



What is a MOOC?

A MOOC is a Massive Open Online Course.

These are freely accessible short courses created by universities and educational institutions around the world and delivered to large cohorts of learners fully online. You can choose any course that interests you and explore the subject through a blend of videos, articles and discussions that give you a taste of the research and teaching at a leading University.

Massive OPEN ONLINE COURSES

The term MOOCs was originally coined by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island in 2008 for a large online class taught by George Siemens of Athabasca University and Stephen Downes of Canada's National Research Council Canada. Today, most MOOCs share these characteristics:

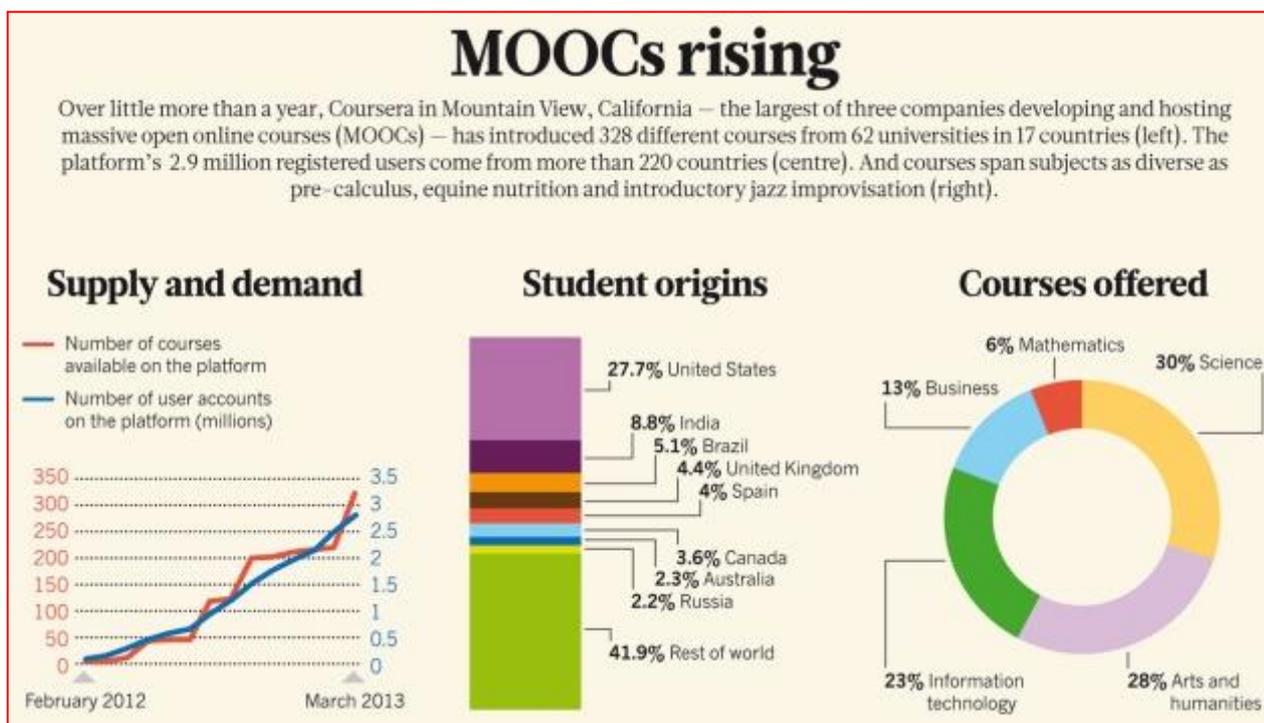
- Course participants are likely distributed all over the world.
- Course content is not located in any one place, but can be found all over the web.
- MOOCs can be massive with a few hundred to several thousand participants engaged in a course simultaneously.
- The classroom is one of many hubs where interaction occurs, including personal blogs or portfolios, websites, social networking sites, and more.
- Most MOOCs are free; there may be a fee if the participant is working toward a form of accreditation.
- Participants and instructors aggregate, remix and repurpose that content during the course.
- The courses do not have specific requirements, but participants are required to stay up to date with rough schedules.

Sources: nytimes.com | ispub.com | davecormier.com | Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): Education Innovation or Threat to Higher Education | sites.google.com | tamarapowell.com | crunchbase.com | udemy.com | en.wikipedia.org | udacity.com | edxonline.org | coursera.org | khanacademy.org | wiredacademic.com



MOOCs...

