

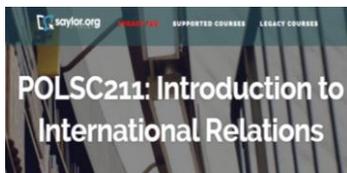


Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

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:

Introduction to International Relations



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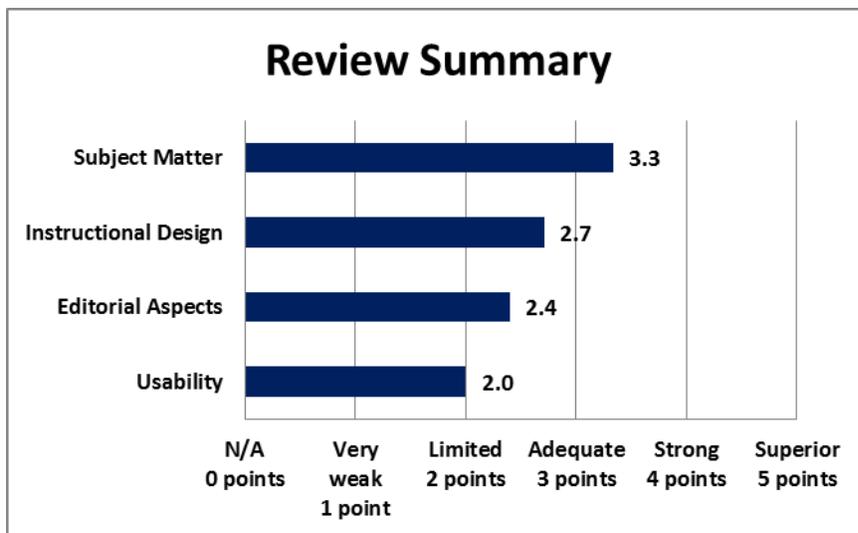
Professor

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: [POLS 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						X

offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)						
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Total Points: 20 out of 30

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

- The first Learning Outcome listed is "discuss and explain the various analytical and theoretical positions used in the subfield of international relations to explain world politics." It seemed at the start that the textbook only focuses on Realism and Liberalism, omitting Constructivism and Marxism/World Systems theories which are admittedly less popular, but are definitely within the mainstream. Unit Two does introduce them.
- My first issue is that the textbook does not introduce concepts in an orderly manner. For instance, Unit 1 has a fairly orderly progression from concepts of anarchy, to sovereignty, to challenges to sovereignty, but then introduces Realism by way of an article by Professor Pham, without (as far as I could see) adequate preparation. Similarly it introduces Levels of Analysis without linking the framework to what students have learned already (1.5). Realism is then treated more in detail in Unit 2 but students are probably confused by this point. Domestic politics perspectives are not included.
- The second issue is that the different elements are pitched at different levels. For instance, Professor Jackson's lectures on Liberalism and Realism on iTunes are pitched at college students in an introductory course and are perfectly appropriate. However, an example of the concept of hegemony is provided by an article by Professor Ufomba, which is a fine article, but uses Gramscian analysis which is probably out of reach for most students. Another article probably too difficult for students is Professor Anne Peters' article in the European Journal of International Law, as if Professor Gyalfason's article on natural resources and economic growth that presumes a fair bit of statistical knowledge on the part of the reader.
- The third issue, related to the first, is that the scope is too ambitious. Unit 3 introduces extremely detailed examples from US Foreign Policy. Generally, US Foreign Policy is a separate, upper-level course in my experience. I doubt that the average student, on completion of the first two units, would be able to approach the discussion of US relations with Africa, the Middle East, Russia etc. In the same vein, the discussion of weapons proliferation and arms control is too detailed--at some point the theories and levels of analysis have disappeared and are no longer linked to the content that is being presented. I think the Unit itself is quite comprehensive and up to date (international security being my special area of interest, but the fact remains that it is not appropriate considering the Learning Outcomes).
- The textbook has a link to a PDF document at the end of some units. This document has a list of terms that students are asked to define, based on their reading/viewing of the sub-units. An answer key is provided. This is a very limited type of evaluation. Some units include instructions for an essay, of 3-5 pages. However, I have doubts about the efficacy of the rubric provided for students to self-assess their essays. Having a test bank online would be preferable. For instance, here is the grading methodology provided for the essay relating to Unit 4 - <https://legacy.saylor.org/polsc211/Unit04/>. I found myself unable to define what 'smoothly' means in this case.

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
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Total Points: 19 out of 35

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

- I was unable to assess the final exam since it required me to have an account at saylor.org.

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: 12 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook:

- Several broken links:
 - <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/hegemony.htm>
 - The future of US-China relations
 - http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/679/soft_balancing_against_the_united_states.html -- this link works but students need a subscription to International Security to access the article
 - <http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Pages/Public/viewdocument.aspx?id=2&docid=1014>
 - <http://blogs.law.uiowa.edu/ebook/uicfd-ebook/part-1-iii-competing-theories-economic-development>
 - <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/depend.htm>

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: 10 out of 25

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

- Students can only access units from the main page.
- Annotations are not possible as it is entirely online.
- Automatic captioning in the YouTube videos is inadequate in my opinion.

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: 3 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- The authors have done an incredible job of finding sources from across the web that deal with diverse aspects of international relations.

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

- Units are not aligned with the learning outcomes.
- Level of instruction often not appropriate for introductory course.
- Evaluation is limited and subjective.

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