



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:

MUS101: Introduction to Music



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Textbook Authors:
Saylor Academy

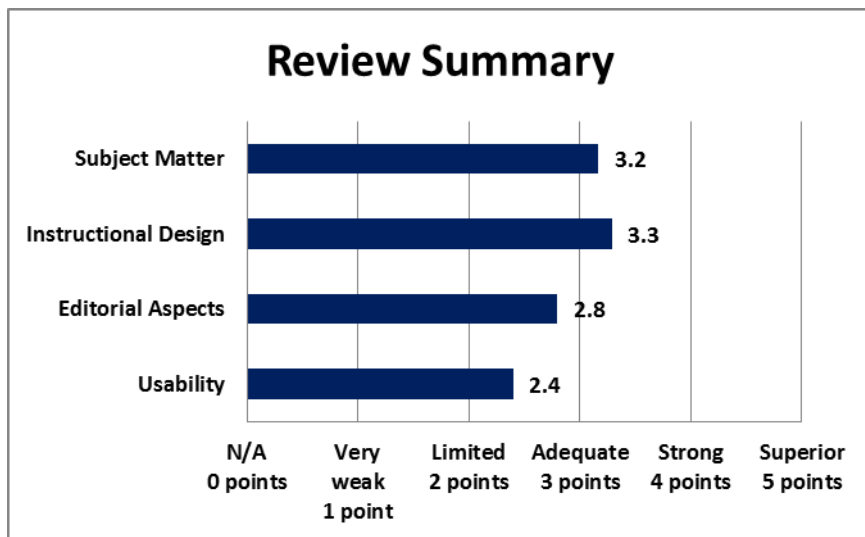
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Date Reviewed:
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California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: [MUS 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	
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:

- Intro to Music functions as a general course in Music Appreciation, and like most such courses focuses on the Western classical tradition.
- Expansions of this fundamental mission include an introduction to sound and culture, the development of aural skills, and connections with contemporary pop, jazz styles and media seen in movies, television, and the Internet.
- The course focuses on specific works within five historical periods which are supported by live performances and streaming audio found on the internet.

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: 23 out of 35

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

- MUS101: Introduction to Music is one of the many entry level courses offered through Saylor Academy, the Washington D.C. nonprofit open learning initiative (<http://www.saylor.org/>). Like many of Saylor's other offerings, the course marshals open access materials available on the web to fashion a course that models one traditionally offered as part of a general education initiative.
- The introduction to the course contains a clear and detailed set of Learning Outcomes that emphasizes not only acquiring knowledge but the communication of both subjective and objectively analytical qualities of music. In addition, Saylor courses hold the lone participant's hand throughout the process.
- The course introduction includes tips on how to study and listen to musical examples, how to complete vocabulary worksheets, learning journals, seven written and four guided listening assignments, and includes time estimates for all activities. These activities are not graded; the participant is encouraged to share them with others on a course forum. But the participant in an active course may take an exam graded by Accredible; a student who receives 70% or higher will receive a certificate.
- Intro to Music 101 is currently listed as a legacy course which remains on the Saylor servers but is not actively supported.

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			
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Total Points: 14 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook:

- Introduction to Music often seems to assemble its materials without regard for the disparate audiences each was originally intended to serve. Some resources, such as (<http://www.teoria.com>), were intended for music majors rather than novices.
- Differences in terminology occur on the micro- and macrolevel. For instance, the presentation of rhythm links to British and American sites which name durations differently. At the other extreme, John Cage is labeled a postmodernist in the Saylor materials and listening guide, although the Solomon article to which this guide links presents Cage as a modernist icon.
- The performances offered are not always ideal introductions to a work or style for the novice listener. For instance, Glenn Gould and Patricia Rideout performing Pierrot Lunaire is a quirky, absolutely fascinating performance filmed second-hand off of an old television (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kc238PnGa3I>), but perhaps not an introduction to the work; the open access study guide of Pierrot Lunaire on <http://lunanova.org/pierrot/> offers a comprehensive guide to the work suitable for all audiences.

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:

- Introduction to Music is a purely web-based site that makes use of flash and audio plugins. Assignments and listening guides are available as pdf downloads, but all course materials are web-based.

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: 4 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- The Saylor Academy's approach is a questionable one to take in the absence of professorial guidance. On one hand the site offers an attractive and easy to navigate design, assembles diverse resources around individual topics, and thoroughly annotates all of its sources. Yet yoking together so many disparate materials leads to various inconsistencies of presentation, and confusing juxtaposition of styles and terminology. The student may wonder whether a more consistently-designed and executed course such as those found on Connexions or the Yale Open Course might be preferable to that offered by Saylor. I would recommend MUS 101: Introduction to Music as a resource for instructors teaching a course in music appreciation rather than a self-standing course. Those who have the time to review the various materials

on offer and determine those they wish to incorporate will find a wealth of ideas, without having to commit to the scattershot pedagogical approach adopted by Saylor.

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

- If Saylor should desire to bring MUS101 back to active status, I recommend that it fix broken links, locate alternatives for those listening guides that are broken, and review of the text to better mediate the different tones and approaches used, or simply eliminate those which are inconsistent with a single, overall tone.

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