



Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The [California Open Educational Resources Council](http://www.cool4ed.org) has designed and implemented a faculty review process of the free and open etextbooks showcased within the California Open Online Library for Education (www.cool4ed.org). Faculty from the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were invited to review the selected free and open etextboks using a rubric. Faculty received a stipend for their efforts and funding was provided by the State of California, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Textbook Name:

Digital History



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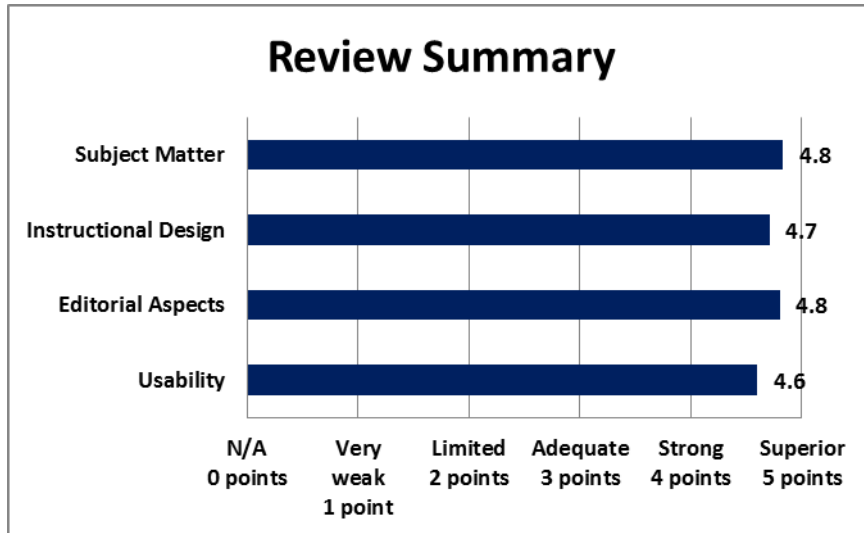
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Date Reviewed:
 December 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: [HIST 140](#)

Subject Matter (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the content accurate, error-free, and unbiased?					X	
Does the text adequately cover the designated course with a sufficient degree of depth and scope?						X
Does the textbook use sufficient and relevant examples to present its subject matter?						X

Does the textbook use a clear, consistent terminology to present its subject matter?						X
Does the textbook reflect current knowledge of the subject matter?						X
Does the textbook present its subject matter in a culturally sensitive manner? (e.g. Is the textbook free of offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)						X

Total Points: 29 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of the subject matter of this textbook:

- This is a very well-done digital textbook. It offers a strong, comprehensive look at U.S. history that is attentive to the role of the US in the world, the diverse histories that constitute US history over time, and the social experiences and cultural histories of the U.S. It is impressive.
- The site is divided into chapters. Each chapter provides an overview, a "textbook" (thematically organized pages, linked to from the main page), a collection of primary sources from the period, and biographies of key individuals. Links also are provided to pages that provide material on the music and film of the era, as well as to images that are well-captions and explained. There are also links to other websites (often hosted by federal agencies or universities) that provide additional materials on the period), handouts for classroom use, quizzes, and a multimedia section that provides links mostly to audio clips of historical speeches at whatnot. There is "do history" tab that was blank for all of the chapters in the 20th century section.
- The combination of these materials provides a rich, multifaceted look at the past as well as provides students with exceptionally good materials to learn how to "do history" (though this tab is blank, the materials offered enable this function) and to think about the past from a range of vantage points and perspectives.
- The textbook is also especially good at drawing out the larger significance of events or movements (sometimes offering the reader a list of key takeaway points as to the broader legacy or import of an historical event) and at contextualizing movements within a broader historical narrative.
- My one quibble would be with the latter chapters. The chapter on the 21st century focuses nearly exclusively on Bush's election and 9/11. The penultimate chapter covers 1970-2000, which means that it provides a solid overview of the crises of the 1970s and the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s, but is inattentive to, for example, the AIDS crisis, the War on Drugs, the Culture Wars, or to the continued social movement histories traced in previous chapters.
- This textbook provides timelines, images, charts, and access to a range of primary documents. These materials would be exceptionally useful in teaching U.S. history.