- do not have any entry requirements - all courses can be taken by anyone from anywhere.
- are usually run two or three times each year.
- are led by world-class academics and supported by teaching assistants.
- typically require 1-2 hours of study each week for around 5 weeks.
- are self-directed, meaning you follow the course materials, complete the readings and assessments, and get help from a large community of fellow learners through online forums.
- are comparable to a standard University course in terms of content and study level.
- meet high academic standards and are subject to internal quality assurance processes
- MOOCs do not have formal university credits assigned to them, Certificates or Statements of Accomplishment are usually available for a modest fee.



Picture Credit: Online learning: Campus 2.0, Nature, 20 March 2013

Whether for a taste of further academic study, for evidence of continuing professional development or just for fun, you can study at a pace that suits you.

Any downsides then...?

There are some concerns about MOOCs but as part of a suite of learning, alongside your AS Levels, there are only positives. They are fantastic evidence of your commitment to learning and commitment to your chosen subject when applying to Higher Education.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I join a course that has already started?

If a course has already started or already finished, you can sign in to Futurelearn and sign up for the next course. When it becomes available again, you will receive an email, stating the new course start date.

MOOCs

Pros & Cons

PROS

- Helps you demonstrate initiative
- Use technology to your advantage
- A huge selection of subjects to study

CONS

- Might not earn college credit
- No face-time with your instructor
- Requires discipline and self-motivation



Where and when do courses take place?

You can join a course at any point throughout its duration. For example, if the course is six weeks long, you can join at any point up until the end of the sixth week.

What are the requirements for taking a MOOC?

Each MOOC is designed so that it can be completed with only a computer and internet connection. Optional sections of the MOOCs may require other technology and sometimes previous knowledge of the subject can help but information on any additional requirements will be available on the sign up page for a course, so that you are aware of any needs before signing up.

Do I have to work at a certain time, in the UK time zone?

Weekly course material can be studied each week at a time that suits you. You don't need to be online at the same time as the lead educator or other students.

How many courses can I take?

There is no limit on the number of courses you can take. Take as many or as few as you like.

How many weeks / hours does it take to complete a MOOC?

Typically MOOCs will require three to four hours per week for up to 6 weeks, including time to join in conversations. If you have the time you can also pursue options for deeper study.

Do these courses offer certificates?

If you want proof that you have taken part in a MOOC, you have the option of buying a Statement of Participation. A Statement of Participation implies neither the award of credit points nor the conferment of a university qualification.

Links to, and comparison of the main providers:

					
URL	www.coursera.org	www.edx.org	www.futurelearn.com	www.udacity.com	www.khanacademy.org
Launch	2012	2012	2012	2011	2008
Run by	Stanford Uni	Harvard and MIT	Open University	Stanford	Salman Khan
For Profit?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Backing	Venture funds	Harvard and MIT	Open University	Venture funds	Grants from Google and Gates foundation
Free to access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Certificate fee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Credit?	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate	Badges
User Experience	Videos, question ranking	edX open source, videos	videos, articles and discussions	Short videos, quiz, feedback	Screencasts, video, forums
Mobile App			no		



What if my MOOC doesn't start until next week or the week afterwards?

You can also engage in '*super-curricular*' activities via the following resources.

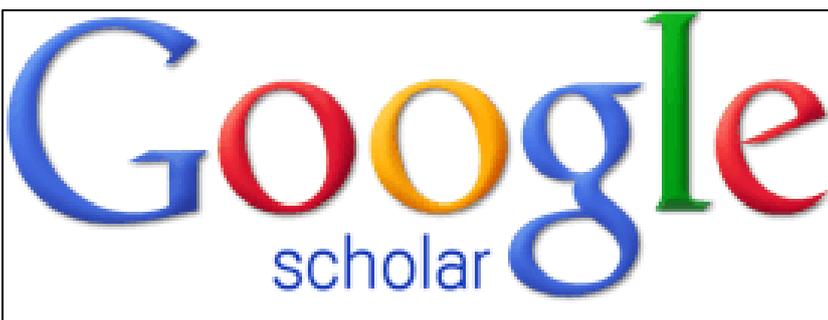
Look at the syllabus ('*specification*') for your subjects and identify topics you are interested in or that you would like to study in further detail. Search these resources for content (click on pictures to go to site):



TED is devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages.



Oxford University publishes podcasts in a range of subjects. You can learn on the go with leading academics from one of the world's most respected institutions.



Part of the 'specialized search' facility, Google Scholar allows you to search for scholarly articles, latest research papers in your subject or area of interest.



Example MOOCs available this half-term: **Starting Monday 7th September**

Introduction to Journalism. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. 6 weeks, 4 hours p.w.

