

Making Sense of MOOCs from a Liberal Arts Perspective

Lisa Spiro
May 14, 2013

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Are MOOCs Incompatible with Liberal Education?

“Although MOOCs start off with huge numbers of enrolled participants, a small percentage do the assignments, and an even smaller percentage finish. The **retention rate** at the highly selective liberal arts schools, by any measure, is very high. Residential liberal arts education depends on the **ongoing interaction** of students with one another and with faculty. MOOCs encourage interaction of a different sort: through social media and chat rooms.”

Michael Roth, Pres. of Wesleyan

[“Why a Liberal Arts School Has Joined Coursera”](#)

[emphasis added]

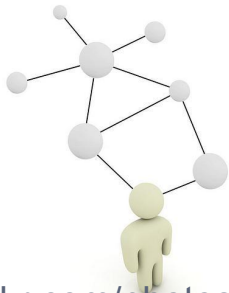
The Origins of MOOCs in Open Education

- 1997: [genesis](#) of MERLOT
- 1999: [Connexions](#) launches
- 2001: MIT's OpenCourseWare Initiative [announced](#)
- 2007: David Wiley offers [Introduction to Open Education](#)
- 2008: "MOOC" coined (with help from [Bryan Alexander](#)); 1st MOOC, [Connectivism and Connective Knowledge](#) (CCK08), offered
- 2011: Stanford offers [3 open courses](#) [snowball accelerates]

MOOCs : cMOOCs vs. xMOOCs

cMOOCs (Connectivist)

- Examples: ds106, [cck11](#)
- Key elements:
 - More participant-driven
 - More organic
 - Participants aggregate, remix, repurpose, and feed forward content

