

# Art History, Open Educational Resources (OERs), and Social Justice-Oriented Pedagogy: Adaptations to Introductory World Art History Survey Courses

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In Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, I had the opportunity to teach World Art History I (prehistoric eras to 1200 CE) and World Art History II (1200 CE to present day art). At my university, World Art History I and World Art History II fulfill a state core curriculum requirement for all undergraduate students and a degree requirement for Art History, Studio Art, and Art Education majors. Because our Visual Arts department is relatively small, my World Art History courses are usually filled by non-majors, which provides me with an opportunity to share the joy of visual art to students whom this may be their first (and possibly only) encounter with art history.

Beginning this uncertain academic year following the events of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was concerned with creating an accessible and flexible course format. I wanted my construction of these classes to take into consideration the ways the pandemic forced many students into unstable financial situations and increased family obligations. As an educator committed to social justice-oriented pedagogy, I saw these courses as an opportunity to transform the way I teach introductory world art history courses by adapting open educational resources (OERs). I define social justice-oriented pedagogy within my teaching and in this article as reevaluating knowledge production, disrupting status quo narratives, and centering marginalized voices within art history and to the service of diverse student needs.<sup>1</sup>

OERs are any type of educational material in the public domain, which can be legally used, adapted, repurposed, remixed, and/or shared and is typically published under a creative commons license. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that OERs are

teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. OER form part of ‘Open Solutions’, alongside Free and Open Source software (FOSS), Open Access (OA), Open Data (OD) and crowdsourcing platforms.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My social justice-oriented pedagogy is informed by bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012); and Sara Lambert, “Changing our (Dis)Course: A Distinctive Social Justice Aligned Definition of Open Education,” *Journal of Learning for Development* 5/3 (November 2018).

<sup>2</sup> “Open Educational Resources (OER).” *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO). <https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer>. Accessed September 15, 2021.

Expanding on the ways in which individuals can work with OER material, David Wiley articulates the “5R activities” of open access or open educational resource permissions, which include:

1. Retain - make, own, and control a copy of the resource (e.g., download and keep your own copy)
2. Revise - edit, adapt, and modify your copy of the resource (e.g., translate into another language)
3. Remix - combine your original or revised copy of the resource with other existing material to create something new (e.g., make a mashup)
4. Reuse - use your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource publicly (e.g., on a website, in a presentation, in a class)
5. Redistribute - share copies of your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource with others (e.g., post a copy online or give one to a friend)<sup>3</sup>

Given the wide scope of resources (both digital and nondigital) and the ability to tailor material to best suit the needs of one’s course, OERs offer instructors many possibilities in meeting both student and pedagogical needs.

Adopting OERs in a university course has several practical benefits. For instance, the adoption of open access materials comes at no cost to students. Student often have limited financial resources to put towards costly textbooks, many of which are not used beyond the course (or sometime even in the course), and those who take alternative approaches to obtaining the material (e.g., via the library reserve or photographing/scanning a peer’s text) use up valuable time.<sup>4</sup> In addition, OERs offer the convenience for instructors to view, sample, and select materials without waiting for publishers’ desk copies. However, there are also a number of social justice benefits. OERs have the potential to assist instructors in facilitating a social justice curriculum. The accessibility of OERs and other creative commons resources (e.g., images and videos) that can enrich course materials enables instructors to (re)present marginalized voices. Marco Seiferle-Valencia comments that “[f]or those with privileged identities, OER can present an opportunity to center a story other than a familiar standard narrative. For those who have been omitted, OER can present an exciting opportunity to co-construct new historical narratives and curricula that better reflect ourselves and others with marginalized identities.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, OERs can assist in the important project of reshaping introductory art history survey courses that disrupt the dominance of the white, male Western art history canon.