Learn about the key principles and debates in journalism and enact the role of a journalist in the context of an escalating story.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Aimed at those curious about journalism and looking to gain a better understanding of what the subject entails. Run by a team of internationally-renowned scholars and journalism practitioners at the University of Strathclyde, it gives you a behind-the-scenes look at the professional world of reporters and editors.

The course contains six topics - what makes a good news story; writing news; writing features; opinion writing; politics and journalism; and investigative journalism - and explores these in relation to a case study running throughout the six weeks. Although the scenario is entirely fictitious, participants will engage in tasks and discussions that reflect real-life situations in journalism.

Each week contains a variety of learning activities that will introduce concepts, challenge assumptions, facilitate understanding and hone new skills. You'll be encouraged to discuss your thoughts with peers and tutors, generate and edit small pieces of writing, and comment on others' work. Several esteemed journalists from around the world will feature each week, as they discuss key topics in relation to their own work.

Inside Cancer: How Genes Influence Cancer Development. University of Bath. 6 weeks, 3 hours p.w.

Understand how genetics influence the development and spread of cancer, with this free, introductory online course.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Cancer is a disease that affects around one-third of the human population, irrespective of nationality or ethnic origins. There are many types of cancer, but they all have one thing in common - they begin as rebel or mutant cells.

Understand the DNA mutations behind cancer

You will learn about the fundamental biological concepts that inform our current understanding of cancer development, the molecular genetics behind it and its spread within the body.

Over six weeks, we'll explore some of the fundamental differences between normal cells and cancer cells. We'll introduce the concept of DNA mutations and the emerging area of epigenetics, identifying how cancer cells are able to trick our blood vessels and immune system to grow uncontrollably.

Finally, we'll discuss how our understanding of genetics has helped both refine conventional treatments like radiation and chemotherapy, and inform the design of new treatments that can target specific proteins within cancer cells.

Learn with leading researchers and clinical oncologists

On the course, you'll learn with some of the University of Bath's leading cancer researchers, as well as clinical oncologists who treat cancer everyday at the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

The course will give you a taster of studying this subject further, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

Ageing Well: Falls. Newcastle University. 4 weeks, 2 hours pw.

Explore why people fall, discover practical methods to reduce the risk of falling and recognise when to seek expert help.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Every day in the UK, almost 10,000 people aged over 65 will fall down. The personal costs are staggering, with falls resulting in injury, broken bones, fear of falling and social isolation.

People fall because of a complex mix of factors. To reduce falling, it is important to identify these factors, and recognise those that could signify serious, but treatable, underlying medical problems.

This interactive course will enable you to:

- Learn more about why falls are just so important
- Discover ways of assessing and reducing the risk of falling
- Recognise when to seek help
- Explore how to prevent falls and injury

During the course, we will meet people who have been affected by falls through a series of video case studies, and discuss together the important issues they raise, which we hope will be informative, practical and enlightening.



Whitburn CofE Academy Sixth Form

Enrichment Programme: Extended Academic



We will draw on the knowledge and experience of world leading experts at Newcastle University through our Meet the Experts series. This includes work with the award winning Falls and Syncope Service (FASS) at Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary - the largest unit of its kind in Europe, recognised internationally for its innovative work in the field of falls and blackouts.

Heart Health: a Beginner's Guide to Cardiovascular Disease. University of Reading. 4 weeks, 3 hours pw.

Learn more about how your heart works, the causes of heart disease and how to keep your heart healthy with this free online course

ABOUT THE COURSE

Your heart beats around 100,000 times a day, pumping blood around your body to deliver oxygen and nutrients, while taking away waste products.

When your heart is unhealthy, it can't perform this vital task so effectively. This can cause significant health problems – cardiovascular disease is one of the biggest killers in the UK and an estimated 17 million people die of cardiovascular disease each year worldwide.

Heart disease is something that touches many lives, but can be difficult to understand.

An introduction to heart health

This four-week course aims to improve your knowledge of how the heart works, the effects of heart disease and what you can do to avoid it. We'll explore the anatomy of the heart, explaining how the circulatory system works and what it does.

We'll then introduce some of the most common cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure (hypertension) and heart failure. We'll help you understand their effects on the body, why they happen and what can be done to prevent them. We'll also highlight some wonderful resources from the British Heart Foundation including up to date statistics, patient leaflets and videos describing many of the tests that cardiac patients undergo. In the final week, we'll examine the risk factors for cardiovascular disease and what you can do keep your heart healthy.

