

Surdam, David George. *Century of the leisured masses: entertainment and the transformation of twentieth-century America*. Oxford, 2014. 305p bibl index afp ISBN 9780190211561, \$99.00; ISBN 9780190211578 pbk, \$35.00.

The title of this book by economic historian Surdam (Univ. of Northern Iowa) is a play on Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899. The book provides a worthwhile compilation of changes and choices in American lifestyles as byproducts of substantial, sustained economic growth. There is nothing new under the sun here, though the author does discuss some important topics, including philosophical and historical attitudes toward leisure, the economics (both in the private and public arenas) of leisure, transformations in the workplace, and evolutions in the commercial and entertainment sectors in response to massive amounts of discretionary free time. Well researched with solid citations and an impressive bibliography, though not scintillating prose, Surdam's work sets the table for serious scholars and the intellectually curious. Absent, unfortunately, are the impact of leisure on mobility and the political landscape in this country (only three of the ten largest cities 100 years ago are still in the top ten today, as people migrate from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and Southwest); comparisons and contrasts with, say, Europe over this same time frame; and the burgeoning social media world of cell phones, video games, streaming, and selfies. Summing Up: Recommended. Undergraduates through professionals and practitioners; general readers.