At my university, I have the joy of teaching an undergraduate student body that is racially and ethnically diverse— 30% Latino/Hispanic, approximately 20% Black/African American, and 9% Asian/ Pacific Islander students—and composed of nearly 90% female students. These

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<sup>3</sup> David Wiley. “Defining the “Open” in Open Content and Open Educational Resources.” *opencontent.org*. <https://opencontent.org/definition/>. Accessed September 15, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Maura Smale. ““To Be Honest I’m Not Sure If We Have a Textbook”: Undergraduate Access to Course Reading.” *The Purpose of Education* (2019). <https://hybridpedagogy.org/textbook-access/>. Accessed September 15, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Marco Seiferle-Valencia, “It’s Not (Just) About the Cost: Academic Libraries and Intentionally Engaged OER for Social Justice,” *Library Trends* 69/2 (January 2020), 482.

demographics grant me the opportunity to connect with a range of students who each bring unique experiences and backgrounds into the classroom. My introductory art history survey courses are especially diverse because, as a course that fulfills an aspect of the undergraduate core curriculum, I have students from across multiple disciplines and university classifications. To enact a social justice-oriented pedagogy, I am especially concerned with developing curriculum that facilitates students' connection between themselves and the course material in ways that foster thoughtful and engaged learning. Such a goal is important given that many of the students at my university are first-generation college students. As Richie Neil Hao notes, instructors of first-generation students can benefit from a self-reflexive pedagogical approach that examines how they can enhance students' experiences in the classroom.<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting on my pedagogical practices, I reviewed art history survey textbooks offered by major academic publishers but was disappointed at the misalignment between my multicultural classroom and the material. A commercial survey textbook of art history typically examines Western art chronologically in a grand timeline starting from Prehistoric time and continuing through to contemporary art. In comparison, global art is confined into discreet chapters towards the end of the text; each chapter consists of a grouping of countries (e.g., China and Korea) or an entire continent (e.g., Africa and Oceania) with its own isolated timeline.<sup>7</sup> I am not alone nor the first to make such observations. In 1995 Joanne Sowell made similar commentary, stating "I have not been comfortable with the approach taken by most introductory texts, simply adding a few token chapters on global art into a format based on the stylistic development of Western art."<sup>8</sup> Two years later, Robert Nelson made similar observations of the *History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Artist from the Dawn of History to the Present Day* by Horst Waldemar Janson and Dora Jane Jansen noting that "the scope is far from global."<sup>9</sup> If similar issues still persist today, this poses a problem for a social justice-oriented pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> As bell hooks states, "Despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism in our society, particularly in education, there's not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, one such area needing improvement are the texts we assign.

I want my students to be engaged in the course, which includes finding sites of connection. These entry points may involve a student locating their cultural heritage in the course materials. However, when a student of color finds their culture's art isolated from the Western art history canon and presented as an afterthought, the social injustice and marginalization they experience in their personal lives becomes reified in the classroom. hooks notes that "[i]f the effort to

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<sup>6</sup> Richie Neil Hao, "Critical Compassionate Pedagogy and the Teacher's Role in First-generation Student Success," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 2011/127 (September 2011), 95.

<sup>7</sup> I use the term "global art" throughout the text to indicate art produced by Indigenous and Global South cultures and chose not to use the term "non-Western art" to avoid recentering Western dominance.

<sup>8</sup> Joanne Sowell, "A Cross-Cultural Approach," *Art Journal* 54/3 (Autumn 1995), 72.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 79/1 (March 1997), 35.

<sup>10</sup> Youngna Kim, "WHITHER ART HISTORY? Korea's Search for a Place in Global Art History." *Art Bulletin* 98/1 (March 2016): 7-13. Youngna Kim notes twenty years later that "translated into more than fifteen languages, Janson's exhaustive text has served as the foundation for countless syllabi in introductory art history classes around the world."

<sup>11</sup> hooks, 35.

respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society who are nonwhite is to be reflected in a pedagogical process, then as teacher—on all levels, from elementary to university setting—we must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, my reliance on a textbook to fully encompass the work I needed to do in the classroom and best serve my students needed to shift.

In art history courses, instructors need to think about which art is privileged, whose art is marginalized, and the broader message sent to students regarding which people are valued. In “White Academia: Do Better. Higher education has a problem. It’s called White supremacy,” Jasmine Roberts calls instructors to think carefully about their pedagogical approaches and curriculum. She notes that “Your Black students and other students of color need to actually see themselves reflected in class content. This leads to more engaging learning. It also helps broaden the education of your White students.”<sup>13</sup> Instructors wanting to adopt a social justice-oriented pedagogy should then carefully consider the texts they adopt for their courses. However, Roberts argues that white instructors need to “[s]top blaming textbooks or other content factors for your failure to implement culturally-relevant/responsive and inclusive pedagogy”<sup>14</sup> In other words, instructors cannot rely on textbooks to be social justice-oriented and should find alternative ways to create diversified curriculum.

