



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:

Digital History



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Find it: [eTextbook Website](#)

Textbook Authors:

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 Sara McNeil

Reviewed by:

Gerald Shenk

Institution:

California State
 University,
 Monterey Bay

Title/Position:

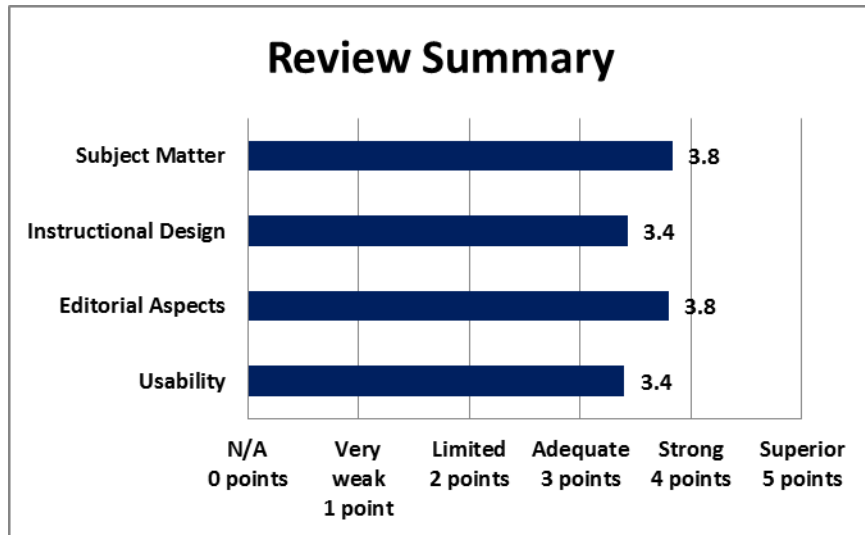
Professor

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 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: 23 out of 30

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

- This text is the most comprehensive, accurate, and balanced of all the text reviewed for this project. There is also room for improvement.
- Pretty good coverage of Reconstruction, but like other texts reviewed, African Americans are the only people racialized. White people are "southerners," "northerners," "Republicans," etc. Nor do the authors acknowledge gender, or the intersection of race and gender, despite decades of historical analysis of this period that does so.
- Excellent coverage of post-Reconstruction South, especially share-cropping & tenant farming. Asks students to think about whether this history helps us understand black poverty today. Good start, but students need more in order to address this question meaningfully.
- "Closing the Western Frontier" sections don't make clear how things are connected. It's just a series of topics seemingly unrelated.
- Coverage of Great Plains Indians somewhat cliché-filled: "Tragedy of the Plains Indians." "Conflict arose;" "war spread." "Violence broke out." "Conflict raged." Not clear what the point of any of the various events described is. Dawes Act description really misses main point.
- Section on RR in late 19th Cent. fails to mention CA & Southern Pacific.
- Pretty detailed coverage of cultural changes in arts, journalism, education, consumerism, etc., but fails to include any gender, race or class analysis.
- Correctly notes a uniquely American version of communism in late 19th century that was not Marxist.
- Immigration section describes 1924 Act, but no 1921 Act which was precursor.
- Question for students: Should immigrants be considered a source of disease?
- Section "Migration Today," which compares current issue with that at beginning of 20th century, appears to have been written in late 20th century although bottom of page says copyright 2014. Clearly, not updated since 2000.
- Good description of the recent critiques of a "push/pull" framework to explanation migration.
- Pretty good on Spanish American War, and Philippines, but like all the other texts, inaccurately says Filipino-American war ended 1902. (Filipino history books say it ended in 1913.)
- Post War section covers overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala, but not Mossadeq in Iran.
- Brief section on Emmett Till appears in middle of unrelated Cold War policies.
- Levittown & GI Bill discussion does not mention racial discrimination.
- No Civil Rights coverage in Post War section, but has links to relevant documents on Civil Rights, as well as Bracero Program and Operation Wetback.
- 1960s Section is all about various civil rights movements, plus new left, Youth revolt, etc.
- Some quite a bit out of date. Says today Cosby is most popular TV star and Eddie Murphy the most popular movie star. Even before the current Cosby controversy, this statement was at least 20 years out of date.
- Radical feminism covered better than any other general textbook I have seen. Most don't mention it at all.
- But referring to long term effects of women's movements still felt "today," refers only to the 90s.
- Good coverage of other 60s/70s movements left out in inadequate in many other texts: La Raza, AIM, Gay Lesbian Liberation (starts with Stonewall), and Environmental Movement.
- Perhaps least satisfactory section is Vietnam:
- Begins by saying was America's longest war. By 2014, copyright date of this text, this was no longer true.
- Needs broader context of U.S. foreign exploits during Cold War, including Iran, Guatemala, and especially Philippines. Suggests U.S. not much involved in Vietnam until 1963.

