



## 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](http://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:

### The American Yawp



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Find it: [eTextbook Website](#)

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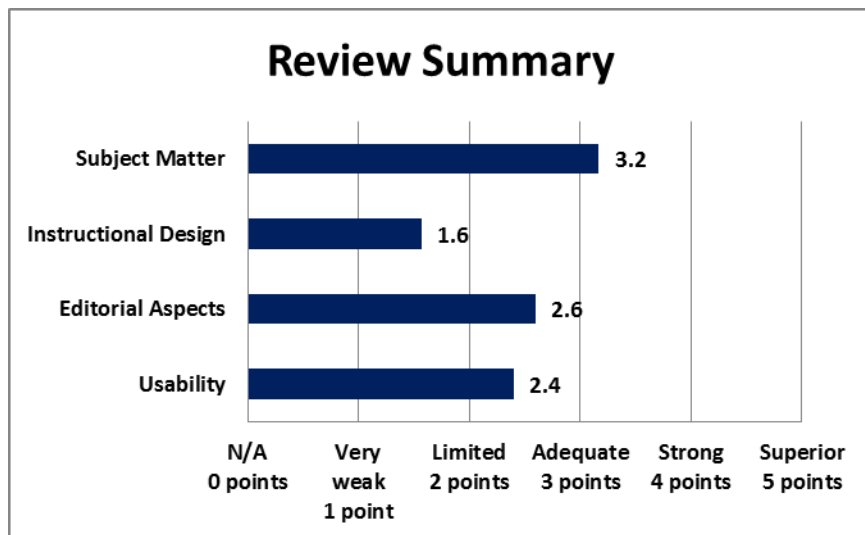
Professor

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: 19 out of 30

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

- This is a real mixed bag, appearing to be a work in progress. No chapter seems like it is a finished product yet. There are some really excellent sections within chapters, including really fantastic and well reproduced images and illustrations, but interspersed throughout every chapter are statements of fact for which no clear evidence exists. In addition, there are some glaring omissions. Thus, a mostly excellent chapter on Reconstruction has good and nicely-nuanced descriptions of debates over rights for black men versus white women, fails to examine race and gender with respect to white men, which many scholars have pointed out allows white men to stand for the universal human, in contrast to all women, and all non-whites, who are particularized as distinct from the universal human. This is a problem elsewhere in this--and many other--texts. However, this text does a very nice job of examining white manhood during the Progressive Era. Some other content issues: Indians during late-19th century westward expansion briefly mentions important events or persons without sufficient context or development. Thus: "Sitting Bull was killed," but we get no explanation of the context, who did it, or why. The description of the Dawes Act is quite superficial, and provides no real description of its purpose or actual effects. In the section on "American Empire," there is a brief mention of "modernization-hungry Porfirio Diaz" with no further context or explanation. Although this chapter offers more extensive coverage of Empire than the other texts being reviewed, it reads like a rough draft. It is very poorly organized with few connections drawn among the various events described. The discussion of immigration in late 19th-early 20th century presents "push-pull" framework without recognition of the important scholarship critiquing this approach. This section also neglects the quite large scholarship on the intersections of race and gender in the history of immigration. Most recent research on the World War I draft soundly refutes this text's characterization of it as "reasonably equitable. . . and generally well-received without serious objection by the American people." The description of Black men and the Selective Service is especially inaccurate, as is the claim that women enthusiastically supported the war. Recent scholarship shows this was a largely determined by class, and somewhat by race and ethnicity. Chapter on the Cold War mistakenly states that Eisenhower defeated Truman in 1952. (A later description of this election gets it right.) The role of the U.S. in the return of the French to Vietnam after WWII, and support for the French Indochina War as described in this text is not in agreement with much of the recent scholarship, or even with State Department documents that have been available for decades. It also mistakenly refers to the Geneva Conference in 1954 as "U.S. brokered," which is not correct. There is an excellent section on the "permanent war economy" following WWII, as well as its relationship to growing racial inequality related to housing and other aspects of the 1950s economy. This is something largely ignored by the other texts. Accompanying maps and other images make this very effective. The coverage of the U.S. war in Vietnam is a mixed-bag, as well. Pieces of it are scattered through more than one section. Some on Vietnam is excellent, but it includes some quite blatantly political claims that give at least an inaccurate impression of things. For example, the authors write: "American-sponsored nation-building efforts flourished across much of South-Vietnam." I have taught a course on Vietnam for 20 years, and I have seen no evidence that would support such a statement. A chapter on "Gender and Culture in the Affluent Society" is just a disorganized hodge-podge of disconnected brief paragraphs on radio, TV, Rock & Roll, the Beat Generation, and homophile organization. Despite the chapter title, there is no gender analysis. The penultimate chapter, called "The Unraveling," refers to "the monolith of American culture" as "white, male-dominated, conservative, and stifling." Maybe so, but there is nothing in previous chapters that would help the student think about the historical roots of this culture. This chapter, again, is, as some have said about history, "just one damn thing after another." There seems to be no particular organizing principle. One of those things is the Iran-Contra scandal of the Reagan administration, which appears here without the students having been given important historical background on the history of the U.S. in Iran, the hostages in Lebanon, or the revolution in Nicaragua. This section concludes by telling the reader that a full investigation cleared