Art history has undergone recent reflections on the state of the field, particularly directed at the content and delivery of introductory survey courses. Claudia Mattos notes that increased interest in re-evaluating the discipline and associated canon began to emerge in the 1970s as interdisciplinary fields, such as women and gender studies, postcolonial studies, semiotics, and psychoanalysis, prompted art historians to consider the ways gender, race, colonization, psychology, and language has impacted or been ignored in art history.<sup>15</sup> Recent re-evaluations have been fueled by various motivations, such as preventing the feared death of the discipline,<sup>16</sup> infusing a social justice perspective,<sup>17</sup> and/or better serving a diverse student population.<sup>18</sup> Initiatives to transform art history courses are imperative given Nelson’s observations that “[a]s a discipline, art history acquired and has been accorded the ability and power to control and judge its borders, to admit or reject people and objects, and to teach and thus transmit values to others. If these structures are seldom noticed, much less studied, they are always present.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, if introductory art history courses and textbooks maintain the status quo, the Western

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jasmine Roberts, “White Academia: Do Better. Higher education has a problem. It’s called White supremacy.” *Medium*. <https://medium.com/the-faculty/white-academia-do-better-fa96cedel1fc5>. Accessed May 25, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Claudia Mattos, “Geography, Art Theory, and New Perspectives for an Inclusive Art History,” *Art Bulletin* 96/3 (October 2014), 263.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Please see Linnea Dietrich and Diane Smith-Hurd, “Feminist Approaches to the Survey,” *Art Journal* 54/3 (Autumn 1995), 44 and Jordana Moore Saggese, “Introduction: Diversity And Difference,” *Art Journal* 75/1 (Spring 2016), 70-74.

<sup>18</sup> Please see Bradford R. Collins, “Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey,” *Art Journal* 54/3 (Autumn 1995), 23 and Shao Yiyang, “Wither Art History? Wither Art History?,” *Art Bulletin* 98/2 (June 2016), 147-50.

<sup>19</sup> Nelson, 28.

focused narrative of art production that privileges white, male, upper to middle class artists is left unchecked and fails to affirm artwork by global artists, women artists, and artists of color.<sup>20</sup>

## Adapting Open Access Textbook: *Boundless Art History*

By adapting OERs, instructors of art history survey courses may have the opportunity to disrupt status quo narratives that overrepresent white Western male artists. Such a move is important since, as Mark Miller Graham notes, “[t]he text as intervention will always be overwhelmed by the text as commodity. Today's texts may actually lag farther behind the parent discipline than did those of twenty years ago.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore adopting OERs may provide more opportunities for curriculum change than what is offered in a commercial textbook. The question arises, how then can introductory art history survey courses be taught that recognizes global contributions to art history? Like Shao Yiyang, I feel “the best way to move forward is to find the purpose of art history, which is vital for establishing mutual understanding among all cultures, instead of marginalizing any culture or discourse.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, one purpose of art history can be to recognize the interconnectivity of artmaking across culture that acknowledges the commonalities and differences between culture, time, and place that does not exist in a hierarchical arrangement built on white supremacy, xenophobia, colonialism, and sexism.

To move away from monolithic narratives of world art history that privileges white Western art, I adapted the open access textbook *Boundless Art History* by Lumen Learning.<sup>23</sup> The materials contained in *Boundless Art History* covers the course content for both my World Art History I and World Art History II courses (i.e., “Prehistoric Art” through “Global Art Since 1950 CE”); therefore, I was able to adapt the OER for both courses. The textbook’s table of contents is arranged by chapters on different time periods/styles and geographical locations (e.g., “Art of the Ancient Near East” and “Romanesque Art”) each of which have several subheadings with a link to a reading on the subject. *Boundless Art History* also offers quiz files and slide lectures for each chapter. While I was drawn to *Boundless Art History* for its accessibility and navigability, and chose this OER over other resources, I was disappointed at the arrangement of the material, which echoes the formatting of commercial textbooks.<sup>24</sup> While the textbook’s chapter distribution is more balanced between Western and global art, the division between these two groups is maintained through chapters dedicated to a particular culture.

Isolating Western and global art sets up a narrative of isolation and insurmountable difference. In addition, when Western art is spread out through multiple chapters, students are introduced to

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<sup>20</sup> Beyond the scope of introductory art history courses, scholarship elsewhere in the field have also made social justice contributions. For example, several CFPs for the 2022 College Arts Association National Conference look at the contributions of marginalized perspectives inclusive of artists-of-color, artists with disabilities, Indigenous artists, queer artists, and other socially engaged art.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Miller Graham, “The Future of Art History and the Undoing of the Survey,” *Art Journal* 54/3 (Autumn, 1995), 32.

