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Margaret D. Stock on Mexican Americans & the Law by Reynaldo Anaya Valencia, Sonia R. García, Henry Flores, and José Roberto Juárez, Jr. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2004. 198pp.

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Mexican Americans & the Law by Reynaldo Anaya Valencia, Sonia R. García, Henry Flores, and José Roberto Juárez, Jr. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2004. 198pp.

This undergraduate textbook, part of a series titled "The Mexican American Experience," offers a broad survey of how Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have been affected by and have changed the U.S. legal system.

The authors, all faculty members from Saint Mary's University, have an ambitious agenda: using short excerpts from landmark American legal cases, interspersed with explanatory material, they hope to inspire students to appreciate how Mexican Americans have used the U.S. legal system to improve their lives. In cases such as *Plyler v. Doe* and *Miranda v. Arizona*, the authors show how Mexican Americans have brought unique cultural and social issues to the courts while at the same time establishing Constitutional rights for all people.

The book begins with introductory material focusing on the history of Mexican Americans in the U.S. legal system. Following this discussion – which covers the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo through the Zoot Suit riots and the Civil Rights movement – the book contains topical chapters covering education, women's rights, language rights, immigration, voting, affirmative action, and the criminal justice system. Each chapter has useful and provocative discussion questions, a list of suggested readings and videos, notes about the cases discussed in the chapter, and illustrations. Following the chapters, there is a short glossary, an index, and a list of relevant websites.

The book covers each topic very briefly, rather than overwhelming the reader with too much detail. Legal terms that would be unfamiliar to most undergraduates are helpfully highlighted and defined in the glossary. Although some topics of obvious interest to Mexican Americans are not covered at all (for example, there is no mention of death penalty litigation involving Mexicans in the United States, or the long legal battles of the United Farm Workers), the selection of cases allows for broad consideration of the political, educational, and socioeconomic status of America's Mexican heritage population.

The authors have carefully edited the cases to offer undergraduates the most interesting material in a few short and easily digestible pages. For example, *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* – an important U.S. Supreme Court case in which U.S. Border Patrol agents were stopping people based solely on their Mexican appearance-has been reduced from its original eighteen pages to a manageable two pages, without any loss of the key discussion about racial profiling. The explanatory material in each chapter is clear and provides a solid background to understanding the case excerpts. No single case excerpt is more than five pages, and each chapter covers two to four key cases, making the entire book suitable for a semester-length elective course or seminar. The format of the book allows for easy supplementation with news articles and other up-to-date material on the topics covered.

The authors' focus on actual excerpts from decided cases allows undergraduates to learn not only about Mexican American social and cultural issues, but also about the U.S. legal system. The brevity of the textbook and the complex issues it raises will engage a student's interest easily. Undergraduate students majoring in law, criminal justice, or Latino studies will benefit from the textbook's broad coverage, while professors and instructors will appreciate the logical organization and concise presentation.

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