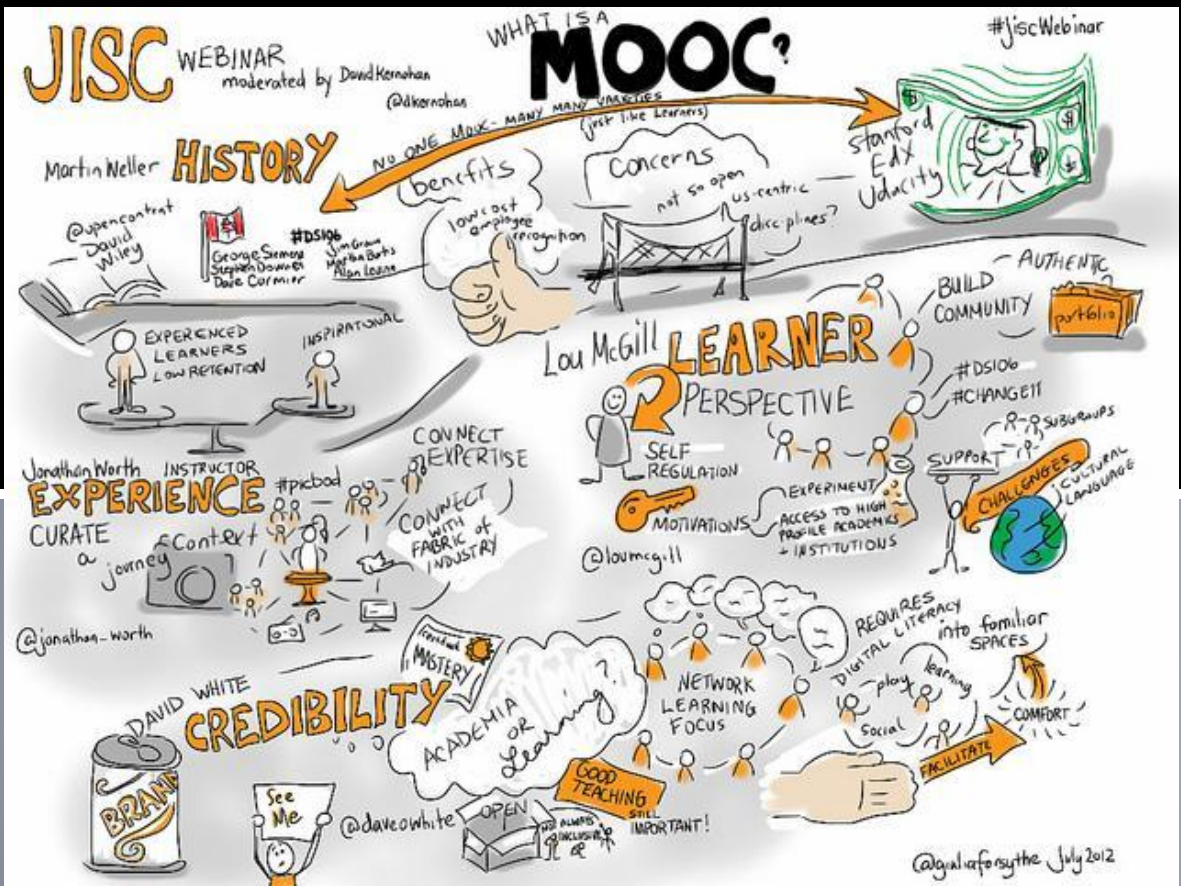


xMOOCs

- Examples: Coursera, edX
- Key elements:
 - Guided by the instructor
 - More linear
 - Participants learn from video + quizzes, exercises, forums, projects &c

coursera





giulia.forsythe

The Mooc Debate

MOOC Backlash!

EdX Rejected

April 19, 2013 - 3:00am

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/19/despite-courtship-amherst-decides-shy-away-star-mooc-provider>

April 30, 2013

Duke U.'s Undergraduate Faculty Derails Plan for Online Courses for Credit

<http://chronicle.com/article/Duke-Us-Undergraduate/138895/>

Professors at San Jose State Criticize Online Courses

By TAMAR LEWIN

Published: May 2, 2013

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/03/education/san-jose-state-philosophy-dept-criticizes-online-courses.html>

