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Innovations Inspired by MOOCs: Supporting Learning beyond the Classroom in Undergraduate Art History Courses

Student Dissertation

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SAT: Innovations Inspired by MOOCs: Supporting Learning beyond the Classroom in Undergraduate Art History Courses (Jocelyn Anderson)

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[Jocelyn Anderson](#)
23 December 2014

Extra content

Over the last few years, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become extremely popular: the research for this multimedia presentation began with the question 'What ideas can lecturers teaching undergraduates in higher education art history courses adapt from MOOCs to improve their own courses?'. Research into MOOC pedagogy might suggest any number of possibilities; however, this project is concerned with what *individual* teachers can do within traditional frameworks. In other words, while the idea of peer assessments, for example, might be interesting, they might also require institutional approval/broader changes of course structures. By concentrating on how MOOCs deliver primary content and the types of resources they offer students, this project explores what innovations can be developed through individual initiatives. Exploring how lecturers can develop innovations for their own courses is critical: while there are some creative and elaborate Open Educational Resources (OERs) for art history, as they do not offer teachers the opportunity to control the content, their usefulness for university classrooms is limited.

Following a brief overview of this project's initial research on MOOCs, this presentation will introduce a range of study resources whose formats were inspired by MOOCs. In order to benefit from both the author's existing professional networks and new online networks the author has joined through H818, the resources are designed to support a course on English Baroque Architecture which the author is currently contributing teaching to. Focused on buildings from the late seventeenth century, like many undergraduate art history courses, this course will be assessed with an exam which involves identifying and analysing critical examples, and the study resources have been designed with this in mind.

The majority of this presentation will be devoted to demonstrating these resources and sharing reflections on the process of creating them and reflections on the feedback the author received after sharing them with the networks outlined above. The first resource is a timeline, a series of slides which maps significant political and cultural moments in the period covered by the

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course. The second resource will be a video providing visual analysis of and study questions for a major building in London. Finally, the third resource will be an audio commentary linked to a specific image; like the video, the commentary's content will be designed to review class content and suggest study questions. The multimedia nature of the resources has necessitated presenting the project as a multimedia presentation: creating all three resources has involved researching good practice in creating multimedia art history teaching resources, and the reflections accompanying the timeline, video and audio commentary will note which sources have been particularly significant. Reflections on feedback will consider how the resources might be improved, how they might be used as models for different art history courses, and why some suggestions were set aside as impractical/undesirable to implement. The presentation will conclude by addressing how this work might be taken forward.



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

20:14 on 16 January 2015

Innovations Inspired by MOOCs' Approaches to Delivering Content: Supporting Learning beyond the Classroom in Undergraduate Art History Courses

Transcript (of both the talk and the two multimedia resources which will be shown)

My project begins with the dilemma posed by these two paintings: what is the best way to teach undergraduate art history students to identify them? They have several similarities, but they also have some fundamental differences, and very often, this is how undergraduate art history courses are assessed: we give students unidentified images, and the exam asks them to identify them, date them and explain their significance. It's a very challenging, memory-based exercise, particularly because the challenge is never two paintings, it's more like this: on this slide, I'm showing you nine buildings from a course on English Baroque Architecture, all of which my students should be able to identify, and I'm only showing you nine because that's what fit on the slide – in practice there are probably at least thirty examples for them to learn. Ultimately, this is a very intimidating and often very stressful exercise for students.

The goal of my project was to take this problem, and explore what teaching solutions MOOCs might offer; in other words, to try and work out ways of improving the study processes available to my students using ideas from MOOCs. Over the last few years, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become extremely popular, and in light of this, I felt that their relevance to the university classroom needed further consideration. MOOCs rely on a wide range of teaching methods, some creative, some perhaps not quite so creative. In my research I looked at both information for teachers designing MOOCs, and reflections from students who participated in MOOCs and wrote about their learning experiences: here are two quotations from students who found their MOOCs relatively conservative.

Slide Transcript:

'I began to wonder if the same course existed at Wesleyan University but delivered by face-to-face instruction rather than web-based instruction [...] the course seemed to reuse materials from a face-to-face class' (Lim, 2013).

'The delivery of the content was through links to the e-textbook and lecture videos of PowerPoint slides [...] This process is similar to most of my traditional face-to-face graduate courses: reading assignments before class, explanation and discussion during class' (Chen, 2013).

Lim, M. (2013) 'Learning about MOOCs by being in one', *Learner Experiences with MOOCs and Open Online Learning*, Hybrid Pedagogy [online]. Available at <http://hybrid->

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pedagogy.github.io/LearnerExperiencesInMOOCs/chapter9.html (accessed 7 January 2015).

Chen, H. (2013) 'MOOCs made me see the potential of online learning', *Learner Experiences with MOOCs and Open Online Learning*, Hybrid Pedagogy [online]. Available at <http://hybrid-pedagogy.github.io/LearnerExperiencesInMOOCs/chapter5.html> (accessed 7 January 2015).

In my project, what I concentrated on was exploring what individual teachers can do within traditional frameworks of teaching delivery and assessment, what they could develop on their own initiative and in relation to their own courses. I decided to do this by using my research on MOOCs' teaching methods to design a set of resources for my English Baroque Architecture course.

