

MOOCs I Recommend

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Massive Open Online courses, aka "MOOCs", are becoming increasingly popular with old and young alike. The ability to get first-class instruction, follow it at your own pace, and learn more about the subjects which most interest you is a win-win for the sponsoring University and the student. Articles about MOOCs have appeared in publications ranging from *The New York Times* to *The Wall Street Journal*, including a [critical examination](#) of my own regarding their value. While I do not believe MOOCs will replace brick-an-mortar classrooms as some hope, they are a welcome addition to the education model.

Thus far, I have taken and completed three MOOC courses:

Archaeology's Dirty Little Secrets

Offered by Brown University through [Coursera](#), this eight-week course has been informative, fun, and requires only about 2 hours a week to complete. I knew nothing about the field until this class and I have a whole new appreciation for the profession now. It is quite different than portrayed in films.

Professor Sue Adcock and her staff put together a combination of videos and readings for each week and a choice of three student assignments. The completed homework is judged by other classmates, at least 1000 scattered all across the globe. There are active online discussions and, for those who live reasonably close together, chances to meet socially if desired. I would recommend this course for anyone interested in archaeology.

The Science of Everyday Thinking

This 11-week course is administered by two University of Queensland, Australia Professors and grad students and offered through the [edX](#) MOOC. The course explores everyday thinking: why people believe weird things, how we form and change opinions, why expectations skew our judgements, and how we can make better decisions. The topics range from subliminal messages and placebos, to cancer clusters and miracles. The lecturers draw on their own experiences as well as world class neuroscientists and psychologists for their insight. Dr. Daniel Kahneman, author of "Thinking, Fast and Slow" ([a book I recommended](#)) appears on several videos.

While not as technically efficient or as dramatic as the Brown University course, the professors are likable and make the information easy to understand and grasp. I did learn through one of

the class experiments that the average person cannot tell the difference between a moderately-priced and a very expensive bottle of wine. That will certainly save me money the next time I get to make the choice at dinner.

Music's Big Bang: The Genesis or Rock n'Roll

Another eight week course offered through [Coursera](#), I loved discovering the evolution of the music I discovered before my teens. Moderated by Journalism Professor and Rock 'n Roll connoisseur David Carlson of the University of Florida, the course delves heavily in the Gospel and Blues roots of the music, the cultural changes that influenced Rock 'n Roll and were, in turn, influenced, and the personal history of great Rock 'n Roll legends.

Who knew Highway 61 was known as the "Highway of the Blues", that Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf were bitter rivals, or that the Beatles were modeled after Buddy Holly & the Crickets? The course which includes snippets of songs and music trailers will have you tapping your foot as you recall those past days of teenage rebellion and lost innocence. If you are old enough to remember "the day the music died," this course is for you.

New Courses Coming UP

I've already registered for three other courses that begin in May 2014:

- 1. On Strategy: What Managers Can Learn from Great Philosophers**
- 2. Understanding the Brain: The Neurobiology of Everyday Life**
- 3. The Bible's Prehistory, Purpose & Political Future**

Maybe I'll meet you there.