May 9, 2013

As MOOC Debate Simmers at San Jose State, American U. Calls a Halt

<http://chronicle.com/article/As-MOOC-Debate-Simmers-at-San/139147/>

May 10, 2013

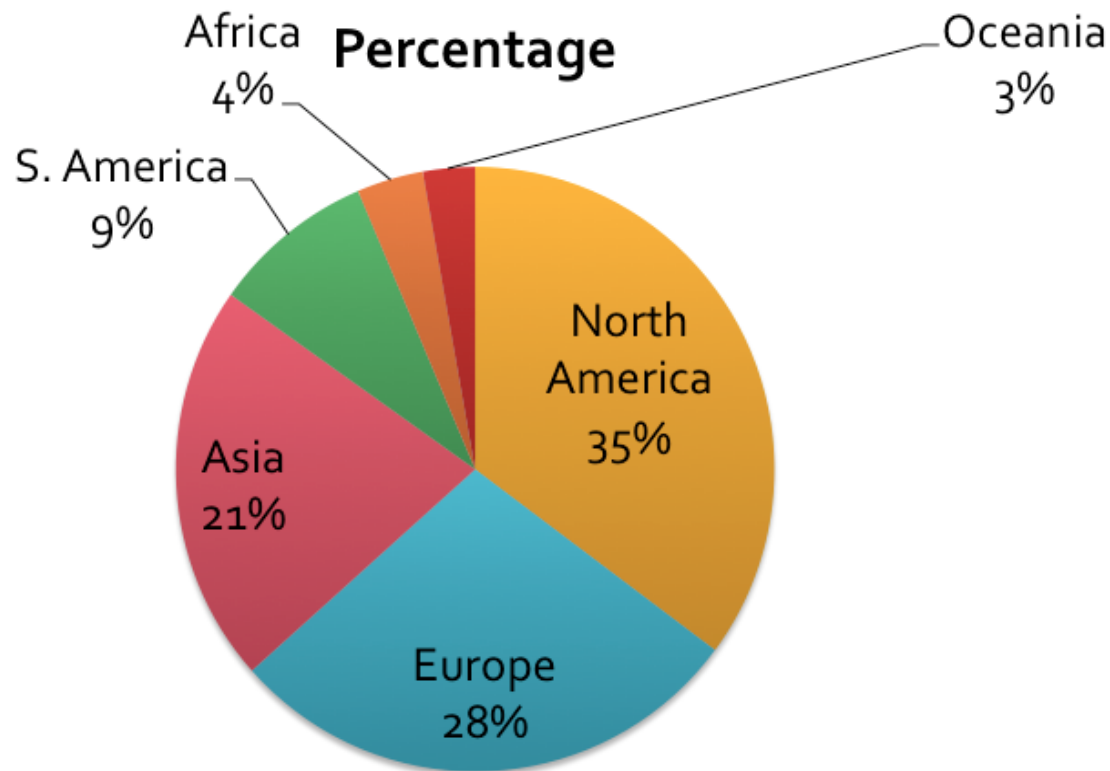
Debate Over MOOCs Reaches Harvard

Concerns about MOOCs

- Fear that MOOCs are at odds with residential education
- Belief that MOOCs are elitist
- Critique of MOOC pedagogy
 - Replicates the large lecture
 - Plagued by high drop-out rates
 - Requires very motivated students
- Sense of threats to higher education
 - Increasing the gap between elite universities & everyone else
 - Reducing diversity of courses
 - Risk of weakening the value of the college “brand”
 - Diminishing faculty autonomy & undermining faculty positions
 - [Risks of privatization](#) of higher ed

The Demographics of Coursera MOOCs: Educated, Global

- Over 80% have a B.A. or higher (5.4% have PhDs)
- Global group of students:

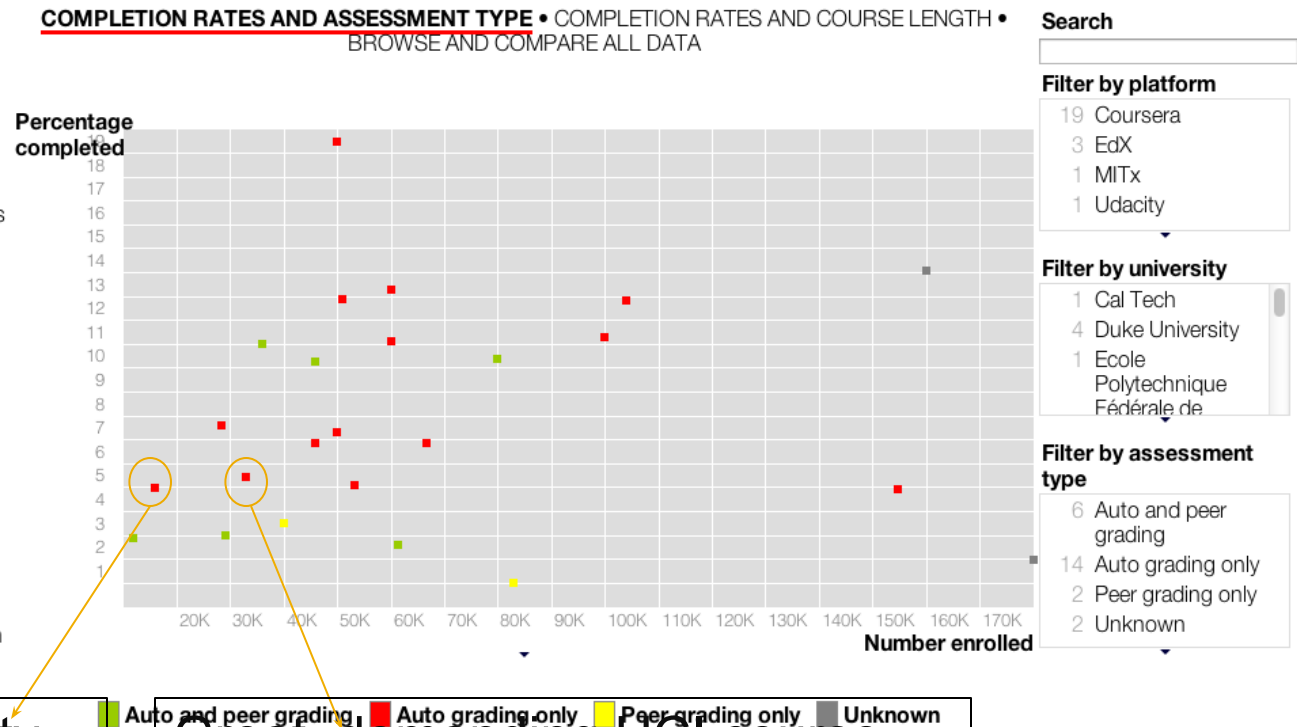


Completion Rates for MOOCs Are Low: .7% to 19.2% (less than 7%)

MOOC Completion Rates: The Data

While Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) may allow free education on an enormous scale, one of the biggest criticisms raised about MOOCs is that although thousands enrol for courses, a very small proportion actually complete the course. The release of information about enrollment and completion rates from MOOCs appears to be ad hoc at the moment - that is, official statistics are not published for every course. This data visualisation draws together information about enrollment numbers and completion rates from across online news stories and blogs.