Instructional Design (35 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook present its subject materials at appropriate reading levels for undergrad use?						X
Does the textbook reflect a consideration of different learning styles? (e.g. visual, textual?)						X
Does the textbook present explicit learning outcomes aligned with the course and curriculum?						X
Is a coherent organization of the textbook evident to the reader/student?						X
Does the textbook reflect best practices in the instruction of the designated course?						X
Does the textbook contain sufficient effective ancillary materials? (e.g. test banks, individual and/or group activities or exercises, pedagogical apparatus, etc.)						X
Is the textbook searchable?				X		

Total Points: 33 out of 35

Please provide comments on any aspect of the instructional design of this textbook:

- This textbook is very well-designed. It is easy to navigate and provides both a clear overview and discussion of historical topics and excellent materials to instruct students to think historically. Of particular use is a collection of links under "do history" on the front page that provide short essays on a range of topics (beauty, music, food, film, courtship, and so on) that instruct students in how to think historically about the development and meaning of social and cultural life. While a number of the pages are devoted more to the first half of the U.S. survey, they offer very useful overviews of the development of the topic and, equally important, strategies for students in interpreting films as historical documents, photographs as historical documents, food as a site of historical inquiry etc.
- The site also provides a "Voices" section that provides first person narratives that flesh out the experiences of different communities across time (Asia American, immigrant, women, etc.). These are remarkably evocative, though also not always evenly distributed across time (the women's voices have no women's voices after the Progressive Era, for example). The site also provides lesson plans, quizzes, and learning activities.
- These are just a few of the resources offered (others included the text of major court cases, newspaper articles, and copious links to music) that would allow students to access the past through a range of materials.
- Finally, the website offers explorations, which are interactive modules that set up students to analyze sources and engage in the practice of historical interpretation. This, overall, is one of the strengths of this site. It both provides a very strong backbone (via its textbook) of U.S. history while modeling how history is an interpretive act and leading students to engage with an impressive range of primary sources to hone their skills at historical inquiry.

Editorial Aspects (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the language of the textbook free of grammatical, spelling, usage, and typographical errors?						X
Is the textbook written in a clear, engaging style?						X
Does the textbook adhere to effective principles of design? (e.g. are pages laid out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective? Are colors, font, and typography consistent and unified?)						X
Does the textbook include conventional editorial features? (e.g. a table of contents, glossary, citations and further references)					X	
How effective are multimedia elements of the textbook? (e.g. graphics, animations, audio)						X

Total Points: 24 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The material is presented in a clear manner. The division of each chapter is smart, as each page is not overloaded with text. The textbook provides excellent resources such as a glossary and timelines (included on the main page and in chapters themselves).
- From my searching, I could not find a references page or suggestions for further reading. This would be one of the key drawbacks of the site. While it includes a "historiography" page that provides overviews of debates about key questions in U.S. history, these overviews do not cite the historians who disagree or their works. Thus this site is a remarkable resource for doing history, though one that has absented historians themselves.

Usability (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the textbook compatible with standard and commonly available hardware/software in college/university campus student computer labs?						X
Is the textbook accessible in a variety of different electronic formats? (e.g. .txt, .pdf, .epub, etc.)						X

Can the textbook be printed easily?						X
Does the user interface implicitly inform the reader how to interact with and navigate the textbook?						X
How easily can the textbook be annotated by students and instructors?				X		

Total Points: 23 out of 25

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- I read the textbook online, though each page has "printer friendly" link that would allow the reader to print them out. The textbook should be easily accessible in any web browser. In addition, the site is well designed and very easy to navigate. I would think the only way to annotate the text would be to print out each page.

Overall Ratings						
	Not at all (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
What is your overall impression of the textbook?					X	
	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
How willing would you be to adopt this book?					X	

Total Points: 8 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- This web resource has two major strengths. The textbook provides an exceptionally good overview of U.S. history attentive to U.S. domestic and foreign policy, the labors of U.S. social movements, the diversity of experiences of Americans on the ground, and cultural life in the U.S. In addition, it offers an excellent range of primary source materials that provide students with opportunities to "do history" themselves.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?

- I think this is a very fine resource. My main recommendations for improvement would be to flesh out the final two chapters and to update the primary resources so that materials, voices, etc from the second half of the twentieth century are accessible to students.

We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to the [textbook site in MERLOT](#)
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