaches to Latin American History incorporates methods and concepts from the social sciences without abandoning a distinctively historical approach. A collection of original essays by distinguished younger scholars, it proposes original concepts and methods for analyzing crucial problems in Latin American history.

Using as examples such subjects as slavery, dictatorship, immigration, and the relationship between land ownership and political power, the contributors show how approaches and techniques from psychology, political science, economics, and sociology can be applied to historical studies. The papers attempt to explain the thematic and substantive importance of the particular problems at hand; describe and evaluate standard approaches to them; propose original hypotheses; suggest methods for testing the hypotheses; or indicate major methodological or conceptual difficulties that have so far hampered such work.

Despite their diversity of content, the papers show strong underlying unities. First, they all point to the need for placing institutions and actions in a broad societal context. The authors present an implicit, cumulative argument against the excessive isolation of historical phenomena. Second, they demonstrate the utility of interdisciplinary research. Third, they issue an implicit call for rigorous comparative analysis. The propositions formulated in these essays can best be tested and modified in comparative fashion.

Ultimately this book deals with the exposition of a research style: a style based on systematic doubt, an awareness of the need for conceptual rigor, and a willingness to try new methodologies. For this reason it is of interest to historians in every field as well as to students of Latin America.

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