- **How big is the typical MOOC?** - while an enrollment of 180,000 is often cited as the largest MOOC so far, 50,000 students enrolled is a much more typical MOOC size.
- **How many students complete courses?** - completion rates can approach 20%, although most MOOCs have completion rates of less than 10%.
- **What factors might affect completion rate?** - the way that the course is assessed may affect completion rates; the completion rates of courses which use automatic grading range from 4.6% to 19.2%, while the rates for courses which use peer grading range from 0.7% to 10.7%. This may present a greater challenge for teaching MOOCs in certain subjects.
- **Do more students drop out if courses are longer?** - there does not appear to be a negative correlation between course length and completion rate, which is interesting as you might expect fewer students to 'keep going' and complete longer courses.



Duke Bioelectricity

Great, demanding HCI course

Katy Jordan

Do MOOCs Always Replicate Traditional Lecture-Based Courses?

- Not cMOOCs
- Even xMOOCs offer:
 - Micro-lectures, which you can view repeatedly
 - Mid-lecture quizzes to test comprehension
 - Online forums, sometimes w/ active participation of instructor
- They may also offer:
 - Projects, including group projects
 - Study groups, typically student-initiated
 - Peer assessments
 - Peer to peer learning

See Derek Bruff, [“Not Your Father’s MOOCs”](#)

Active, Collaborative Learning: Venture Lab's Technology Entrepreneurship

Technology Entrepreneurship

By Chuck Eesley, Stanford University

Powered by [Venture Lab](#)

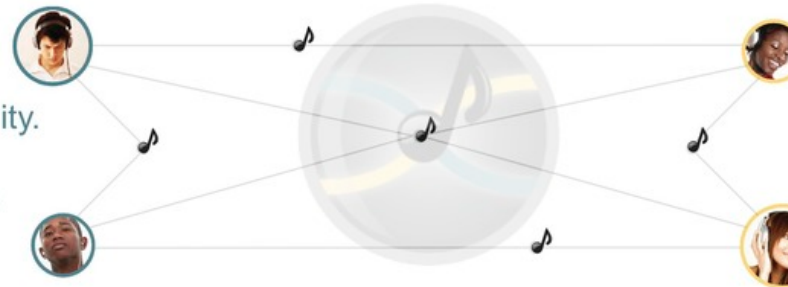
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MUSIC UNITES PEOPLE

When two or more people have a similar interest in music there is an instant compatibility.

BeatMatched Presentation

Our goal is to help users to share music and meet people who enjoy the same music.



Marketing Page

View All Submissions

Like 0 +1 0 Tweet 0

Team BeatMatched is focused on creating an online dating/networking site for people who share similar interest in music. The site will take user provided content and match them with other compatible users based on their selected genres, artists and alternative interests. The site can also be used for people looking to start bands, musicians collaborating on remixes or for concert attendants looking to meet new people and attend events together. The business will be web/software based and will eventually be made into a mobile application.

MARKET OPPORTUNITY &
LOW FIDELITY PROTOTYPE



Global, Peer to Peer Learning: eLearning & Digital Cultures MOOC

The screenshot shows the Google+ interface for the 'E-Learning and Digital Cultures MOOC' community. The header includes the Google+ logo, a search bar, and the user 'Lisa Spiro' with a notification badge for 7 items and a '+ Share' button. The left sidebar contains navigation icons for Home, Profile, Explore, Photos, and Communities. The main content area features a community banner with the title 'E-Learning and Digital Cultures MOOC' and '2629 members'. Below the banner is a 'Join this community to post or comment' button. The post feed shows a post by 'emily r purser' from 2:59 AM, titled 'Introduction'. The post text reads: 'a couple of little papers by some edmoocers you might be interested to read, along with a bunch of other interesting reads on the topic of moocdom, in the latest issue (33) of eLearning papers http://www.elearningpapers.eu/en/elearning_papers we did 2 short papers on peer to peer learning in the wonderous EDC - I'd be very interested to know if these stories represent your experiences too, or not - do tell :)'. Below the text is a link to 'eLearning Papers | The Open Education Journal'. The post has '+1' and share icons. A second post by 'emily r purser' from 3:02 AM says 'and many thanks again to those of you who contributed to Ary and Angela's survey here last month - that went into the quad-blogging paper!'. On the right, there are sections for '2629 MEMBERS' and 'Moderators (3)' with profile pictures.

