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*The Postmodern Presidency: Bill Clinton's Legacy in U.S. Politics.*  
Steven E. Schier (Ed.)

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interpret historical events in the light of the analytical insights of theory.

This book augments this tradition by drawing on Michel Foucault's theoretical work on the subject of 'governmentality' to analyze the way the issue of unemployment has been defined and managed by Western governments over the last hundred years. Walters shows how unemployment has been defined in different ways by the state during this period. Indeed, he contends that the concept of unemployment did not exist until the end of the 19th century when industrialization created pressures for governments to respond to what was increasingly perceived as a problem that not only affected individual workers but undermined family life, the moral order and cherished social institutions. Attempts to deal with unemployment were, therefore, not necessarily motivated by altruism but by many other complex considerations which give expression to the role of government in regulating the welfare of its citizens. In pursuing this task, the problem of unemployment has frequently been redefined. Early definitions that viewed unemployment as a function of disorganized labor markets, or of deficient moral character have given way to new conceptions that emphasize social risk or, increasingly today, of a lack of skills. While these diverse conceptions produce different policy responses, all seek to regulate the problem through state intervention.

However, in offering this analysis, Walters rejects simplistic deterministic accounts which emphasize the role of structural forces in interpreting events. The author rejects these explanations and offers a more complex analysis which draws on the use of a genealogical methodology. This methodology, he contends, provides more powerful insights. Walters has written a sophisticated account not only of the history of unemployment but of the way social problems are defined and handled through practices of governmentality. His book should be widely consulted.

Steven E. Schier (Ed.), *The Postmodern Presidency: Bill Clinton's Legacy in U.S. Politics*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000. \$45.00 hardcover, \$19.95 papercover.

Many books and articles designed to assess the impact and legacy of the Clinton presidency are likely to be published during

the next few years. Indeed, as Steven Schier points out in this recent publication, several books (including his own) on the subject have already appeared. While each will emphasize particular aspects of the Clinton record, his own book emphasizes the way the Clinton administration gave expression to the cultural and political themes of the post-modern age within which, he contends, the administration functioned. As he put it, Bill Clinton's style of leadership "fared well in a culture grounded in ambiguity, confusion and irony (p. 1)." The book thus conforms to a tradition of political science analysis which places more emphasis on the role of institutional factors in determining a political agenda than the personal skills, commitments or intentions of presidential incumbents. While personal characteristics do matter, wider forces are more important in determining the way the presidential record unfolds.

Framed by this theme, the book examines diverse aspects of the Clinton presidency. Its chapters range over topics such as economic policy, race and gender politics, foreign policy, and Clinton's relations with the public. An interesting introductory chapter examines the way Clinton used his personal style to address the forces which impinged on his administration and sought to shape his executive style. Clinton was enormously successful in responding to these challenges often in idiosyncratic and unpredictable ways, and his ability to survive political onslaughts including the offensives associated with the Lewinsky scandal were remarkable. The book contains three chapters dealing with Clinton's relationship both with the Republican and Democratic Parties in Congress, and his ability to negotiate with them.

Although none of the book's chapters are specifically concerned with social policy, material on welfare reform, health care and similar initiatives are briefly addressed in different places. However, it is a pity that the editor did not allocate a separate chapter for a full discussion of social policy issues. Clinton's legacy in managing and directing social policy in the wake of the Reagan revolution deserves much more attention. Hopefully, a book that addresses this topic will soon appear.