At a time when US presidential candidates are discussing alternative approaches to such issues as health care coverage it is opportune to look at the methods taken by our neighbor to the north. This book is edited by a Canadian (Thomas) and new to this edition by an American (Torrey). They have assembled 20 mostly Canadian authors to write on an array of topics. Thomas is a recently retired vice president of Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and Torrey is a visiting scholar at the Population Reference Bureau, and formerly with the US National Academy of Science.

Ninety percent of the Canadian population lives within 160 kilometers of the United States border, and yet as the authors note, the inhabitants of both countries remain something of a mystery to each other. Canadians have a fear of convergence, but it is suggested in this volume that there is actually an increasing divergence rather than a convergence. Canadians views are closer to those held in other Canadian provinces rather than any region of the United States. This compilation is designed for students, the general public, and scholars and teachers of comparative politics. In-depth analysis of the economic relationship between the countries is left to other sources (some of which are identified in the notes sections associated with each chapter). Some interesting points highlighted in a general overview include the statistics that Canada takes 23 percent of American exports, and that Canada supplies 17 percent of US imports. To give some sense of the cross-border traffic, on a daily basis some 30,000 trucks and 100,000 cars traverse the border.

On a political basis, Canadians have a different take on US presidential politics. In a survey of Canadians, when asked who they would have voted for in the 2004 US election, 70 percent indicated a preference for Kerry versus 15 percent for Bush. Since the events of 2001 both countries have been preoccupied with security issues, defense costs, and international relations. The approaches taken in each country so far as maintaining statistical data are quite different. In Canada there is a centralized statistical system, by contrast the United States employs a decentralized approach. In the US race relations are important, and the Census Bureau has long retained detailed data related to race. Canada does not collect data on race, but rather on ancestry.

Areas covered in this volume include, but are not limited to the following: treatment of minorities, health care system, public welfare system, taxation, legal system, crime, jury selection and sentencing, judges, election spending, issues related to federalism, relationship with Aboriginal peoples, chief executives (prime ministers and presidents), impact of age, education, income, and religion on voting, environmental regulation, and dispute resolution. The contributors perceive the Canada/US relationship as “fundamentally sound,” but “sometimes rocky.”
The overall aim of the contributors is to provide a comparative overview that avoids “shallow generalizations.” Interestingly, while trade between the two countries continues to increase, this has not led to the “integration of values, attitudes, identities or policy preferences.” Students and scholars of comparative politics will find much of interest in the 18 chapters presented. These are divided into four parts, and cover the essential issues that separate us, and provide the outlines as to the different ways the two countries seek to resolve the major challenges of existence.

**Summary:** Highly Recommended. This book is a valuable addition to our understanding of the neighbor with whom we share so much, and yet from whom we are quite different.