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# Review of Parasites, Pathogens, and Progress: Diseases and Economic Development, by Robert A. McGuire and Philip R.P. Coelho.

Dennis G. Hodgson  
*Fairfield University*, [hodgson@fairfield.edu](mailto:hodgson@fairfield.edu)

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**DIRK HOERDER AND NORA FAIRES (EDS.)**

*Migrants and Migration in Modern North America: Cross-Border Lives, Labor Markets, and Politics*

Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. xxi + 432 p. \$24.95 (pbk.).

The 20 studies collected here are for the most part essays in social and cultural history and historical geography, aimed at offering, according to the editors, an integrated history of North American migration. The qualifier “modern” in the title is minimally restrictive: the underlying narrative begins with the refugee migration of the continent’s “first peoples,” uprooted by European settlers, and the forced immigration of a labor force of enslaved Africans. With colonization, what had long been a demographic regionalization by ecology and culture gave way to one based on new and arbitrary administrative boundaries—adjusted through conquest, treaty, and annexation until attaining their final shape. These political realities redefined migration as border crossing. The administrative impetus toward monitoring and regulating such crossings eventually yielded the routine flow-statistics that constitute the feedstock of most modern migration research. However, the contributors here amply attest to how much of demographic interest and significance can be drawn from accounts that rely only incidentally on those statistics—not least by interpreting later population movements through the frame of other regionalizations. The introductory essay by Hoerder, “Migration, people’s lives, shifting and permeable borders,” is exemplary from this perspective. Replete with innovative maps, his account decries the “Westward ho” trope of the continent’s migration history distilled into an advance of civilization from the Atlantic coast across the prairies, to the neglect of population movements in the northern and southern US borderlands and of trans-Pacific immigration. The editors and contributors are historians, mostly at US and Canadian universities. Dirk Hoerder, author of a major historical treatise on world migration, *Cultures in Contact* (2002), is at Arizona State University; Nora Faires, deceased, was at Western Michigan University. Index.—G.McN.

**ROBERT A. MCGUIRE AND PHILIP R. P. COELHO**

*Parasites, Pathogens, and Progress: Diseases and Economic Development*

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011. 343 p. \$30.00.

McGuire and Coelho are economists who see the historical development of humanity as being the result of both biological and economic factors. They argue, for instance, that Malthus was historically correct to associate population growth and increased density with increased mortality, but was fundamentally incorrect when he asserted that shortages in the means of subsistence caused the mortality increase. In fact, they contend that Adam Smith was correct to associate growing numbers, increased density, increased market size, and greater specialization with economic progress and rising productivity. But what neither writer realized was that a vicious biological cycle of “parasites and pathogens” had consistently interfered with Smith’s virtuous cycle. With increased human densities and increased production came substantial increases in the biological resources for microparasites. Economic development meant better transportation, more animals, more food, more waste, and more biomass that became the breeding ground for microbial pathogens. Only in the twentieth century did sci-

ence advance sufficiently to break this vicious biological cycle. Biology, therefore, explains why throughout most of human history, growing numbers and increased density led to die-offs and reversions to prior states, and why transitions from hunting and gathering conditions to agriculture often failed. Chapter 7, "Evidence on the spread of disease in nineteenth-century America," is the authors' case study of how this vicious biological cycle was working as recently as 150 years ago.

In Chapters 4 through 6 the authors use this integrated economic and biological approach to explain the origins and persistence of African slavery in the United States. Central to their explanation are the interaction of climate, regional disease pools, and differences in the immune systems of West Africans and Europeans. Africans introduced to America particular parasites such as malaria and hookworm to which they had developed higher levels of immunity and which thrived in warmer climates. Europeans brought with them cold-weather viruses and bacteria such as measles, influenza, and whooping cough to which they had developed higher levels of immunity and which thrived in colder climates. Each group's arrival changed the disease pools found in North American colonies in ways that were harmful to the native population and, regionally, to each other. Economic forces therefore drove Southern plantation owners to replace white indentured servants with African slaves while making their use as a workforce on Northern farms uneconomical. Although the authors consciously avoid institutional explanations, obviously factors other than biological fitness vis-à-vis a particular disease pool must have played a role in the origin and persistence of African slavery in America. "Fitness," for example, hardly explains why Haiti experienced a successful slave revolt (in 1791) but the American South did not. And in what sense does economic rationality "explain" why chattel slavery was ever thought to be legitimate?—D.H.

**PER PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN AND DERRILL D. WATSON II**

*Food Policy for Developing Countries: The Role of Government in Global, National, and Local Food Systems*

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011. 392 p. \$45.00.

Since the 1960s, the Green Revolution and other advances in agriculture have made possible a huge expansion of global food production to provide a better diet for a rapidly growing population. But a vigorous debate is underway on whether the projected large increase in the future demand for food and agricultural products can be met without widespread environmental destruction. Increasing shortages of fresh water, soil erosion, climate change, and rising food prices suggest that environmental limits are approaching. Recent progress in reducing global hunger levels was much less successful than expected. For example, the target set at the 1996 World Food Summit was to halve the number of undernourished people between 1991 and 2015. This goal now seems out of reach because the number of undernourished people in developing countries climbed from 824 million in 1991 to 925 million in 2010.

This textbook provides a much-needed overview of food policies and programs and their economic and ethical underpinnings. The first two chapters describe the global food system (i.e., the aggregate of all food-related activities and the political, socioeconomic, and natural environments in which they take place). Subsequent