Reagan. This is factually incorrect. He was not cleared. They simply did not uncover sufficient evidence to prove he was involved, which is different from being cleared. In the final chapter, "The Recent Past," we have a purely presidential synthesis approach organized around Clinton, G. W. Bush and Obama. NAFTA is briefly described, but its effects are not. The Gulf War gets 3 sentences. Obama is described as a "community activist," although "community organizer" would be the accurate term. The description of the 2007-8 economic crisis is confusing. Some sense of the authors' own confusion may have been reflected in this mystifying sentence: "Issues have confronted Americans with sustained urgency." Finally, the chapter concludes with this rather offensive description of Obama: "Obama was a lame duck before he ever won re-election. The Obama administration campaigned on little to address the crisis and accomplished far less." I'm not sure what this means, other than that it is not meant to be complimentary. In any case, it tells the student nothing useful.

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: 11 out of 35

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

- The writing is so variable that it is difficult to state what level it is appropriate for. However, I would say that any college freshman should be able to understand most of it. See below for comments on writing style. There are no learning outcomes provided. Organization is basically mixed chronological and thematic, in other words, themes within traditional periods. No particular pedagogies are reflected in the design.

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: 13 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The text is in great need of proofreading. It also needs work on organization within each chapter, with paragraph organization and structure, etc. It needs better transitions between paragraphs and among sections to help students make connections. The writing style is often abstract, with extensive use of passive voice. Many awkwardly-phrased sentences have abstractions as the actors: "Global economic crisis gave way to global war." "War unleashed . . . technology." "War broke out." "Riots rocked Detroit." "Prosperity began to retreat." Many of these are silly clichés, such as: "Time marches on." "The present becomes the past and the past becomes history." And perhaps most absurd: "The last several decades of American history have culminated in the present." This is worse writing than most of my students would

do. The formatting of the text on the page is in one very wide column, making the lines too long to read comfortably. However, the embedded images and illustrations are very high resolution and better than any of the other texts reviewed here. There are no animations or audio. There are citations in the form of chapter endnotes, and there are further references listed at the end of each chapter, but no glossary.

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.

- This is basically a web page. I could not find an option for pdf or Word doc. It can be printed from the web. Navigation is a bit confusing at first, since once in a chapter, it is not clear how to go back to the table of contents, which is where one must go to find the primary sources. I found no options for annotating within the text. Finally, there are no primary sources available for the years after 1923. There is a note that they are waiting for copyright permissions.

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: 4 out of 10

## Overall Comments

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

- The best sections are very engaging, and it covers a number of important topics not well-covered in other texts. The embedded images are especially wonderful.

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

- Proofread, proofread, proofread! Organize, organize, organize! Get rid of cutesy clichés. Correct factual errors, especially those statements that are simply political positions disguised as facts. I don't think any instructor will want to adopt this text until the primary documents post-1923 become available. Until then, it's just the text. Further, this needs to be designed for full online use. Right now, it is just a traditional-looking textbook digitized and posted online. It doesn't really make much use of features that would enhance student learning, such as group forums, places to comment on the text, etc.

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](#).



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