



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 etextbooks 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:

Sage American History: A Survey of America's Past



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Sage American History: A Survey of America's Past by Henry J. Sage is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)

Find it: [eTextbook Website](#)

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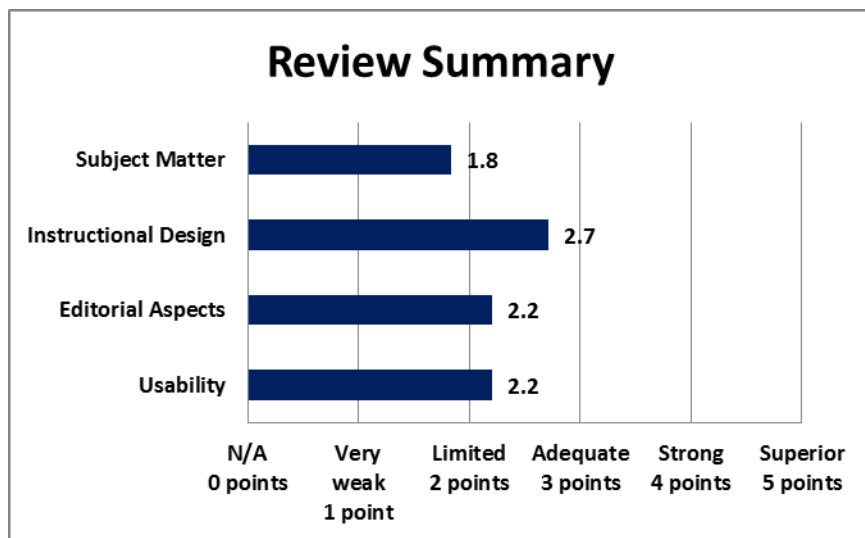
Professor

Format

Reviewed:

[Online](#)

A small fee may be associated with various formats.



Date Reviewed:

August 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			X			

to present its subject matter?						
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: 11 out of 30

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

- My primary concern about this text is what is not there. Unlike most of the other texts reviewed, this text has few outright factual errors. What it has, is an unrelentingly narrow view of U.S. history, which may reflect the fact that it has a single author, whose perspective is pretty much up front. I actually like that about the book, because I know what I'm dealing with. Students may, however, miss this.
- The section on Reconstruction is a detailed traditional account that might have appeared in a textbook in 1980. It is a straightforward political account with probably more details than students will want to read.
- The Gilded Age section is also very good in a most traditional sense, but with the author's social biases and perspectives coming through. Thus, he writes: "Because we live in an age in which workers are protected by federal and state laws as well as by sound business practices, it is hard for us to imagine a time when workers—especially unskilled, often immigrant workers—were completely at the mercy of their employers. (The plight of many illegal immigrant workers today may be comparable; however, without legal status, they have little recourse to assistance in case of unfair practices.)" "Quite a number of historians, to say nothing of our students, will find several things objectionable in this. The author repeatedly refers to "illegal immigrants" elsewhere, terminology many of my students will find insulting. In writing about labor issues, the author describes "the workers," and then "women workers," so that unless otherwise specified, "workers" is to mean male workers. As with other texts, here men have no gender and whites have no race. Only women are gendered, and only non-whites are raced.
- The discussion of imperialism shows no evidence the author has read any of the recent scholarship on Empire. But in this, he is not unlike the other authors reviewed for this project.
- The main section on the New Deal is quite sketchy, but with an excellent short description of the "Indians' New Deal." There is more to be found on the New Deal and the Great Depression if you are lucky enough to happen on the correct link, which is not obvious.
- The section on Vietnam is a real mixed bag. It has the best historical background on Vietnam before 1945. It plays down the role of the U.S. in the French Indochina War, and in general reflects the consensus of conservative historians of the 1990s, & does not reflect the scholarship of the past 15 years. Nevertheless, it's better on Vietnam than most of the other texts.
- Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement is mostly King-centered, and to the extent other Civil Rights Movements are mentioned, it is to say they were inspired by the Black Movement. He makes this point with respect to the women's movement, giving the impression that women had not thought about their rights before the 60s. There is no mention of other movements, such as Chicano, American Indian Movement, or LGBT Liberation. The anti-war movement receives scant attention. The last chapter simply has a series of subsections on Presidents from Ford through Clinton, ending with the election of 2000.

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: 19 out of 35

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

- Although there are many links, they are to texts, some of which include images, so it generally has nothing for the visual or auditory learners.
- The organization by broad topics, somewhat chronological is visible on the main page of each section, but within those sections, the organizational rationale is not apparent. I don't see any pedagogical principles reflected in the design.
- Navigation is somewhat awkward and confusing. There are numerous links in each chapter. They are usually grouped in three categories: Readings; Documents; Resources. It's not clear what the distinctions are, or which students should open first, until they discover that "Readings" are actually the text. Each link in "Documents" takes them to a primary document, while most of those in "Resources" take them to another web site, including in one case, a chapter from one of the other textbooks being reviewed in this project. This format was abandoned in the last chapter, where "Documents" were linked within the "Readings" category.
- Pedagogical principles are not apparent in the design.

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: 11 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The writing style is mostly like a traditional history textbook, which means it's not as engaging as it could be. It's most accessible when it reflects the unique views and perspectives of the author, but those passages are also often embarrassingly shallow, or simplistic. Here's an example: "When one views the long history of relationships between males and females in various cultures, it becomes immediately apparent that only in recent years has anything like true equality between men and women begun to emerge. Though advances for women in American society have been notable, many other cultures still lag behind. The history of women in Western society has provided innumerable examples of women who have achieved remarkable things, up to and including the running of entire nations, as was done by Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen Elizabeth the Great of Great Britain, Catherine the Great of Russia, and many others. Those women are exceptional by almost any definition."
- "Social relations between males and females are the product of thousands of years of evolution, and inborn genetic tendencies cannot be wiped out by social action or legislation. When I was teaching a course in Women in American History several years ago (100% of the students in the class were women) I asked the question, "If a boy and girl child were raised in a totally gender neutral environment, would they still gravitate towards traditional male and female roles?" The unanimous response of the class was that they would. Anecdotal evidence, to be sure, but nevertheless interesting." This kind of thinking invites students to make their own facile conclusions, and undermines an instructor's attempts to teach serious historical thinking and analysis. Some conventional editorial features are included. There are references to sources within some of the text, and documents include citations. There are no multimedia elements.

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: 11 out of 25

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

- Issues of navigation were addressed with discussion of organization. But to repeat, the user interface does not always make clear how one should move about within the textbook.

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			
How willing would you be to adopt this book?	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
			X			

Total Points: 4 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- It is relatively accessible, and seems to reflect the personality of the author, which can make it more interesting.
- It has a minimal number of factual errors, and a large number of links to documents for some chapters.

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

- It needs to incorporate recent social history scholarship, especially those on race, ethnicity, gender, and class, as well as recent scholarship on imperialism.
- Quite a number of important topics need to be added, including more on the West in early 20th century, social & political movements of the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

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



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