<sup>22</sup> Yiyang, 147-50.

<sup>23</sup> Lumen Learning, *Boundless Art History* <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-arthistory/>. Accessed May 25, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> I found that other resources from Khan Academy and Smarthistory listed on the OER Commons webpage (oercommons.org) were more specialized (e.g., focused on a particular region’s or time period’s art rather than a global survey) and would be more useful for future additions to the material I found in *Boundless Art History*.

a false narrative that Western art is greater than global art (i.e., there are more chapters on Western art so it must be more important). Students may also find it difficult to conceptualize art development on a global scale when they are presented with different timelines for each region. Because I want students to identify interconnections between art of different cultures, I adapted the chronological method to present Western and global art together in a combined timeline. To accomplish this task, I separated the textbook material into timeframe units; I have twelve units in World Art History I and ten units in World Art History II, twenty-two units in total covering Prehistoric art to present day contemporary art. For each unit, I transferred material from *Boundless Art History* to individual region's chapters. As a result, each of my unit's readings represents multiple regions and cultures and students develop a better sense of art's chronological development on a global scale.

In drawing from *Boundless Art History* open access materials, I created a reading and slide lecture for each timeframe unit, which was made available to students on our Canvas course.<sup>25</sup> I intended the reading to contain the bulk of the information that is supported by a few artworks, while the PowerPoint slide lectures reiterate the key ideas from the text and introduce additional images. Because *Boundless Art History* holds a great amount of content, many of the timeframe's readings were quite lengthy, 20 pages or more. I maintained the composition of the material I took from each individual *Boundless Art History* chapter but did not place the text from the different regions in a particular order for the new reading. Each of the *Boundless Art History* chapters has one or more sections with learning objectives and key takeaways (composed of key points and key terms). Instead of applying this information to my adapted readings, I used some of the text in the PowerPoint slide lectures. The downloadable *Boundless Art History* PowerPoint slide lectures feature the images from the readings with brief captions as well as attribution slides at the end. In my adaptation of the PowerPoint slide lectures, I transferred over some of the key takeaways from the text to encapsulate the main ideas in the reading. To cut down on the readings' length and omit redundancy with the PowerPoint slide lectures, I omitted some images from the reading and featured these in the slide lecture. I also collected other images with a creative commons license to further develop the PowerPoint slide lectures.

To support the changes I made in the *Boundless Art History* material rearrangement, I completely diverged from the quiz and major exam assessment approach. Instead, I created discussion-based assignments that prompted students to locate key themes across cultures at given time periods and consider the commonalities and differences between regions' art. Assignments included discussion board posts in which students responded to major themes found in the week's reading, a social impact write-up that asked students to consider how social events and climates impacted a cultures artistic production, and a major project that asked students to select and compare work from different cultures that relate to a common theme. In switching my assessment approach to a discussion centered approach, I changed my student's learning outcomes to focus on developing critical thinking, communication, and analysis skills and give them the opportunity to select artwork and themes that most interested them.

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<sup>25</sup> The open access resource titled "World Art History: Multicultural Connections" is published in the *OERTX Repository*: <https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/1581>.

My work follows in the footsteps of other scholars who seek to reinvent the normative art history survey narrative. In “The Future of Art History and the Undoing of the Survey,” Mark Miller Graham examines major ideology structuring art history introductory courses and proposes ways of addressing their problematic dominant narrative. He suggests that if we let go of the traditional “story of art” that relies on chronology and Western narrative we can shift from a canonical emphasis to a thematic approach.<sup>26</sup> He argues,

Among the obvious themes that could be used to structure segments of a two- or three-course introduction are the art of early states, cities of the ancient world, art of the age of discovery, and individuality and tradition in the modern world. None of these themes is inherently Western (except for the age of discovery, where the inclusion of non-European civilization is implicit), and each is sufficiently broad to allow for a natural mainstreaming of the traditional Others of the survey”<sup>27</sup>

Although my adaptation of *Boundless Art History* materials maintains a chronology through time frame units, its arrangement features global and Western art as equal contributors to the development of art history and disrupts the narrative of Western art’s superiority.

