



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:

Art History Resources



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Find it: [eTextbook Website](#)

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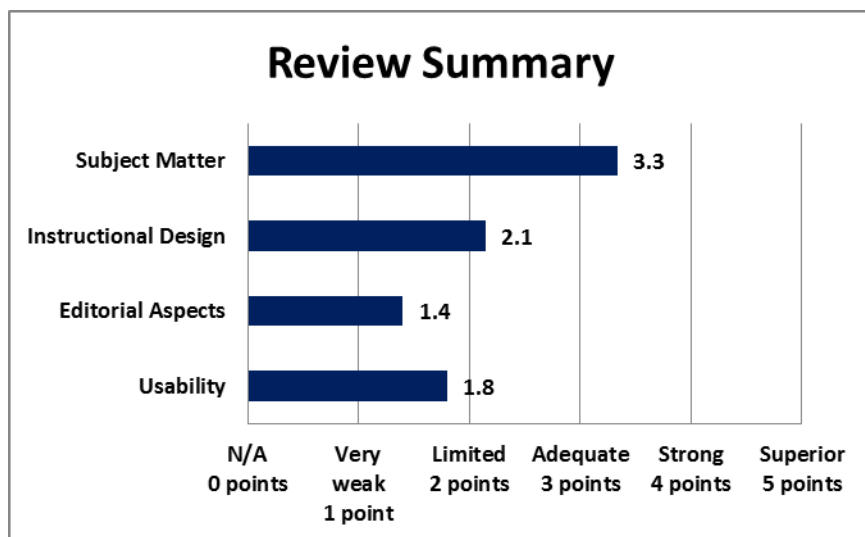
Professor

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: [ARTH 110](#)

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: 20 out of 30

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

- This is less of a textbook than, as the website title indicates, a series of "resources" for art history. Compiled by a professor of art history, who includes a bio with credentials, the website readily communicates that it is compiled by a well-read and experienced faculty member. As a compilation of materials, often drawing from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Timeline of Art History, the website could easily be assigned to students with set readings and room to explore, but not all the links are generated by reputable institutions. Hence, it is certainly a great place to start for an instructor preparing a course, but perhaps not best for a student to explore without some guidance.
- The most impressive and admirable part of this site is its coverage of the material. Again, relying often on the Met's website and other personal and museum sites, it has some impressive sections on Prehistoric Art that gives great in-depth looks at specific sites and spaces, and unlike most surveys of this material it divides the information well and does justice to the great expanse of time being covered -- it even does a far better job at this than any traditional textbook I've used or consulted. Since there has been interest in the field to deepen and expand our knowledge and work on the prehistoric, this site really encourages the instructor to expand on this period. Though as an aggregator, the site is immensely varied and therefore both concerns of accessibility for students and quality of the content does come up. At times, for instance, foreign museum sites are linked which do not even feature texts in English -- and there are some highly dubious sites, such as the "Signs of Consciousness: Speculations on the Psychology of Paleolithic Graphics." Hence for the prehistoric material it even risks falling into traps of primitivist fantasies and speculative anthropological reconstructions or dioramas that must be used with immense caution, if at all.
- Certain sections, such as the Early Christian section, rely heavily on Khan Academy's SmartHistory, and because of its aggregative nature there is often lots of repetition on the same topics with contrasting and varying quality of information. The Byzantine sections include Met links, but also several personal sites from non-academic sources and contemporary artists that can lead to confusions between historically-based understandings of icons and later readings emerging from late-nineteenth century Russian and Greek spheres, which only leads to the propagation of many stereotypes about this art and can muddle the student's ability to see artistic production as culturally and historically contingent. Overall, there is at times a pseudo-anthropological angle to the site's various areas that could definitely produce the image of certain historical areas or periods as continuing unchanged for millennia. While at the same time, the strength of this being the inclusion of material from the afterlives of past periods, such as Byzantium, to consider its continuations and permutations in the works of later artists. The inclusion of Islamic art within the context of the Middle Ages is likewise a strength here, though the list for this topic does span well beyond the Middle Ages in its scope and thus again conflates the passage of time -- but this is something that most traditional art historical texts are likewise guilty of doing.
- The section on Medieval Art is well distributed across mediums and locations: drawing attention not only to the Gothic architecture and Romanesque sculpture that students might expect to see, but also having a lengthy list of resources for manuscripts. Though these sections are somewhat repetitive, particularly reproducing material that should be/appears elsewhere (as in the Byzantine and Early Christian sections). And, furthermore, the manuscript resources cover a great deal of background going back into antiquity -- one of the instances where the collection proves to be usefully thorough for an instructor wishing to tailor their teaching but somewhat overwhelming for the student.
- Overall, it is an excellent resource but cannot be used as a straightforward textbook.

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: 15 out of 35

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

- Given that this "textbook" is an aggregate of sites, it lacks in unity and thus it is difficult to assess these as one. Certainly, this presents a challenge, and also comes with issues: for example, the body as a whole cannot be searched given that it is simply a compendium of links, yet it makes up for this by having an accessible table of contents layout to find material -- if one knows where to look. Likewise, it lacks any pedagogical framing that one might expect from a proper online text such as quizzes or any internal form of learning evaluation. Overall, though, there is consistency in the accessibility of the language simply because of the fact that these resources have been compiled with students in mind by a seasoned educator. Thus, while lacking in coherence the compiler's educational eye has nevertheless allowed it to remain accessible to intro students.

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: 7 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The greatest challenge to the text on editorial matters is simply the fact that it is a compilation of links.

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: 9 out of 25

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

- The accessibility of the text varies since it comes from various sites with their own particularities. The clear table of contents and subsections with clearly defined artworks/places, however, does help greatly to navigate it.

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: 5 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- The merit of the text is a tool for instructors designing a survey course to be able to find images and online, accessible texts for their relevant subject. The compiler has admirably scoured the internet for available sources and thus makes it easy to assign readings from it and see what resources might be out there.

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

- While the nature of the site as a compilation of links makes it difficult to assign it wholesale as a textbook, for scholars wishing to use it as a resource, one question that remains is how often the site is updated and how current it is on all the available resources out there. While there is evidence that the site has been updated in the past several years, it would be useful to have a better sense of how exhaustive certain sections are for the instructor wishing to compile their images and readings. Furthermore, it would be immensely helpful if there could be brief notes on links, particularly speaking to the quality of content to which the links point, given that there are many sites that are strong in images but their text is less current and reliable, whereas there are also other instances where certain sources are of a dubious, non-academic nature. Being able to sign post this would make it more feasible as a textbook to hand over 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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