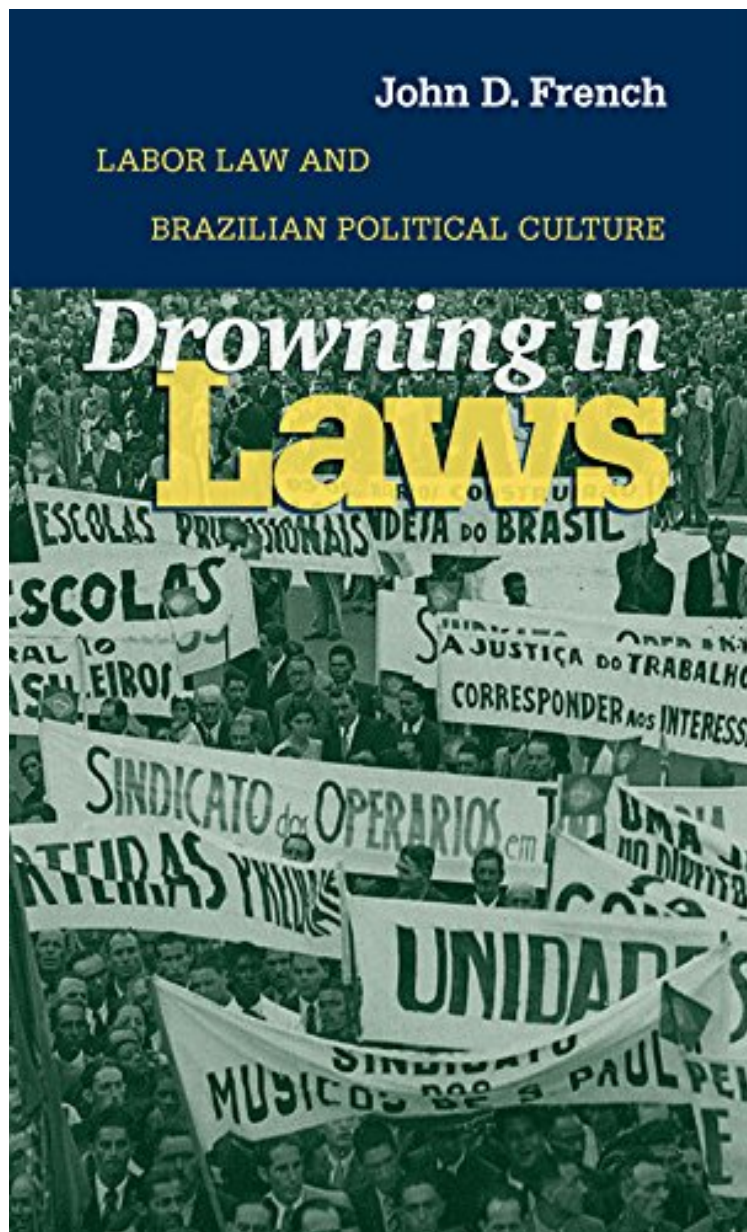


# Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture

John D. French

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**John D. French : Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture:

Since 1943, the lives of Brazilian working people and their employers have been governed by the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT). Seen as the end of an exclusively repressive approach, the CLT was long hailed as one of the world's most advanced bodies of social legislation. In *Drowning in Laws*, John D. French examines the juridical origins of the CLT and the role it played in the cultural and political formation of the Brazilian working class. Focusing on the relatively open political era known as the Populist Republic of 1945 to 1964, French illustrates the glaring contrast between the generosity of the CLT's legal promises and the meager justice meted out in workplaces, government ministries, and labor courts. He argues that the law, from the outset, was more an ideal than a set of enforceable regulations--there was no intention on the part of leaders and bureaucrats to actually practice what was promised, yet workers seized on the CLT's utopian premises while attacking its systemic flaws. In the end, French says, the labor laws became "real" in the workplace only to the extent that workers struggled to turn the imaginary ideal into reality.

French analyzes the effects of legislation in Brazil in 1943 that has been hailed as remarkably advanced social and labor legislation. He illustrates the glaring contrast between the generosity of the law's promises and what it actually delivered. "A monograph that will interest scholars of both labor and legal history in Brazil and Latin America. . . . An intriguing analysis." -- "American Historical " "Offers readers a fresh perspective." -- "Luso-Brazilian " A monograph that will interest scholars of both labor and legal history in Brazil and Latin America. . . . An intriguing analysis.-- American Historical [Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture] is the first book-length treatment of the history of Brazilian labor law in English and presents a number of important contributions.--International of Social HistoryOffers readers a fresh perspective.--Luso-Brazilian French makes a well-reasoned and important contribution, reconciling the two interpretations of the *Consolidacao das Leis do Trabalho*, the corporatist labor code promulgated in 1943. He shows instructively and persuasively that workers fought to make their interpretation of the CLT, 'an imaginary ideal, real.'--Joseph L. Love, University of Illinois at Urbana-ChampaignDrowning in Laws is an excellent discussion of--and engagement with--several of the most important threads in the historiography on Vargas and Brazilian state-labor relations, reflecting French's substantial experience in this field.--Journal of Latin American StudiesA carefully researched, clearly written, and very informative book that far transcends the borders of labor history and leadership and followers studies.--Labor HistoryAbout the AuthorJohn D. French is associate professor of history at Duke University and author of *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern Sao Paulo*.