Instructors’ efforts of “mainstreaming” marginalized art of Indigenous and Global South cultures should be done with mindfulness and intentionality. Merely sprinkling in a handful of examples of global art into units that predominantly feature Western art serves only to tokenize the art of the “Other” and further supports the narrative of Western art’s greatness. As Chandra Mohanty notes, the “add and stir” method often taken by instructors aiming to include third world and women of color scholars is insufficient because Western viewpoints remain primary and unchallenged.<sup>28</sup> As such, I aim for my rearrangement of the *Boundless Art History* textbook to place global art on more equal footing with Western art.

However, it is important to note that I view my adaptation as an imperfect work in progress in which others may add to or take in different directions. For example, the timeframe unit readings might be revised to create a more fluid weaving of art developments across the world or arranged thematically within that slice of time. Others may also contribute to my adaptation by adding more open access content (e.g., artwork examples, timelines, and maps) and/or taking the existing content to an interactive platform. For those who desire to completely move away from a chronological format, *Boundless Art History* materials and my adaptation may be useful in developing an open access thematic course.<sup>29</sup> Inspiration may be taken from Gretchen Holtzapple Bender’s article “Why World Art is Urgent Now: Rethinking the Introductory Survey

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<sup>26</sup> Graham, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Chandra Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 239.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of motivations to move away from a chronological format please see Patricia Mathews, “What Matters in Art History,” *Art Journal* 54/3 (1995), 51.

in a Seminar Format” in which she discusses her move to a thematic presentation in her introductory world art course that focused on the idea of contact and conflict.<sup>30</sup>

At the forefront of my adaptations and any subsequent modifications is the goal of enacting a social justice-oriented pedagogy in my introductory art history survey courses. Like Griselda Pollock, who draws on the theorizing of Gayatri Spivak, to ask how can art history “begin to think in ‘planetary’ rather than in global terms: the former being grounded, connective, and differentiating, and the latter being abstracting, homogenizing, and indifferent?” I am to work towards inclusion and diversification in my course content.<sup>31</sup> I see my efforts to revise World Art History I and World Art History II by adapting OERs as part of my academic duty and a means to engage in Open Education that takes on a social justice lens.<sup>32</sup> Sarah Lambert defines Open Education as:

Open Education is the development of free digitally enabled learning materials and experiences primarily by and for the benefit and empowerment of non-privileged learners who may be under-represented in education systems or marginalised in their global context. Success of social justice aligned programs can be measured not by any particular technical feature or format, but instead by the extent to which they enact redistributive justice, recognitive justice and/or representational justice<sup>33</sup> (Lambert 239)

As Lambert’s definition indicates, redistributive justice, recognitive justice, and representational justice operate as three guiding principles.<sup>34</sup> In brief, redistributive justice “involves allocation of material or human resources towards those who by circumstance have less,” recognitive justice calls for “recognition and respect for cultural and gender difference,” and representational justice demands “equitable representation and political voice.”<sup>35</sup> Applied to my World Art History pedagogical project, I also seek to serve non-privileged learners through the use of free to access materials and aim to address the mis/underrepresentation of marginalized groups through redistributive, recognitive, and representational justice.

## Analysis: Students’ Thoughts on OERs

Having adapted the *Boundless Art History* resources for World Art History I and World Art History II, I exclusively used these materials for the classes scheduled for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 respectively. At the beginning of the semester, I explained to my students what OERs are, how I had adapted the *Boundless Art History* materials, and my motivations for doing so. At the

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<sup>30</sup> Gretchen Holtzapple Bender, “Why World Art is Urgent Now: Rethinking the Introductory Survey in a Seminar Format,” *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 2/2 (2017), 1-34.

<sup>31</sup> Griselda Pollock, “Whither Art History?,” *Art Bulletin* 96/1 (March 2014), 16.

<sup>32</sup> While Open Education can refer to accessible education outside of a higher educational framework, my use of the term is within my university instructor context.

