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:

Art History
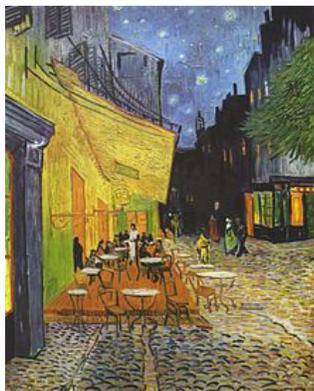
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Format Reviewed:
Online

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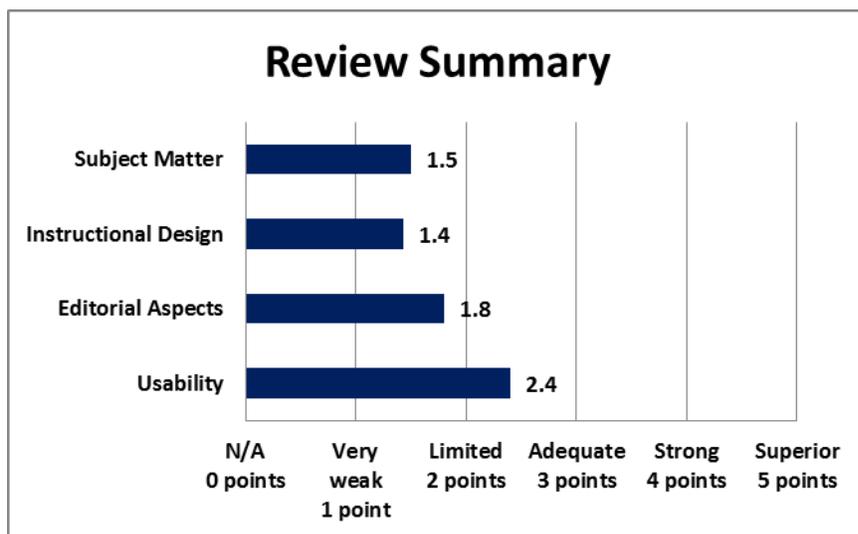
Date Reviewed:
August 2015

Review Summary

Category	Score
Subject Matter	1.5
Instructional Design	1.4
Editorial Aspects	1.8
Usability	2.4

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

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				

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

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

- This text is more a series of short bullet points for students that attempts to summarize wide swaths of historical time and listing art or architecture produced in that period. While the later chapters on modernity are marginally more elaborate with at least an orientation around artistic movements for structure, even if still lacking.
- For the period from Prehistory to the Middle Ages, however, thousands of years of history are glossed over with vague generalizations of style, such as "frontalism" in Egyptian Art, appended with a short timeline. Despite the availability of many open access images from museums and other sources online, one or two images are used per entry with no caption except an enigmatic indication that the photo is an "example" of the period's art.
- Beyond a lack of depth and lack of analysis, whole segments of history are absent. For example, in the section on Ancient Art the only content addressed is Ancient Egyptian Art.
- There is one admirable aspect of the text, however, that deserves mention which is the inclusion of Islamic, East Asian, South Asian, and African art in the Medieval Art section. While promising and relevant even to a "western" survey, these sections nevertheless are missing -- except the Islamic art one which is very brief, as is the case with all the entries, and there is no treatment of Early Christian or Byzantine Art -- not to mention the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds.

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: 10 out of 35

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

- As a WikiBook, the text reads as a Wikipedia entry, which is promising and exciting since it might encourage students to read through it as they might a Wikipedia entry and thus be more inclined to read through the text and get caught in chains of links to explore in depth the topics discussed. However, there are no links leading elsewhere, since the content is immensely limited and not conceived as being in a network of sources, just a linear progression of isolated entries.

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			

	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
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: 9 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The fact that it is written like a Wikipedia entry is attractive. However, when compared to actual Wikipedia entries, this text is far more dry and uninteresting, given that it reads as a summary of an art history textbook rather than an entry on a specific historical topic that has been fleshed out by various readers over time.

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 text could be easily copied-and-pasted for annotations and also can be printed or PDFed as any other site, but otherwise it has no unique or notable features.

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: 1 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?
- The Wiki format might encourage reading and be attractive to students.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?
- The lack of subject coverage makes the text unusable in a survey course. The text also raises concerns about the quality of the content since the information is severely limited, lacking entire sections, and evidences errors.

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](#).