Google+ Lisa Spiro 7 + Share

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E-Learning and Digital Cultures MOOC
2629 members Public

Join this community to post or comment **Join community**

emily r purser 2:59 AM - Introduction
a couple of little papers by some edmoocers you might be interested to read, along with a bunch of other interesting reads on the topic of moocdom, in the latest issue (33) of eLearning papers http://www.elearningpapers.eu/en/elearning_papers we did 2 short papers on peer to peer learning in the wonderous EDC - I'd be very interested to know if these stories represent your experiences too, or not - do tell :)

[eLearning Papers | The Open Education Journal](#)

+1

emily r purser 3:02 AM
and many thanks again to those of you who contributed to Ary and Angela's survey here last month - that went into the quad-blogging paper!

2629 MEMBERS
All (2629)
Moderators (3)

Networked Learning in the Liberal Arts Context

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Related Articles

Essay on what MOOCs are missing to truly transform higher education

Essay on a contradiction facing MOOCs and their university sponsors

Coursea doubles university partnerships

Essay on how MOOCs

Unlikely Pairing?

December 6, 2012 - 3:00am

By [Alexandra Tilsley](#)

The word massive – as in massive open online courses – seems inconsistent with one of the hallmarks of an education at a small liberal arts college. But for the liberal arts colleges that have partnered with MOOC providers, the size is part of the appeal.

“Our social psych course, for example, more than 20,000 people signed up right away. Meanwhile, most of our classes here have fewer than 20 students,” said Wesleyan President Michael Roth. “That’s an interesting idea.”

The Key Question

“How do we infuse the massive open online space with a responsive, collaborative and discussion-based learning experience—the kind of education that is truly transformative?”

([Andrew Shennan](#), provost & dean of Wellesley College)

Models for Networked Learning at Liberal Arts Colleges

- Integrating MOOCs into on-campus learning
 - Teaching “wrapper” courses that leverage MOOCs
 - Using MOOCs as “super-textbooks”
 - Extending course offerings through independent study and mentored learning
 - Practicing the “distributed flip”
- Providing multi-campus classes
- Facilitating “generative scholarship”

MOOCs May Enhance Learning in a Blended Environment

San Jose State University's [experiment](#) with blended course using edX's "Circuits & Electronics"

- Students worked w/ edX materials at home & came to class 2x/week to work problem sets & ask questions
- 90% of students in blended course passed vs. 59% in "regular" course
- Instructor [reported](#) greater student engagement & confidence
- Concerns that this model will diminish faculty autonomy & threaten learning

Blended Learning: MOOC Instructors Flipping Their On Campus Courses

- [Dr. Scott Rixner](#) (Rice, [“An Introduction to Interactive Programming in Python”](#))
 - Students worked through Coursera material before class & were thus more prepared
 - Time freed up for projects, discussion
 - “I will never lecture in a classroom again”
- [Dr. Phillip Zelikow](#) (UVA, “The Modern World”)
 - Flipped his classroom: discussion sessions 1 day/week, “history lab” w/ primary documents the other
 - Zelikow: “I’ve been teaching courses like this for about 20 years now.. . This is the most powerful design.”