<sup>33</sup> Lambert, 239.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 226. Lambert draws on Amanda Keddie, “Schooling and Social Justice Through the Lenses of Nancy Fraser,” *Critical Studies in Education*, 53/3 (August 2012), 263–279; Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Age,” *New Left Review*, 1/212 (June/July 1995), 68-149; and Iris Marion Young, “Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser’s Dual Systems Theory,” *New Left Review*, 1/222 (March/April 1997), 147–160 in her definitions of redistributive, recognitive, and representational justices.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 227.

end of the semester, I asked students to fill out a brief Google Forms survey, which asked four questions about students' experience with OERs within and outside of our class. Out of 136 students across both classes, 15 students responded.<sup>36</sup> The questions asked: 1) What were your experiences with Open Educational Resources or any other types of free to access course materials before taking ARTS 2423/2433?, 2) Do the Open Educational Resources we used in the course provide something different or more than a textbook might offer?, 3) Do the Open Educational Resources we used in the course lack something that a textbook would provide?, 4) Any additional thoughts on Open Educational Resources?

Using a discourse analysis methodology, I consider below how the students' responses coincide with a social justice-oriented open education and what areas of my OER adaptation can be further developed to better serve student needs. According to Gabriele Griffin, "discourse analysis is concerned with the investigation of language, both written and oral, as it is actually used (as opposed to an abstract system or structure of language)."<sup>37</sup> Discourse analysis "assumes from the outset that language is invested, meaning that language is not a neutral tool for transmitting a message"<sup>38</sup> instead discourse is "shaped and constrained by social structure"<sup>39</sup> while at the same time "discourse is socially constitutive... Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning."<sup>40</sup> In adopting a discourse analysis framework, I identify themes within each questions' responses, note the discursive techniques students employ to express their evaluation of OERs, and connect the student's discourse to aspects of redistributive justice, recognitive justice and/or representational justice.

In response to my first question, I found that half of the student respondents did not have prior experience with OERs. Other students had taken courses that assigned no cost materials. For instance, one student reported that "[p]rior to this course, most of my other classes used fee-based education sources such as textbooks or paid videos. However, I have had experience with some websites and short videos in science-based or English courses" and another student commented that "[i]t was mostly just in handouts or reading assignments given in other classes, or sometimes a teacher just telling us to go find/read something online outside of class and happening to find a free version of something." One student did have "some experience with OER in other classes" stating, "I loved OER resources rather than buying a costly textbook. These resources, I feel, are always both helpful and efficient." As the responses indicate, OERs are still relatively new at my university but, based on the language characterization, would be welcome because of their no-cost features. Indeed, other students used appreciative language to express their feelings on no-cost textbooks. One student commented, "I was grateful I didn't need to buy resources for my classes and that they were provided for the class" and a second student said, "I really appreciated them because I did not have to spend hundreds of dollars on

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<sup>36</sup> While this is a relatively low response rate, the stress of the pandemic and general timing of the survey (end of semester) could have impacted students' time and energy to complete the survey.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriele Griffin. "Discourse Analysis." In *Research Methods for English Studies* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition edited by Gabriele Griffin. (Edinburgh: University Press 2013): 93.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Fairclough. *Discourse and Social Change*. (Cambridge: Polity Press 1992): 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

them for only to use 4 months.” Another student expressed similar sentiments stating, “I think they are very cool and take a chunk of stress off of students by not making them spend extra money on textbooks for classes that they may or may not use ever again in the future.” As this student indicates, when required courses are outside of a student’s major, it is unlikely they would need or want to keep the course materials. Reducing or eliminating textbook and other course material fees is one way of enacting redistributive justice. Since many students may not have financial access to fee-based course materials, adopting open access resources can better serve economically disadvantaged students. Furthermore, the number of students who face economic struggles has increased due to the pandemic and, thus, universities have a greater need for low or no cost materials.

One possible concern instructors may have in adopting OERs in a course is the risk of losing valuable content that may be offered in commercial textbooks. When asked if they saw a difference between the OER material adapted for the course and traditional textbooks, two students noted no difference between my adapted open access materials and a traditional textbook. However, some students noted perceived differences between the OER material and their past experiences with textbooks. Specific to my editing and adapting, some students found the material to be less detailed than a typical textbook. For example, a student commented that “[a]n OER does provide something different we usually see in another textbook but I don’t think it’s exactly MORE than a textbook you pay more money on does. The OER shared briefly discusses the countless of [sic] information it has over the topic in a much general way unlike a much larger textbook that would go into depth” and similarly, a peer stated that the OER material lacked “[m]ore in depth information- lack of additional resources and questionnaire [sic] sections.” Another student commented that “[i]n my experience some of the information was not as thorough as a textbook. The information was sometimes vague and lacked the detail textbooks usually go into, which made research for this class hard.” In considering the students’ use of terms such as “broad” and “general” as opposed to the “depth” and “detail” that a handful of students desired, I interpret their discourse as indicating expectations that an introductory art history course goes, at least in part, beyond a traditional survey style to deeply examine certain aspects of art history.