The core of my artefact is a set of four digital resources, and for the balance of this presentation, I'd like to show you three of them, or, more accurately, parts of three of them. The first one is a timeline I created with Powerpoint – the slides I'm showing you cover the period from 1660 to 1690. A timeline of this type is not unlike a concept map, which I found a reference to in an article on a nutrition MOOC, and timelines are often created for museum exhibitions and art history books, so I had some useful models to draw inspiration from. For me, what was particularly interesting about creating this resource was that I looked at several different types of timeline software, and I concluded that none of them would give me the flexibility I wanted, so I ended up experimenting with Powerpoint, and I was really pleased with the result. I wanted the timeline to map both major political events and significant moments in architectural history, and so I decided on a dividing line as my basic template, and worked from there. You will notice that I have credited a colleague here: she and I are teaching together, and I've shared various ideas and drafts with her throughout. For the timeline, I worked with a word document of key dates which she had created for a previous version of the course.

The second resource I created is a video of this church. I'm going to show you a clip in a moment, but by way of introduction, the idea behind the video was twofold: one, the society of architectural historians is beginning to incorporate videos into their research publications on the grounds that they can be better illustrations than photographs; and two, videos are very common in MOOCs, and what I was struck by during my research was the idea that part of their value was that they could be watched several times; my lecture can only be heard once. So this is the video I created – it's actually the third version of this video, as it took me a while to get all the shots properly edited, and at the suggestion of other H818 students, I ended up silencing the video's sound and creating a separate audio track for better sounds quality.

Audio transcript: This is the church of St Mary le Bow: of Wren's post-fire city churches, this was the first to have its steeple completed, and that makes it particularly significant. As you study this church tower, make sure that you feel comfortable with the different terminology needed to analyse it. How would you describe these different levels? More broadly, what's the significance of applying classical forms to a Gothic silhouette? Finally, you might also consider how this tower's design might be linked to Wren's wider practice.

The final resource I want to show you is an image with an audio commentary – I've placed it in YouTube, but it could also be presented by embedding an audio track into a powerpoint slide – this was my original plan and I abandoned it because it was easier to share via YouTube.

Audio transcript: This is the south front of Chatsworth, an Elizabethan house which was rebuilt between 1686 and 1707: this façade, designed by William Talman, was part of the first phase of construction. In *Architecture in Britain*, John Summerson referred to this as 'a majestic and decisive statement of an original kind' – what elements of the design might support this?

In terms of its pedagogical inspiration and value, it's really a variation on the video I created – but while I had to actually go to the church, this type of resource can be created with any image I might happen to have. It's ideal for suggesting study questions; the idea of an exploratory text was one suggested to me by the OER smarthistory.

In thinking about how these resources and the project itself might be taken forward, I should firstly say that I only received feedback from my students yesterday, and I haven't really processed it yet. For me, however, the resources represent an experiment; having created them once, I am now looking at how I might create similar resources for another course I am teaching. In the future, I hope to share this work with more of my colleagues, and to explore designing a set of resources for a survey course – when a course's goal is to introduce students to the history of art from ancient Greece to the modern period, the need to provide students with a framework in which to situate dozens of examples is particularly acute, and I think digital resources would have a lot to offer here.



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

12:35 on 7 February 2015

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added by [Jocelyn Anderson](#)

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Discussion (7)

[Links \(0\)](#)

[Academic References \(0\)](#)



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

11:06am 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jocelyn. I really like how you fleshed out the poster after the early versions I saw in Open Studio. After reading your abstract, I understand much more clearly what elements of MOOCs you will address (i.e. "what *individual* teachers can do within traditional frameworks...how MOOCs deliver primary content and the types of resources they offer students..."). I am now excited to hear about your experiences teaching a course on English Baroque Architecture and to see specific examples of how MOOC pedagogy altered its delivery. See you on the 7th!



[matthew street](#)

6:25pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jocelyn

I hadn't previously thought about extracting elements of MOOCs into traditional teaching frameworks, so this really made me think. I would be interested to hear why you chose certain elements a MOOC approach. Did you consider opening up the resources you developed to all learners to.

Best

Matt



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

11:15pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Hugo,

Thank you so much for your comment, I'm glad the poster is clearer!

All the best,

Jocelyn



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

11:20pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Matt,

I have to admit my choices have a lot to do with feasibility (i.e. what kinds of elements could fit into an existing teaching framework and an existing course) - while there were other things I thought sounded interesting, I wanted to trial some things with my current students...As for opening up the resources - well, I'm considering it now! Hopefully I'll have a good idea by the 7th :)

All the best,

Jocelyn



[Dave Martin](#)

12:03pm 2 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

It seems Jocelyn as though drawing teaching and learning techniques from MOOCs into the face-to-face environment is acting as a stimulus to both adapting and enhancing the existing teaching offer. Is that what you are finding in your context?



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

3:45pm 9 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Here are the comments and questions from your live presentation at the conference:

- ▶ Does using images present challenges for copyright in creating visual content?
- ▶ Bit of a metaquestion: was there any trouble loading these image-rich slides into

the Collaborate system?

- ▶ I hope you do a MOOC Jocelyn- I would take it!
- ▶ Do you hope the resources can be re-used by others too? If so, you are creating an OER
- ▶ Could students annotate images and videos to analyse the architecture?



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

4:13pm 18 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you very much for these questions! Here are some thoughts in brief...

Yes, copyright can produce challenges for visual rich content. It depends a great deal on what you are using the images for, and on whether or not you are dealing with living artists (I work on the eighteenth century, so I rarely have to work with artists' estates).

No difficulty in loading the images...

I'm delighted by the idea of a MOOC, but I'm not sure I'm in the right place for that right now. As for an OER, this is a really interesting question, and I'm still thinking about it . I designed these resources to work with my lectures and seminars, so I hadn't thought of the material as potentially useful to anyone outside my class. I think this is something I will take forward in a future development of the project.

Yes, students could certainly annotate the images, and part of the reason I chose to work with Powerpoint was to enable them to do this. I'm not sure they could annotate the videos - I'll ask my students once the course is over.

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