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:

Khan Academy SmartHistory: Art History

Find it: eTextbook Website

Textbook Authors:

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

Reviewed by:

Aglaya Glebova

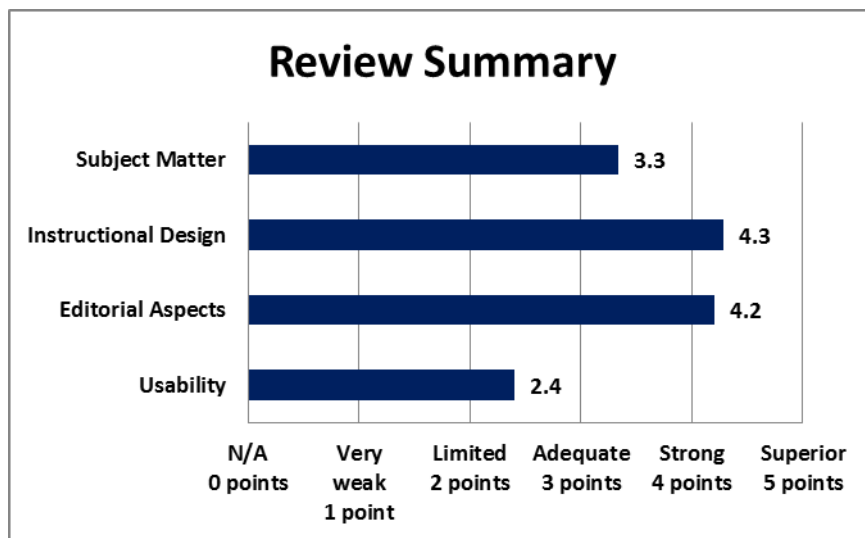Institution:

University of California, Irvine

Title/Position:

Professor

Format Reviewed:

Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.

Review Summary

Category	Score
Subject Matter	3.3
Instructional Design	4.3
Editorial Aspects	4.2
Usability	2.4

N/A 0 points | Very weak 1 point | Limited 2 points | Adequate 3 points | Strong 4 points | Superior 5 points

Date Reviewed:

March 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: ARTH 120

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	

	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: 20 out of 30

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

- The site provides both broad overviews of (art) historical periods and discussions of case studies. The selection of these case studies at times differs markedly from the standard version of the art history survey. For example, in discussions of European art between 1900 and 1930 (including "early abstraction" and "avant-garde and totalitarianism"), only two works by Russian avant-garde artists (Kandinsky and Stepanova) are mentioned, and painting/graphic arts are emphasized over other media, the use of which largely defined European avant-garde art.
- The site has an excellent compilation of tests and quizzes, discussion questions, and links to additional information. However, much of the material is discussed in the video format, which means that reviewing it might be difficult, in terms of both reviewing images (since they are not posted separate from the videos) and course content.

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: 30 out of 35

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

- The site is searchable, but the search results come from across the site--which means a wealth of information, but makes locating the material from the specific textbook a bit more challenging.

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, 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: 21 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The site is clearly laid out and easy to navigate. However, for the most part, the essays and videos lack citations. Much of the material comes from elsewhere on the web, and while it is judiciously selected (for the most part coming from the websites of such venerable institutions of the Met, the Getty, and the Tate), the permanence or accessibility of these materials is hence not guaranteed.

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: 12 out of 25

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

- The material is only available online and cannot be annotated.

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?

- I would recommend the discussion questions (under "teacher resources"), which are broad and thought-provoking but also contain additional, narrower questions to focus student discussion.
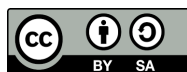- I would also recommend the timelines for student review, and a few of the case studies.

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

- The primary area requiring improvement is the delineation of methodologies used. Much of the discussion relies on formalist understandings of the work, i.e. description and analysis of its formal aspects. At times, the kinds of language used ("this would look good over someone's couch"; "this is pretty") seem likely to reinforce, rather than challenge, the students' potential resistance to different methodologies and ways of thinking about art.

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