

Poster Presented at Lilly Conference

Teaching Art History Surveys Using Open Educational Resources (OERs)  
Annie Dell'Aria, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Art History  
Miami University  
dellaria@miamioh.edu

Introduction

An history survey textbooks usually cost students over \$100. While Open Educational Resources (OERs) have been celebrated as an effective means to help bring down the cost of higher education (Wiley, Green, & Soares, 2012), the field of Art History has specific challenges to implementation. Students need access to high-quality images for study (which incurs copyright costs for textbooks) and utilize OER materials that do exist are not in the form of introductory texts and focus close analyses of specific artworks, leaving the connecting narrative and comprehension questions of a traditional textbook.

Objectives

- To teach Art 188: History of Western Art (Renaissance to Modern) without a costly textbook and without losing content or quality
- To build a website curating the best OER content relevant to the class (including video, reference texts, and primary sources) while also providing an overarching narrative and useful class resources
- To examine the effectiveness of this new model and make changes based on student and peer feedback

Innovations

Rather than simply linking to OERs from the course Canvas site, my project involves integrating the articles and videos I have curated into a single, coherent resource: a website that acts as a textbook. Each OER pops out of text and questions I wrote, which ties them together and prepares students for class discussion. I also integrate primary sources into the website. These readings introduce students to highest-level historical research and are used in close reading activities in class. The site also has a blog with supplementary material and current events. The site becomes an easily accessible resource students do not have to log in or remember a password, and they can engage multiple types of art historical knowledge and inquiry. The project not only decreases the cost of a textbook, but also promotes an open environment of learning more broadly (Mishra, 2017, p. 370-371) and makes the field of art history—often assumed to be stuffy and elitist—free and accessible to multiple types of learners.

Building a course website with OERs makes for a dynamic textbook alternative that saves students money and engages multiple forms of learning.

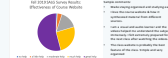


To visit the course website, go to:  
art188.lib.miamioh.edu  
or scan the QR code



Feedback and Results

Overall, students reported preferring the website to a traditional textbook in every semester. It has been used in a Student Assessment of Learning Exams survey, an overwhelming majority of the 86 students polled found the website helpful, particularly the introductory videos, which engaged multiple types of learning in addition to reading.



The website has also allowed me to better focus preparatory readings on the content of my lectures, meaning students are better prepared for both class discussion and exams. The class has now been taught three times using the website, and the class average scores on exams has either stayed constant or improved against the norm when a standard textbook was used, demonstrating the website's effectiveness as a textbook replacement.

Improvements

- Added lecture outlines at the bottom of each page, providing students with an optional reading aid
- Clearer comprehension and discussion questions guiding students' close analyses of artworks and primary sources

Potential improvements based on student feedback include:

- Class dates indicated next to each class page (difficult to implement as, in the spirit of the OER movement, I want this resource to be available to other classes and instructors)
- Easier to navigate dropdown menu

Support and Citations

This project was supported by an Open Educational Resources Grant from the Provost's Office of Miami University.

Web hosting and technical support is provided by the Center for Digital Scholarship of the Miami University Libraries.

All video material is either captioned or translated for students with hearing impairment or language differences.

Wells, Chad and Kather Reading. 2018. "Overcoming the Costs of Required Textbooks." *Arts History Society*.  
Mishra, S. 2017. "Open Educational Resources: Removing Barriers from Art." *Arts History Society*.  
Wiley, J., Green, C., & Soares, L. (2012). *Decreasing Learning Barriers: Cost of Learning and OER*. <https://www.oercommons.org/learn-about/10000>



Teaching an Art History Survey Using Open Educational Resources (OERs)

Friday 4:45 pm-6:00 pm  
Annie Dell'Aria, Art, Miami University

This poster outlines the development of a course website using OERs and original text to replace the standard textbook for Art 188: Renaissance to Contemporary Art. This website saves each student over \$100 on a textbook while supplementing existing OERs with the overarching narrative and reading comprehension questions a textbook affords, primary source texts, and a course blog. I examine the effectiveness of this through evaluation of student feedback and outline major feedback-based modifications.

Keywords:

- Instructional Technology
- Introductory Course
- Large Classes
- Online Educational Resource
- Web

Download a PDF file of the full session paper

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Objectives

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<http://celt.miamioh.edu/lillycon/presenters.php?session=10895&year=2019>

# Building a course website with OERs makes for a dynamic textbook alternative that saves students money and engages multiple forms of learning.

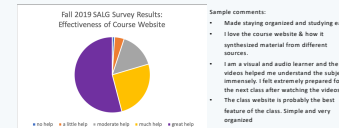


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## Feedback and Results

Overall, students reported preferring the website to a traditional textbook in every semester it has been used. In a Student Assessment of Learning Gains survey, an overwhelming majority of the 96 students polled found the website helpful, particularly the Smarthistory videos, which engaged multiple types of learning in addition to reading.



The website has also allowed me to better focus preparatory readings on the content of my lectures, meaning students are better prepared for both class discussion and exams. The class has now been taught three times using the website, and the class average scores on exams has either stayed constant or improved against the term when a standard textbook was used, demonstrating the website's effectiveness as a textbook replacement.

## Improvements

Improvements that have been added to the website include:

- Skeletal lecture outlines at the bottom of each page, providing students with an optional note-taking aid
- Clearer comprehension and discussion questions guiding students' close analyses of artworks and primary sources

Potential improvements based on student feedback include:

- Class dates indicated next to each class's page (difficult to implement as, in the spirit of the OER movement, I want this resource to be available to other classes and instructors)
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## Works Cited and Further Reading

- Boffa, D. (2018). "Questioning the Ethics of Required Textbooks." Art History Teaching Resources. <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2018/12/questioning-the-ethics-of-required-textbooks/>
- Mishra, S. (2017). "Open educational resources: removing barriers from within." Distance Education 38 (3), 369-380.
- Wiley, D., Green, C., & Soares, L. (2012). Dramatically Bringing down the Cost of Education with OER: How Open Education Resources Unlock the Door to Free Learning. Center for American Progress.
- Smarthistory <https://smarthistory.org/>
- The Art Story <https://www.theartstory.org/>
- Hollbrum Timeline of Art History <https://www.metmuseum.org/taoh/>