

# Michael Regina

## Design Collage Project

MIT-511 Fall 2010

---

### Book Title:

A Concise History of the American Republic, Second Edition: Volume I to 1877

### Objective:

To redesign an existing book cover that incorporated poor design principles and images by using Adobe Photoshop.

### Tools Used:

- **Eraser** – used to erase edges of multiple images so the contour would fit that of the flag
- **Text** – used to create multiple words in laying out the document
- **Magic Wand** – used in selecting large areas of similar color to apply changes in design
- **Layers** – used for control of design by segmenting different items such as graphics and text
- **Skew** – used to alter the shape of images and distortion of certain text
- **Drop Shadow** – used to enhance the look of the text and box behind text
- **Bevel and Emboss** – used to enhance the look of the text and box behind text
- **Feather** – used to soften edges of images for cleaner look
- **Eye Dropper** – used to sample colors so they could be applied to other design elements
- **Paint Bucket** – used to fill box and text in a more efficient manner

### Techniques Used:

- **Blending images together on top of flag** – I took different images and put them on a separate layer above the flag, reduced the transparency so I could see the background, skewed and distorted the image to create desired effect and erased overlapping content.
- **Creating text that appears two dimensional** – by using the “fx” tools I was able to add drop shadows, embossing and beveling which gave the text depth and clarity. This technique allowed me to apply the text on top of intense imagery without needing to erase any of the flag in making it stand out.
- **Having images on top of flag look like they are part of the flag** – using the distort and skew features, I was able to manipulate the photos in a way that makes them look as if they are following the curves of the flag. After blending the images, I copied the original space on the flag stripes, copied it, and created a new layer that I then adjusted in the curves palette to overemphasize the highlights and shadows. I placed the adjusted layer on top of the images and reduced the transparency to only a wash appeared over the images which gave them a realistic appearance as if they were part of the flag
- **Having images curve with the flag to add realism** – to make the curvature of the images I had to use the free transform tool and then the warp tool to pinch and bloat the image until it flowed smoothly. You had to use the Bezier handle points to control the distortion.
- **Making the “of” appear behind the main book title** – once I had placed the text in its proper location, I added a duplicate layer of the box layer, free transformed it and scaled it down to only cover the section I wanted covered and put that layer on top of the text layer.

**Audience Analysis:**

Audience would be high school students taking an American history class (typically first of two sections). This book would also need to appeal to the administrators who make the decisions of what book is to be used during a school year. Even though there are many factors in choosing a textbook not mentioned here, window dressing (cover design) can play a major role in getting an opportunity to be chosen.

**Designed Pages:**

- Textbook Cover, original and redesign

**To be turned in:**

- JPEG image at 72dpi and original Photoshop file, zipped, along with first draft and this document explaining techniques/criteria.

## CRITERIA

**CLARITY**

*(likely to be comprehended clearly)*

What this cover lacked primarily was its clarity. The overuse of text and quilt style image lent itself to a poorly designed book. Before opening the text, you already felt misguided and turned off into ever reading it. Basic text layout principles were broken such as kerning, leading and all caps usage. I added multiple images but combined all of them into one stable image by using multiple Photoshop tools. The fonts used on the cover are identical to the ones used in the book, Verdana and Constantia to add repetition for clarity. My color selection of the box is also found inside the book and the images are iconic and recognizable.

