



Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The [California Open Educational Resources Council](#) 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:

U. S. History



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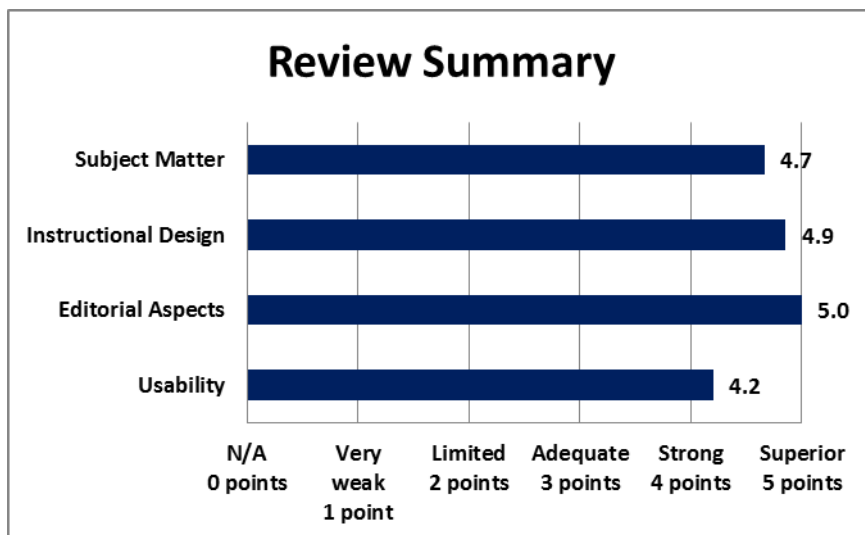
Professor

Format

Reviewed:

[Online](#)

A small fee may be associated with various formats.



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)
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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: 28 out of 30

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

- Overall, I found this to be a thorough and excellent text. The chapters manage to both depth and breadth. They both chart key events, currents, transformations while providing well-chosen specific examples to flesh out the important conceptual and historical changes being addressed. By and large, the textbook fairly consistently balances an attention to political history, social history and cultural history, and is attentive to the distinctions in how different communities in the U.S. experienced particular historical eras.
- I have very minor quibbles with the content. The discussion of HUAC and the blacklist contains a number of errors. The overview of the Latino/a rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s feels rushed and a bit too abrupt. Cultural history disappears from the text once it hits the 1970s. The discussion of Hurricane Katrina does not address the racial inequalities of the city and the disproportionate suffering imposed by its African American community. The chapters on Reagan and on the post-Reagan fairly ignore race and identity during these decades (there is no mention of Rodney King, for example, or the impact of Reaganomics -- and Reagan's attacks on the civil rights division of the DOJ -- on communities of color). With a few important exceptions (discussion of Japanese interment, a brief acknowledgment of Patsy Mink), Asian Americans are essentially invisible in the chapters on the 20th century. The metadata indicates that the book was revised as late of May 2015, yet it makes no mention of the Black Lives Matter movement or the Occupy Wall Street movement.
- Yet, despite these criticisms, this is a very good text. It covers an impressive amount of material, but also stitches its various sections together to provide a nuanced and thorough overview of U.S. history.
- One other strength of the book is its inclusion of "historians disagree" discussions which nicely flag how history is an ongoing, interpretive process. For example, the text acknowledges debates across historians over the dropping of especially the second atomic bomb and provides a brief overview of the different interpretations of Truman's decision.
- This is a very thoughtfully constructed textbook. While I will discuss the instructional elements below, I will note here that each chapter begins with a useful timeline, includes images that are discussed within the text and supplement the material quite well, and offers very well-chosen links to websites that offer fantastic resources to learn more about the topics covered in the chapter.
- In addition, the appendices of the book are quite useful. In addition to including the Declaration of Independent, Constitution, list of US presents, list of US census, and two maps (topographical and political) of the U.S., it provides a list of "recommended readings" for the book's different sections. While these lists cannot be exhaustive, the texts listed combine a good representation of primary sources, canonical histories, and more recent scholarship.

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: 34 out of 35

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

- The design of this textbook is very smart. The authors note in the introduction that they consulted instructors to figure out what sorts of elements would be useful in a history textbook; they clearly integrated excellent suggestions into the book's design. I found this text to be very impressive.
- Each section of the book begins with a list of learning outcomes. Important events/people/concepts are presented in bold; the end of each chapter includes a glossary that provides a brief definition of the terms. In addition, most chapters include excerpts, followed by discussion questions, of primary source documents ("My Story" inserts); images and discussions of cultural artifacts ("Americana"); and links to other websites to access, for example, interviews with historians, film footage of key events, and an overall impressive array of primary documents ("Click and Explore"). Each chapter ends with a summary of its subsections and a series of questions to test basic knowledge and to spur critical engagement with the material. In addition, chapters include images, charts (there are fantastic charts, for example, that list the agencies created during the First and Second New Deals), maps that genuinely supplement the chapter's text.
- The selection of these additional materials is excellent. Of particular note are the websites linked to in each chapter which provide access to truly remarkable primary sources such as newsreel on the Watts riots, interviews with survivors of Hiroshima, and the testimony of Dee Snider during hearings of music lyrics during the culture wars. Each of the "click and explore" boxes provides a succinct but useful indication of the site that the reader would be led to as well as to the content that will be accessed.
- In addition, the choices of "My Story" primary sources are fabulous. They include both iconic, familiar texts (MLK's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail") and less familiar ones (a letter from a member of the NAACP articulating the organization's criticisms of Birth of a Nation). The "Americana" inserts do a very fine job of modeling how to use material culture and popular culture as sites of historical inquiry.
- As one might expect, the discussion questions at the end of chapter are a bit uneven. However, many could be useful in structuring in class discussions or student assignments.

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: 25 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- As noted above, I think this is a remarkably well-done textbook. It is written in an engaging and accessible

style. It is very well-organized. The supplementary materials are well-chosen. Each chapter includes a glossary, and the book does include an index at the end. The design of the text is pretty clean and appealing.

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: 21 out of 25

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

- I read this textbook as a PDF, but it also can be accessed as online. The online allows the reader to click on a table of contents that easily can take the user to any of the book's sections. An advantage of the online version is a greater ease in clicking on the links provided in each chapter. Students should be able to access the text in any web browser and/or to download the PDF and save it.
- One could print out the text as well. This seems to me to be the only way to annotate the book.

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: 9 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- Overall, this is an excellent textbook. It provides an accessible and thorough overview of U.S. history that is attentive to a wide range of issues, experiences, and ways of thinking about the past. It supplements its main text with fantastic primary sources and consistently models for students how to engage with primary documents. It also offers useful discussion questions, telegraphs clearly to students how to use the text and provides very good guides to promote student learning and engagement.

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

- Overall, I really like this textbook and would consider using it in my courses. If I were to ask for specific revisions, it would be for the authors to be more attentive to issues of racial inequality in the book's discussion of the latter decades of the 20th century and early decade and a half of the 21st century.

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.)

For questions or more information, contact the [CA Open Educational Resources Council](#).



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