While noting a lack of depth may reflect the survey style of the *Boundless Art History* text, further development of the materials may be useful in providing depth students seek. For example, the *OER Commons*<sup>41</sup> website lists several art history resources such as *Art and Life in Africa Project*,<sup>42</sup> *Islamic Art and Culture: A Resource for Teachers*,<sup>43</sup> and *Edo: Art in Japan, 1615–1868*<sup>44</sup> that can enrich content on specific cultures and geographic regions. In addition, *Art History Teaching Resources* (AHTR) website page on OERs contains several lesson plans with

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<sup>41</sup> *OER Commons* <https://www.oercommons.org/>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, *Art and Life in Africa Project*, <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/art-and-life-in-africa-project/view>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> National Gallery of Art, *Islamic Art and Culture: A Resource for Teachers*, <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/islamic-art-and-culture-a-resource-for-teachers/view>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> National Gallery of Art, *Edo: Art in Japan, 1615–1868*, <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/edo-art-in-japan-1615%C4%911868/view>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

links to readings and image content that could further develop instructional units.<sup>45</sup> While I have aimed to enact cognitive and representational justice by placing global art on more equal footing with Western art through the increased inclusion of global art, further enriching sections on global art can further my efforts.

Similar to optional student evaluations that often represent two ends of the spectrum, my survey responses indicated similar conflicting responses. While some students felt the materials were too broad, other students felt the opposite. One student reported that “the information was very detailed, but not too long and the readings were able to keep my attention.” Another student said that “[t]extbooks can be rather bland with their information. These resources felt more informative and refreshing with viewpoints other than just facts,” and their peer expressed similar sentiments stating, “I felt like because we were working with smaller more specific documents that the OERs worked better than trying to find the same information a big textbook.” Likewise, another student commented that “I found that the OERs provided information in a more understandable and comprehensible way than a textbook. The OERs also allowed me to quickly and easily search for terms and images” and another stated, “I honestly think that there was just as much information from the resources as I would get from a textbook.” The range in opinions demonstrate that students hold different expectations for the course material. Given this information, in future courses I may offer more optional supplementary readings for students who wish to explore topics further.

Indeed, with the range of art history OERs available and the freedom to remix materials, instructors can tailor readings to better suit student’s needs. For example, instructors can just as easily trim down readings as they can add to them. For some units, shortening lessons may be useful for students. When asked whether open educational resources used in the course provided something different or more, one student commented that “[y]es, less reading and more time to understand the lecture.” Similarly, another student said that “[i]t seems that it offers the same amount of important information as a textbook would. I liked the OER's for this class because they included pictures and they wer [sic] not as text heavy as a textbook can get.” By cutting back on reading, instructors may open more space for other forms of instruction, such as activities, group discussion, and/or videos (as was suggested by one student’s survey feedback).

As one might expect, some students discussed the tangible versus digital aspects of using OERs. On one hand, as one student pointed out “[t]he only thing that the OERs "lacked", in my opinion, was having something tangible in my hands. This is not really an issue though, unless I was unable to have service of wifi.” On the other hand, some students desire digital copies of the reading materials. One student expressed that

I'm not sure if it's a learning difference or something like that like how some people are visual Learners and some people are textile [sic] learners but I learned better when I'm reading from a computer or PowerPoint then I do when I'm reading from a book I just can't absorb a textbook for some reason and the readings that were compiled for us, while

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<sup>45</sup> “OERs (Open Educational Resources),” *Art History Teaching Resources* (AHTR), <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/oers-open-educational-resources/>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

they were basically textbook material were so much easier to understand. It also made it easier to use those readings and photos in projects and the reading reactions.<sup>46</sup>

Moving beyond the surface level of the student's discourse we can note "the less obvious, nuanced and implicit meanings for the subtle and complex renderings of ideological assumptions and power relations in contemporary societies."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, it is important to consider students' internet access, which can impact their ability to access course readings and materials if they are only available online. Instructors can consider printing and placing copies of the readings on reserve at their university's library if free on campus printing is not available to students. Equally as valuable to note is students' learning styles that may make them prefer one type of reading format over another. One student also commented that "I love the open educational resources. I think textbooks are a waste of paper far too expensive, and useless in a society where we can store terabytes of information on a computer that will fit in my pocket. It would be interesting to see if there was a way we could add the OERs to students' Kindles or something along those lines." Part of enacting redistributive justice is ensuring students of all abilities have access to materials. This can take the form of making sure one's adaptations to OERs are available to students in multiple formats, compatible with text-to-speech applications, and easily enlarged.

