

governance and globalisation to the study of higher education. The book is structured into two main sections. The first section, 'Globalisation and Regulatory Governance', provides a conceptual framework by placing the study of universities at the global level where King explores three contemporary global 'templates' of university governance: new public management, the emulation of world leading systems and the role of universities in national economic competitiveness. The rise of transnational harmonisation processes such as Bologna are also explored. The second section, 'Standards, Models and Rankings', investigates the importance of university league tables and, more significantly, how these rankings impact on policies and institutional behaviour.

Although clearly written to appeal to a wide range of people, there are numerous ideas and debates that are of direct interest to politics scholars. King again successfully applies the concept of regulatory governance to higher education systems and explains the various mechanisms by which globalisation is, and is not, impacting on universities. The national varieties of capitalism literature is utilised to explain the enduring importance of national systems and the critical influences of domestic factors alongside globalising pressures (p. 82). However, this is not as developed as perhaps it could be.

The book explores a complex 'patchwork quilt' of sector governance where there is no overall sovereign. Rather, the world comprises transnational networks where governmental and non-governmental actors are simultaneously both regulated and regulators as universities are subject to a form of regulatory governance that flows from a global agenda. Although the analysis is not based on a large quantity of new empirical research, it does offer a fresh examination of existing data collected by other organisations and authors.

One of the main strengths of the book is the analysis that considers the growing importance of global as opposed to national league tables. The book exposes these rankings as a form of private regulation that disciplines higher education and helps to constitute markets. It also explains how league tables construct the global blueprint of the world-class university and foster organisational incentives to build institutional reputations. *Governing Universities Globally* provides a comprehensive account of higher education in the world today and successfully demonstrates how the study of universities now needs to acknowledge the global environ-

ment. Many of the themes are covered with an appreciation of global political economy concepts, making it an informed and timely addition to the literature.

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The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Synge by P. J. Mathews (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 194pp., £17.99, ISBN 978 0 521 12516 1

A collection of essays on the Irish playwright John Millington Synge (1871–1909) might be an odd pick for this journal's review section, but in light of the growing popularity of classes on politics and literature as well as the increasing number of scholarly works dedicated to the tenuous relationship between the two fields (see for instance *Political Studies Review*, 7 (1), 141–2), the appearance of this work by P.J. Mathews in these pages should be less surprising.

A political scientist interested in tackling literary works will automatically have to acquire a sound knowledge of literary theory and consider relevant publications in this alien field. We learn in the editor's opening essay (p. 4) that Synge's 'works have been mobilised in the pursuit of nationalist, liberal humanist, formalist, feminist, Marxist, historical revisionist and postcolonial critical agendas', and his work has to be read against the backdrop of political, economic and social changes in Ireland – two factors out of many that make his plays a likely choice for a politics and literature class.

The essays in this book are grouped into three parts. The first six contributions are dedicated to 'The Synge Texts', which include analyses ranging from his best-known play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, to lesser-known pieces such as *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. The essays in the second part of the book deal with 'Theorising Synge' and cover, for instance, Synge's continental European influences and offer a gender studies perspective on his plays. In the final part, the book sets 'Synge on Stage' and gives the contemporary reader an idea of how Irish and American audiences reacted to his anti-idyllic accounts of the country.

While a political scientist interested in Synge will automatically consult the first part for analyses of certain works, he or she might at first sight deem the

book's final part the least relevant for political science. These essays, however, provide an interesting reflection on the social impact of the theatre and on the mobilisation of the morally outraged, which makes them a necessary read to understand Synge's lasting appeal and significance. Nonetheless, a political scientist might judge the second part the most rewarding and accessible to read, as most of its essays explicitly address political aspects in Synge's work. In sum, *The Cambridge Companion* offers an accessible source on J. M. Synge that political scientists might take as a lead towards new approaches to the Irish playwright's *oeuvre*.

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Global Environmental Change and Human Security by **Richard A. Matthew, Jon Barnett, Bryan McDonald and Karen L. O'Brien (eds)**. London: MIT Press, 2009. 327pp., £18.95, ISBN 978 0262 513081

The African saying, 'a fish is last to acknowledge the existence of water', reminds us to protect and acknowledge the importance of earth and the life on it. This book compels us to think of the most vulnerable person in society who is unable to cope with the implications of environmental change, and offers advice for formulating suitable strategies to protect him or her.

The volume provides an excellent description of the ways in which global environment change affects people's needs, rights and values. Further, it also recognises the role of individuals and communities in fostering security and sustainable development. The book thus raises the focus of ongoing debates on environmental change and prioritises human security issues in coping with the challenges of global environmental change.

This superb collection of essays provides a coherent and comprehensive understanding of global environmental change and human security, highlighting three points along the way. First, the book digs deep to investigate the nexus between global environmental change and human security. Global environmental change has undermined human security by increasing the risks of disease, social tension, specific problems of urban dwellers and disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

Second, the authors explore the interconnection between global environmental change, cooperation and violent conflict. They suggest that pollution, resource scarcity, demographic change and 'ecological migration' present altogether 'new forms of sensitivity to risks' (p. 122). The case study of Nepal explicitly depicts the grave situation and warns that 'without addressing demographic and environmental conditions' (p. 24) it will not be an easy task for the new coalition government to resolve the problem. Last, the book highlights how women are ubiquitously exposed to environmental threats and the profound role they have to play in sustainable development.

Although the volume presents engaging and interesting essays employing an empirical approach, Matthew and Upreti in their article failed to understand the complex mixture of political and environmental issues in Nepal, since the authors deal to a large extent with the history of Nepal and its relations with India instead of focusing on environmental tension in Nepal and the consequent violent conflicts.

More importantly, the volume erodes the existing Westphalian notion of national security by highlighting the cooperation among Latin American countries over trans-boundary resources like the 'La Plata River Basin and Mesoamerican Biological Corridor' (p. 301). This succinct and timely book should be essential reading for students of environmental security, politics, international relations, sociology and geography.

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Politics of Civil Wars: Conflict, Intervention and Resolution by **Amalendu Misra**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008. 183pp., £22.99, ISBN 978 0 415 40346 7

In this study Amalendu Misra sets out to investigate the logic behind a 'familiar and persistent' feature of human civilisation – that of civil wars (p. 1). In so doing he charts the course of contemporary civil wars and uncovers the 'narcissism of violence' (p. xi). For Misra, a civil war is an organism with a distinct life cycle: it is born, grows, and – eventually – dies. With this in mind, the task the author sets himself is to analyse factors contributing to this cycle with the intention of road mapping ways to prevent, intervene or aid reconciliation in the event of civil war.