

A Brief History of American Culture

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Robert M. Crunden



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"The discussion of each period is wide-ranging, analyzing movements and spotlighting major figures in politics and philosophy, law and literature, economics and education, jazz and journalism, science and civil rights. A readable, insightful overview of the underlying patterns that give shape to U.S. cultural history. Nonacademic readers will find Crunden's selective bibliographical essay helpful". -- Booklist

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Editorial Review

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Over the past 20 years, University of Texas at Austin history professor Crunden has taught and lectured around the world, most notably in Finland, Germany, Australia, and India. Seeking to help students in other countries understand the U.S., he has come to perceive in American culture "a peculiar mixture of Christianity, capitalism, and democracy" (in order of chronology as well as importance). Crunden's *Brief History* covers five historical phases: local culture (1630-1815), sectional culture (1815-1901), "the Northern Nation" (1865-1917), national culture (1901-1941), and cosmopolitan culture (1941-present). The discussion of each period is wide-ranging, analyzing movements and spotlighting major figures in politics and philosophy, law and literature, economics and education, jazz and journalism, science and civil rights. A readable, insightful overview of the underlying patterns that give shape to U.S. cultural history. Nonacademic readers will find Crunden's selective bibliographical essay helpful *Mary Carroll*

From Kirkus Reviews

Reworking a book first published abroad, Crunden (American Civilization/Univ. of Texas at Austin) provides readers in these United States with a useful overview of their cultural history. The narrative presents American creative endeavor as gradually increasing in scale and growing more integrated into the world. Crunden (American Salons, 1992, etc.) begins with ``local culture," looking in turn at Puritan Boston, Enlightened Philadelphia, and the Virginia of the Founding Fathers. Discussing the subsequent era of North, South, and West, he shifts his emphasis from culture's religious and political dimensions toward the fine arts. Especially strong pages treat Washington Irving and John James Audubon. Somewhat scanting the Civil War, Crunden moves quickly to a discussion of the national culture that found progressives and pragmatists tempering capitalist excesses. Mini- biographies--e.g., of William and Henry James, of Alice Hamilton--convey much information. Paradoxically, the emergence of international modernism crowns Crunden's narrative of the specifically American. Charles Ives and Frank Lloyd Wright, we find, were following European leads by formalizing indigenous national styles. The author further gestures toward an apotheosis of the American with a final section on ``cosmopolitan culture." A profile of William F. Buckley Jr. nicely encapsulates the emergence of a ``conservative hegemony," while an examination of T. Coraghessan Boyle's fiction as exemplary post-60s literature works surprisingly well. Crunden represents contemporary academic thought by rehashing David Lehman's denunciations of Paul de Man and followers--this is a letdown in the wake of his superb account of transatlantic intellectual exchange around the time of the Second World War. But this history aspires to start, not finish, debates over coverage; its risky choices work to stimulate rather than to conceal. Leavening common information with uncommon insights and skillfully managing--without directly addressing--the difficulties of its mission, Crunden's work should provoke fine conversations on what Americans might want to say next. -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

American religion, politics, and the arts from 1600 to the 1990s benefits from a panoramic survey which charts the rise and fall of movements, the influence of politics on popular developments, and the roots of democratic, Christian culture. -- *Midwest Book Review*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jessica Hodgkins:

As people who live in the modest era should be revise about what going on or info even knowledge to make these people keep up with the era that is certainly always change and advance. Some of you maybe will certainly update themselves by studying books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to you is you don't know what type you should start with. This A Brief History of American Culture is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Bernice King:

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