## Closing Thoughts

In considering my initial work with OERs and my students' feedback, I conclude with a few thoughts on how I can further expand my engagement with OERs. As mentioned earlier, my use of *Boundless Art History* materials creates a beginning foundation for an introductory art history survey course. However, more material is required to provide the depth and breadth of resources that students desire. Folding in open access or free to view materials from additional OERs such as *Art History Teaching Resources* (AHTR),<sup>48</sup> unrestricted museum digital images,<sup>49</sup> *Smarthistory*,<sup>50</sup> and open access course materials<sup>51</sup> either within the readings or as supplementary

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<sup>46</sup> Reading reactions are discussion posts that asked students to answer a set of questions on the week's reading that focused on establishing connections between different cultures' art.

<sup>47</sup> Michelle M. Lazar. *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 13.

<sup>48</sup> ArtHistoryTeachingResources.org is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

<sup>49</sup> The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The Met Museum, and The National Gallery of Art all have searchable images on their website that are under the public domain or licensed under the Creative Commons Zero (CC0).

<sup>50</sup> *Smarthistory* offers videos, essays, and images and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. <https://smarthistory.org/> Accessed September 15, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> For example, the course *Introduction to the History of Modern Art* is part of the Open-Educational Resources initiative developed by Lehman College, City University of New York, and maintained by Associate Professor Sharon Jordan on the CUNY Academic Commons. <https://arh141.commons.gc.cuny.edu/> Accessed September 15, 2021.

material can help diversity the art, cultures, and topics explored as well as open possibilities for alternative modes of content delivery.

As part of developing OER content to better serve student needs, the students themselves can become a part of the authoring process. As Robin DeRosa and Scott Robison assert “An open pedagogy perspective invites *students* to be content creators”.<sup>52</sup> *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students* edited by Elizabeth Mays makes a similar argument and offers suggestions on how to consider ethical questions such as the instructor’s responsibility to students’ rights, privacy, and safety as well as items to consider when adding to an existing textbook or creating a new textbook.<sup>53</sup> If instructors only consider the cost aspect of OERs

we largely miss out on the opportunity to *empower* our students, to help them see content as something they can curate and create, and to help them see themselves as contributing members to the public marketplace of ideas. Essentially, this is a move from thinking about OER as open textbooks and thinking about them as opening textbooks...and all sorts of other educational materials and processes.<sup>54</sup>

Applied to an introductory art history course, students could help locate additional open access images, videos, and/or writings that further develop their areas of interest in the course. Fused with a social justice-oriented pedagogy, I plan to devise assignments that guide students in future iterations of these courses to locate gaps within the course material, especially areas pertaining to their identity, interest, and/or major. Once identified, students can assist in designing assignments that help develop the overlooked areas in the course.

In closing, I want to reflect on one student’s comment in response to the question that asked for additional thoughts on open educational resources, who stated: “I love the way this course was set up because of the oers and I wish more classes would use this format. Restricting knowledge is elitist and I hate it but making knowledge easily accessed like this and taking the excess burden off of students is an amazing approach to education.” As my student indicates, open access education can help break down barriers between the haves and have nots. By adopting OERs art history courses instructors can make knowledge more accessible and facilitate alternative forms of presenting art in relation to time and space that disrupt status quo narratives. It is my hope that my adaptation to *Boundless Art History* is useful to other instructors similarly engaged in social justice-oriented pedagogy and that the materials continue to be enriched by both instructors and students to develop to better serve student needs.

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<sup>52</sup> Robin DeRosa and Scott Robison 2017. From OER to Open Pedagogy: Harnessing the Power of Open.” In: Jhangiani R. & Biswas-Diener R (eds.), *Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science*. London: Ubiquity Press. (2017): 119. Original italics.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Mays, editor. *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students*. The Rebus Community for Open Textbook Creation. 2017 <https://press.rebus.community/makingopentextbookswithstudents/>. Accessed September 21, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> DeRosa and Robinson, 122. Original italics.

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