



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 etextbooks 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:

Sage American History: A Survey of America's Past



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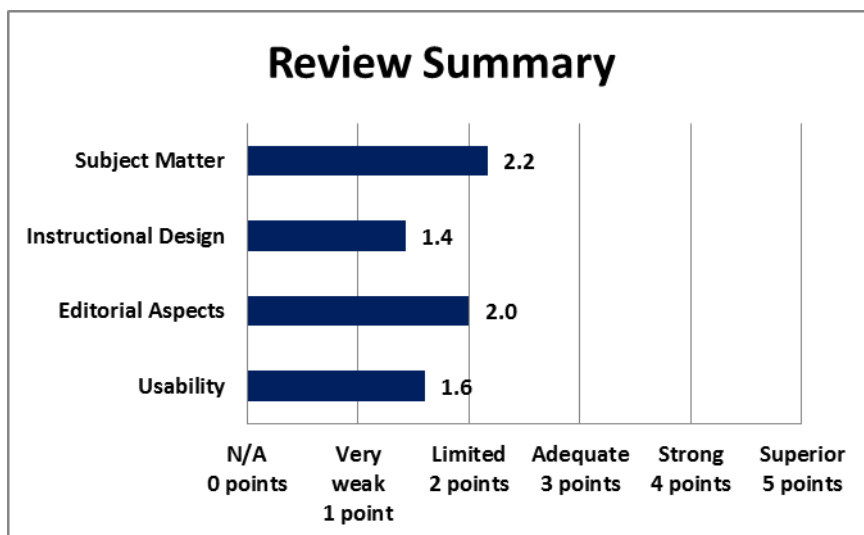
Professor

Format

Reviewed:

[Online](#)

A small fee may be associated with various formats.



Date Reviewed:

December 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: 13 out of 30

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

- This textbook alternates between being intensely thorough and overly broad. It provides highly detailed overviews of periods like the Progressive Era and the Great Depression, offers in-depth discussions of the major wars and foreign policy conflicts of the late 19th and 20th centuries, and gives a good amount of biographical information on presidents. Its earlier chapters also provide material about social life during the eras under discussion, such as good discussions of life during the Depression and experience of the homefront during World War II. Yet the primary interest here is primarily in political history, both of policies enacted at home and U.S. engagement and foreign policy overseas. Accordingly, the chapters that cover U.S. history after World War II overwhelmingly focus on these areas and neglect some of the major social movements of the period.
- While there is a dedicated chapter to the Civil Rights movement, and while there is an overview of student protests of the 1960s, this book all but ignores second wave feminism, the Chicano movement, the American Indian Movement, Black Power/Black Nationalism, the environmental movement, and so on.
- In addition, the chapter on Civil Rights is remarkably cursory, predominantly focuses on legislation and legal cases, and spends little to no time on the major figures, organizations, campaigns, and so on of the movement. Perhaps most importantly, these discussions dismiss the role of civil rights leaders and activists in fomenting these legislative gains and for engendering the political will and support necessary to get them passed.
- The emphasis on political history is reflected in the primary documents included in each chapter. While the chapter on the Progressive Era includes documents like an excerpt from Jacob Riis' How the Other Half Lives (oddly, though, it features predominantly the text of the book and not the important images of poverty in NYC) and one from Sinclair's The Jungle, and while the Depression chapter has good texts that describe life in the 1930s, the overwhelming majority of primary sources are of presidential speeches or the text of legislation.
- One of the strengths of this text is that the author frequently offers in-text suggestions for books for the reader to consult to learn more about the topic. One of the drawbacks of this text, in my view, is that at least in some of the chapters appeared ads for books on Amazon that the reader could purchase to learn more. Furthermore, the text frequently makes suggestions for (fictional) films that address an historical topic, and includes a film poster of that movie as one of the images on the page; while perhaps not the same kind of explicit advertisement as the Amazon ones, these references and images often have a promotional effect.
- The chapter on the 21st century is still "in progress", and as written reads as a very brief overview, one that does not mention Obama or his reforms or, really, much other than an acknowledgment of 9/11, the financial crisis, and the increased attention to gun violence.
- In sum, the topics in which Sage is interested are covered in meticulous detail (perhaps a bit too detailed in parts), while other key parts of the history of the late 19th and 20th centuries are ignored or glossed over fairly quickly. This is a textbook for those who wish to focus predominantly on political history.
- The textbook provides access to primary documents. Within some of especially the latter chapters, it provides embedded video to supplement the material (a video, for example, of MacArthur's address at the ceremony at Tokyo Bay at the end of WWII). It also offers useful timelines.

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:

- The textbook offers useful introductory sections to each chapter. However, the chapters on whole often are very text heavy, and it is not always clear to the reader what are the salient or significant points to be drawn. I also found the organization of the textbook to be a bit confusing. Rather than proceed chronologically after World War II, it offers long thematic chapters on the Cold War (covered in a single chapter, 1945-1990), domestic affairs (largely overviews of the domestic policies of presidents during the second half of the 20th century), and then a brief chapter on the Civil Rights movement largely composed of a page of "milestones" that is a highly superficial in its coverage (see above).
- The book does not offer any learning objectives, discussion questions, or activities. As mentioned above, its emphasis on political history and oft celebratory accounts of U.S. presidents makes it read to me as a bit out of step with where the field of U.S. history is currently.

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: 10 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The design of this book is a bit difficult. The webpages are very dense with text, with few elements like photos or pull quotes to break the wall of words. I applaud the integration of video in a few chapters, but overall the chapters themselves are not visually engaging.
- In addition, many of the webpages are "busy." The font is small, but the band of ads for Amazon at the bottom also contribute to a look that does not register as clean and effective.
- The textbook does not include a glossary or index. Intermittently it makes recommendations for "further reading" on topics. It does offer a table of contents that is a fair reflection of each chapter.

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

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

- I found this book somewhat difficult to navigate. It is only the main page of each chapter that allows the reader to return to the main page of the textbook. Otherwise, one can return to the main chapter page, and from there can return home to the main page.
- The textbook should be accessible from any web browser. There is no tab for a printer friendly version of the page, though I imagine it would not be difficult to print the pages. This would be the only way to annotate them.

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: 2 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- This textbook is an often-times thorough examination of the political history of the U.S. It provides access to key documents of the period, most notably presidential speeches and address and acts of Congress.

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

- I would want this textbook to be more attentive to social history, cultural history, and especially social movement history in the 20th century. I would also want it to be more attentive to women's history, Latino/a history, and Asian American history. I would also be highly reluctant to assign a textbook that contains advertisements.

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