Collaborative Classes: Sunoikisis

Sunoikisis | A national consortium of Classics programs



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Call for Abstracts: Spring Symposium

2013 Spring Symposium Every December and April, the Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS) in Washington,... [\[more\]](#)

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Upcoming Event

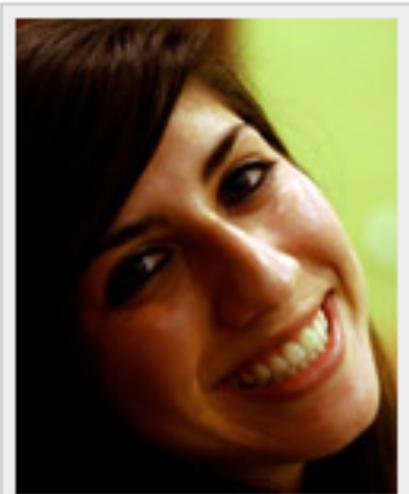
Join us online for a meeting about upcoming Sunoikisis events and current initiatives this Saturday, January 5 at 7:00pm (PST). We will be webcasting live from the American Philological Association meeting in Seattle, WA. Join our Google Hangout or watch the live stream on YouTube!

Subscribe

Enter your email address:

“Cross-Continental Course”: Swarthmore & Ashesi University (Ghana)

I have the chance to partner with 4 Ashesi students whom I talk to over email, Moodle forums/ blogs, and Skype. Not only do we talk about class, but we talk about our own roots and exchange ideas of a transforming global community, and over the Internet I am exposed to a life different from my own.



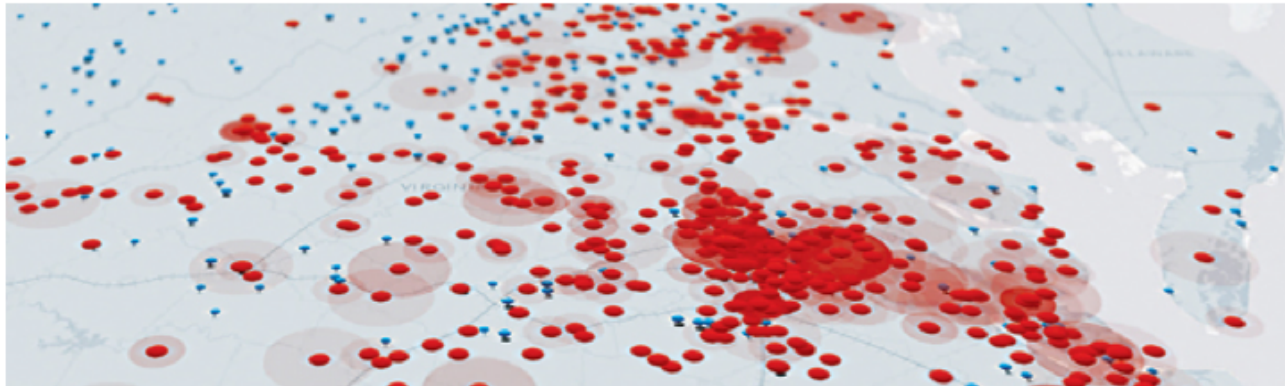
Lisa Sendrow '13
Swarthmore College
sociology and
anthropology and
history double major,
from Princeton, N.J.

Leveraging Networks to Create New Knowledge: "Generative Scholarship"

February 4, 2013

A More-Radical Online Revolution

By Edward L. Ayers



"generative scholarship": "It is scholarship built to generate, as it is used, new questions, evidence, conclusions, and audiences."

History Harvest: A New Kind of MOOC?



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Department of History

The History

History Harvest is a University history events in the community and the United States. The University rich histories. Advanced relationships with individual

The Hi



The History Harvest is an innovative new authentic learning initiative in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. This

“The problem with MOOC’s is that they are largely one-way delivery.... they don’t appear to me to be grappling with the real questions, the hard questions, about how can we use technology like this to better serve our students. We need more models for MOOC’s, not fewer. And we need ones that particularly advance the humanities.”

([Will Thomas](#))

The History Harvest 2013

Professor William Thomas and Dr. Patrick Jones to host a History Harvest seminar via [National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education](#) in Georgetown, Texas on April 12.

Participatory Research in a MOOC

- [Human Evolution: Past and Future](#)
 - “With a worldwide group of thousands of students, we'll be giving people the opportunity to participate in some real research.” ([John Hawks](#))

Making MOOCs Work Better for Liberal Education

- Develop a deeper understanding of the implications of MOOCs for learning and liberal education
- Embrace true openness
 - Employ Creative Commons licenses to allow [reuse](#)
 - Bring learning into the open
- Allow customization and contributions
- Enable instructors to access learning data for their students
- Employ appropriate business models