



# **A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas: Bridging the Liberation Theology and Religious Studies Divide**

*Michelle A. Gonzalez*

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A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas argues that we cannot understand religion in the Americas without understanding its marginalized communities. Despite frequently voiced doubts among religious studies scholars, it makes the case that theology, and particularly liberation theology, is still useful, but it must be reframed to attend to the ways in which religion is actually experienced on the ground. That is, a liberation theology that assumes a need to work on behalf of the poor can seem out of touch with a population experiencing huge Pentecostal and Charismatic growth, where the focus is not on inequality or social action but on individual relationships with the divine. By drawing on a combination of historical and ethnographic sources, this volume provides a basic introduction to the study of religion and theology in the Latino/a, Black, and Latin American contexts, and then shows how theology can be reframed to better speak to the concerns of both religious studies and the real people the theologians' work is meant to represent. Informed by the dialogue partners explored throughout the text, this volume presents a hemispheric approach to discussing lived religious movements. While not dismissive of liberation theologies, this approach is critical of their past and offers challenges to their future as well as suggestions for preventing their untimely demise. It is clear that the liberation theologies of tomorrow cannot look like the liberation theologies of today. Instructor's Guide

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