**COLOR**

*(appropriate, supports media and content purpose)*

Green used as a book cover choice reminds me of days gone by and this book is from a generation ago so maybe it fits. However, my purpose is to get this textbook ready for a major release into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and need to add some pizzazz to the color selection. There won't be much connection between the interior colors I chose to accent the content and the cover. The repetition will come in the font selections. Repetition of color from the inside was important but even more so was the use of our American colors (red, white and blue). It was very important that these colors maintained a strong presence throughout the design. The aqua green color was selected purposely to because of its cool appearance so that it would not compete with the background image. It also reverses the typical design elements of cool background and warm foreground technique which adds a nice originality to the design.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **Contrast** – Going against normal contrast principles, I felt minimizing it would prove more effective because the book will be seen and viewed a lot. A cover that is visually loud could deter the student from using it. Even choosing a specific color scheme, such as the original, might not interest people who don't like that color. In order to respond to those possibilities, my contrast was limited to the flags colors being repeated in the text and I decided that a neutral cool color would be effective for the main title backdrop. The most contrast I used in the cover design was how I manipulated the word "of" to not match any other elements, kind of like adding hot sauce to a bland dish.
- **Repetition** – The ability to use repetition for a cover is limited because it is a "one and done" thing so any design elements need to be well thought out and should be connected to the contents in the book. With that in mind, the backdrop for the main title is referenced throughout the inside of the book. I also made sure to repeat the fonts on the cover that were used as headers and sub-headers. A more subtle use of repetition was in the images inside the flag. I used five images in a repetitious layout but is more subtle is that there are the same number of images as there are main stripes in the flag itself. Finally, the dates at the top and edition number on the bottom are different fonts but the effects applied to them were the same so an association between the two is formed.
- **Alignment** – My alignment goals for the cover were to utilize all three basic positions (left, center, right) without causing the student any visual discomfort. I was able to succeed in doing this by defining a predominant right edge that all the elements were sharing. You can also see by the design that the eye easily follows from top left, down diagonally, and to the bottom right which follows basic design principles. Finally, spacing between design elements was done in a way that created alignments within specific elements such as the title box and the authors/edition area.
- **Proximity** – The biggest change between the original cover and the redesign was the proximity of design elements. The original was congested and basically unreadable so I gave the information breathing room. By clustering the elements into three areas, I was able to open enough design space for an effective background and create a flow to the cover that should increase the students desire to pick up the book.

## LAYOUT DESIGN

*(effectiveness)*

The biggest change that needed to happen with the layout was to give it an identity. The original cover is all over the place, from text to formatting to alignment. There is also a huge need to give the cover an "edge" that makes it stand out from the competition without being offensive to decision makers. Right off the bat, my redesign screams national pride and history. The image of the flag blowing in the wind, intertwined with images from the period being covered in the book creates a sense of history and timeline. I also took a risk right aligning the text that had similar importance and left aligning the title to the left as well as centering the authors. It seemed necessary to help distinguish each as its own element. The "of" design is the most risky element on the cover and am waiting to hear back from my peers as to its effectiveness.

## LEGIBILITY FOR USE

*(size, clarity, etc.)*

As I mentioned in the layout portion, the misuse and abuse of text on the cover creates an uninviting environment for the learner. By cutting down on the amount of text, choosing

appropriate imagery and using proper alignment, I will improve the legibility to such an extent it might seem as though the old cover was a joke. My redesign shows how properly positioned and sized text can be create an effective cover and accentuate the images being used. Only the Authors names were cut down due to choice. The clear alignment and use of simple color schemes for the text enhanced its legibility.

## **MOTIVATION**

*(likely to stimulate/ maintain interest)*

There is one thing a cover of any book should want you to instinctively do: OPEN IT! Right now, the last thing anybody would want to do is open this book. Only a student being forced to read it for school would, and that is exactly how much effort went into the original design. Just as inside the book, the outside screams adventure and excitement. All of the flowing movement and bright elements seem to invite a closer exploration. Even sitting at home with other textbooks, this cover will separate it from the others in a positive way. Each image holds a story that awaits inside and that should generate interest from the student.

## **NAVIGATIONAL HELPS**

*(table of contents, glossary, index, buttons, menu, etc.)*

The largest navigational responsibility this cover has is to draw interest from the reader to want to open up the book every time they look at it. Consistency in design will help accomplish those goals for its navigation. I utilized the same “button” look on the cover that I did in the book and the click on me look is supposed to affect the students response that the book is somehow connected to the internet thus enhancing its appeal. The different alignments mentioned earlier also help the reader navigate the cover as well as using the Z principal again.

