# 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 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:

# Writing Commons

License:

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Textbook Author:

Joseph M. Moxley

Reviewed by:

Michelle Baptiste

Institution:
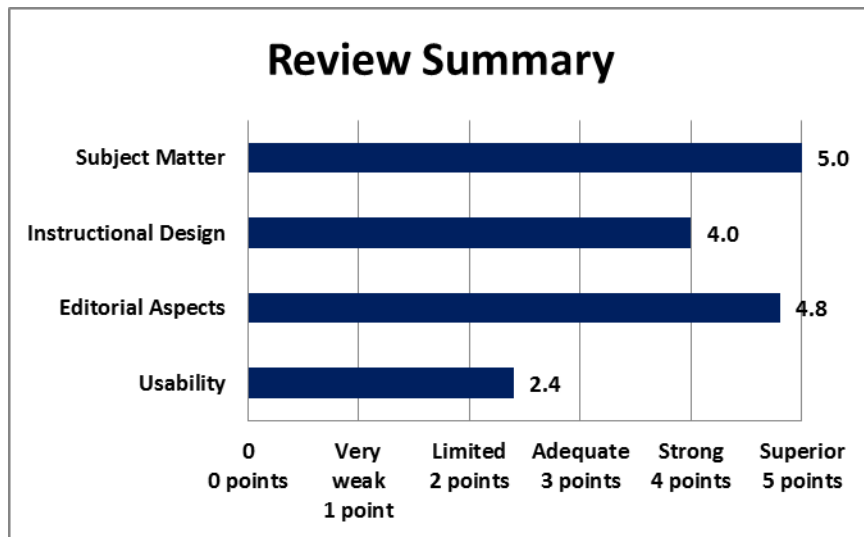
University of California, Berkeley

Title/Position:

Professor

Format Reviewed:

Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.

Date Reviewed:

March 2015



## California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

### CA Course ID: ENGL 105

| 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? | | | | | | |

| | N/A (0 pts) | Very Weak (1pt) | Limited (2 pts) | Adequate (3pts) | Strong (4 pts) | Superior (5 pts) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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:  30 out of 30

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

- The content is covered succinctly and effectively with real-world current examples that are so relevant to many college-aged students (e.g., Facebook vs.  Google+ or rap as a genre requiring practice to master). The complex material becomes accessible because of the multitude of voices and examples provided.

- A cutting-edge look at Visual Literacy follows other more traditionally-considered forms of literacy--as reflected on in the Introduction.  The treatment of Ad Analysis demonstrates extensively how different lenses can be used for critique--of many different types of texts.  Later, theories are mentioned again in the Research section.  Principals of Design are addressed later in a Format section in Writing Processes. Sections on Public Speaking and Audio-Visual/Multi-Media Presentations are especially welcome, as is a sub-section on copyright and ethics of online materials--complete with explanation of and links to Creative Commons.

- I was surprised that mimicking an author's style is defined as plagiarism here, as I've always held on to Wendy Bishop's definition of "stealing" style (but not content) without attribution is a way for students to practice trying on different authorial voices.

- This book is genuinely culturally diverse in its textual examples and images and even features diverse individuals and a variety of English accents in videos.

| 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: 28 out of 35

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

- This is an expertly-designed online text--from the lay out of the site and structure of each page to the video and links effectively inserted in each section.  The highly-accessible content is so engagingly presented in diverse media with a plethora of angles, voices, and topics. (Note: Among the numerous videos and links, I found only one video that no longer worked and two links.)

| 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 latid0out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective?  Are colors, | | | | | | X |

| | font, and typography consistent and unified?) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | N/A | Very Weak | Limited | Adequate | Strong | Superior |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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.

- This e-book is so easy to navigate and well maintained; all the links work and enable the reader to easily jump around or read in order, as desired. Related articles and useful links are provided at every juncture but not in a way that overwhelms. I found myself thinking I'd like to go back to a few pages or refer my students to those pages for further reading and clicking.

- The Table of Contents is clear in the left tool bar though it doesn't contain sub-categories till you click on them--though a drop-down menu at the top does list all categories. Some ordering is strange; for instance, Publish precedes Revise and Edit, as well as Invent, which appears to be a section about the brainstorming process. Style is placed last of all in the Table of Contents so would need to be integrated at the Revise stage in most courses.

| Usability (30 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: 12 out of 30

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

- I find it very easy to access and read, though the videos may require certain Flash Plug-ins.

| 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: 10 out of 10

## Overall Comments

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

- I really like the voice of this online text in that it is aligned with current thinking--research and theory--about teaching writing and would engage students at a high level.

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

- This text would require an instructor to piece together the order of coverage, design some exercises, and create assignments, but this is something I expect to do anyway!

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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For questions or more information, contact the CA Open Educational Resources Council.