Hands-on exercises to understand your own heart

Each week you'll have the opportunity to get hands on and do a practical activity, helping you to apply the knowledge you'll gain on the course, to better understand your own heart.

William Wordsworth: Poetry, People and Place. Lancaster University. 4 weeks, 4 hours pw.

Explore the influence of the Lake District on Wordsworth with this free online course, filmed at his home, Dove Cottage, Grasmere.

ABOUT THE COURSE

This course will explore the great poetry of William Wordsworth, with an emphasis on his writing process and the inspirational landscape of the Lake District. This course is presented in association with the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

Discover how Wordsworth wrote his best-known works

The course has been filmed at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, where Wordsworth lived from 1799 to 1808. There, he produced much of his greatest work, including "I wandered lonely as a Cloud" (perhaps better known as "Daffodils") and The Prelude (his autobiographical masterpiece).

You will study how Wordsworth created and revised these poems and Lyrical Ballads, drawing on the magnificent collection of manuscripts held by the Wordsworth Trust in the museum next to his home.

Explore the Lake District with leading Wordsworth scholars

Through readings and discussions focusing on Grasmere and the landscape of the Lake District, the course will explore why this location was so important for Wordsworth.

Contributors to the course will include Jeff Cowton, the Curator of the Wordsworth Trust, and Professor Sally Bushell, one of the world's leading scholars of Wordsworth's writing process, who is based at Lancaster University on the doorstep of the Lake District.

Identifying the Dead: Forensic Science and Human Identification. University of Dundee. 6 weeks, 4 hours pw.

Uncover a grave, examine remains and reveal the victim's identity in this free online course, linked to a new Val McDermid story.



ABOUT THE COURSE

The first step in any investigation involving a death is to determine the identity of the deceased. This course will take you on a journey through the world of forensic anthropology, unveiling the tools that will allow you to reveal that identity.

Join forensic experts to identify the dead

In the shadow of Dundee's Law Hill, a grim discovery demands the attention of forensic experts. Unidentified human remains have been found and the police need to identify the victim to move forward with their investigation.

After a meticulous recovery of the remains, it will be your job to:

- document and attempt to explain any evidence of trauma;
- identify the victim through biological profiling;
- and undertake a facial reconstruction.

Experts from the University of Dundee's award-winning Centre for Anatomy and Human Identification (CAHId) will guide you through the process of human identification.

They will introduce you to the fields of human identification; forensic anthropology and archaeology; craniofacial identification; and the study of the human body.

Evaluate evidence as the case unfolds

Week-by-week, the case will unfold, providing you with more information about the victim. You will be presented with theoretical material and hands-on learning opportunities, to evaluate the case information and use what you have learned, to piece together clues to the victim's identity.

You will be able to discuss, with educators and other learners, your thoughts on the identity of the deceased, based on your evaluation of the evidence.

Get your own copy of the murder mystery

After you submit your evaluation of the victim's identity, all will be revealed at the end of the final week. You can continue your journey into the life and death of our victim in your very own ebook copy of a specially-written murder mystery by international best-selling crime novelist Val McDermid.

Can you use the skills that you will learn on this course to identify the dead?

Identity, Conflict and Public Space. Queen's University, Belfast. 6 weeks, 3 hours pw.

Explore how people use public spaces around the world to protest and express their identity, with this free online course.

ABOUT THE COURSE

In ethnic and political conflicts around the world, public spaces are used by diverse groups of people, to express their identity and protest about their beliefs:

- in **Northern Ireland**, contests over flags, parades and memorials have been frequent during the peace process;
- as **South Africa** developed a new democracy, the management of demonstrations by the police became a key issue;
- in the post-soviet era, **Eastern European countries** have slowly come to terms with the rights of people to express their political opinions in public spaces;
- and **post-9/11**, western democracies have struggled to define public spaces for their large Muslim communities.

How is freedom of expression managed in highly divided societies, particularly when they have a history of political violence?

Discover the role of public space in identity and protest

This course will introduce you to the key issues around the use of public space to express identity. We'll start by looking at the nature of social groups, and the importance of identity and public spaces in politics around the world, including the **Arab Spring**, the **Occupy Movement** and the **Civil Rights Movements**.

We'll then examine why understanding public space is important, looking at symbols, parades and memorials. We'll examine well-documented examples, including the learnings that have arisen from the **Northern Ireland peace process**.

You'll be asked to create your own digital artefact, which illustrates an organised public event that you have experienced or are interested in, and share it with other learners around the world.

Finally, we'll explore the role of human rights and public policy, concluding by returning to the comparative frame to examine key lessons for understanding conflict transformation in divided societies.