## **COGNITIVE LEARNING AIDS**

*(overview, cues, summary, chapter review, etc.)*

Cognitively speaking, the cover has to sell the topic of American History. Unlike video or animation, I have to create user interest in just one snapshot. A measure of my success is if the reader can tell me: what is the topic, what is the timeline, what is the purpose, will it be useful. By blending the images into the flag, there would be an added stimulation and powerful use of the flag and its deep colors can only add to its visibility and retention of the subject matter.

## **TECHNICAL QUALITY AND USABILITY**

*(easy to read, free of flaws, easy to use, etc)*

When I get remarks back from my peers about my redesign, the first thing most of them say is the improved usability and ease of reading. Since the original cover looks like a mistake. I can't help but think a few simple changes would solve the problems but I want to take it a step further by thinking outside of the box and introduce a cover that is fit for the learners of today. My design is youthful and full of energy but still impresses the importance of it as a textbook. The eye moves easily across the page and entices the learner to open it for continued discovery.

## **REALISM AND ACCURACY**

*(represents real item effectively)*

When I redesign this book, I believe it needs to capture the emotions of the current climate both culturally and emotionally. Since textbooks are not timeless, as my original cover can attest to, so mine must serve the audience in the short time. Items from text to images need to be well thought out and applied effectively in order for potential students to accept the text as an asset

for their learning. Anybody could have used the flag as a cover and been done with it but by putting historical images in the flag, a certain realism jumps out at you and informs the reader that our history is rich and needs to be explored.

## **REFERENCES**

*(complete and up-to-date)*

As far as references are concerned with the redesign, the biggest challenge will be incorporating all three authors and the title into an effective layout. All of these references are necessary components for the book cover so they have to be used. To battle the long names, I abbreviated their first names with an initial. Instead of commas to offset the names, I used vertical lines that wound up being much more clean and legible but not take away from the overall design.

## **READING and VOCABULARY LEVEL**

*(aligns with audience description, content appropriate for level)*

The original text on the cover seems to appeal to an older audience and having all the authors listed with full names also creates an inappropriate design for high school students. I just want to keep it simple and fun for the readers. From abbreviating the authors to using bold text and bright colors, I believe my audience of high school students will be pleased.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

*(list and describe any special features of the media)*

I think the most exciting part of the redesign will be the use of technology to enhance the covers overall appearance. If anything special comes out of my design, it might be in the association with a potential website that offers further learning tools. Using Photoshop and its seemingly endless tools, I was able to put together a cover that would have been near impossible twenty years ago and took a fraction of the time. The button like style backdrop for the main title is purposely in place to represent a web graphic. The images in the flag were originally flat but I was able to give them depth using the tools of Photoshop.

## **VISUALS**

*(relevant to objectives and content, follows design guidelines, verbal information aligns, etc.)*

The only part of this book that had color was the covers (front and back) but still had similar issues like the rest of the book. Just as "grey" pages can reduce interest in the content of a book, so does an overcrowded cover of a textbook. There is an inability to make connections between the graphic and the text. By adding relevant images of the time period, I gave the cover relevance and purpose. I also kept the selection of colors, fonts and alignment in conjunction with the rest of the book.

## **BIAS AND/OR CULTURE**

*(free of objectionable bias, appropriate for many cultures)*

There seems to be different rules associated with content inside a book and what is on the cover because everyone can see the outside. Objections to what is used, especially images, can cross over many cultural boundaries. Something that was acceptable 30 years ago might be viewed negatively now. In a melting pot of cultures, it is very important to be considerate of cultural insensitivity. I decided to use iconic images that lacked potential fallout. The response from my audience about the use of American Indians and the new settlers will be of interest to me because of its potential objections from different interest groups or education board members