- Even though copyright is 2014, there is basically nothing in the text after 9/11/2001.

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: 24 out of 35

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

- Makes more effective use of technology than the other texts reviewed.
- Navigation is pretty easy, although some broken links. Easy to find things from the main page. But order in which links appear does not seem to follow any particular logic. For example, the top link on the home page is "Media," which takes you to audio & visual recordings and images that really ought to be explored after reading the text for that period. The "Do History" link is blank for all but one section from Reconstruction to the end. The one that is not blank simply tells you it is under construction.
- "Events" link in each section provides nice timelines.
- Links always open in new page, so that closing them puts you back into the previous page.
- Find many of the questions in the "For Teachers" sections to be problematic. Many ask students what should have been done. Better would be what does a particular event or document tell us about the time, about social, political, economic relations and systems. How do these help us understand something about the U.S. today?
- Here's an example of a highly inappropriate question: "Do you agree with the authors of the Black Codes that the freed slaves were not ready for freedom and needed special laws to regulate their behavior?" I have taught Civil War and Reconstruction for many years, and I would never force African American students to sit through the array of thoughtless and racially-offensive comments many white students are likely to make in response to a question like this. In addition, I don't see the point of debating this question. What's the learning outcome it addresses? A later question asks students who they think was right, B. T. Washington, or W. E. B. Du Bois. This is not a question for white students to answer, and I don't see the point of having this discussion.
- Question in lesson plan on Indians: Do you approve or disapprove of [the Dawes Plan]? Don't think it's a good practice to have students debate rights for groups of which they are not members.
- Asks students opinions about things like whether they think temporary migrants are likely to learn the language, establish community, etc., when answers to these questions have empirical answers based on systematic studies. What is the point of asking for their opinion on a matter of fact?
- The authors provide multiple perspectives from professional historians, naming them and their works without formal citations, but do provide formal citations to primary documents. Some good demonstration of how historians work to construct their accounts.
- Link to "Active Learning," takes students to another page with a link to "Explorations," said to have interactive modules. It's not clear what they mean by interactive, since I could find no option for students to respond. They can explore a large number of modules and hyperlinks, but it seems all one-way communication. If I am mistaken, the problem is that the truly interactive feature is not clearly visible.

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: 19 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- Mostly well-written, but there is a tendency toward textbook-style clichés, such as "violence erupted," "wars broke out," as opposed to sentence structures featuring specific humans acting. In other words, name the actors. Violence and war are not actors.
- Fair number of typos: e.g. "New York's Eve, 1905," instead of New Year's Eve, 1905. Probably occurred in converting Word doc.
- Text is nicely formatted and easier to read than most of the others.
- The main section pages are visually appealing, although many of the linked pages are quite bland, appearing simply as highlighted lists.
- No formal citations in the main text, but does provide formal citations to primary documents.
- There are some nice audio and visual links, which vary in number and quality from chapter to chapter. Graphics could be improved, and relevant images could be inserted into the text to liven it up.

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: 17 out of 25

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

- Although there are some aspects of navigation that take some experimentation, in general, this is smoother than competing online texts. Once familiar with the design, one quickly finds it easy and logical.
- I could find no options for annotating the text, or interacting with it. Perhaps this will be fixed when the "Do History" sections are opened.
- This seems to be a work in progress, but it's not clear how fast it will be progressing, since the copyright date is 2015, but coverage stops with 2001, and many references to "today," clearly mean the 1990s.

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: 7 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- This is well-written and fairly complete with few errors. It is accessible and well-designed for the current technological environment on most college campuses. The coverage is more balanced than most texts reviewed for this project, with opposing views on many controversial topics respected.

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

- I would use it as it is, if I needed a purely online text. However, I would most like to see the "Do History" sections completed and opened up, as they already are for the Pre-Reconstruction chapters.

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