



Educate the world

Take courses from around the globe

School is back in session and summer soon will be a distant memory. The school year is a cycle that most people repeat annually during their childhood and early adulthood. For some people that is not enough.

The desire for self-improvement, or to advance or change careers, leads many to pursue educational opportunities beyond high school or college. Many institutions of higher learning offer adult education classes to meet this need. And, of course, the Internet offers many resources to further your education. **Coursea.org** is a website dedicated to offering MOOCs (massive open online courses).



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites

Many prestigious schools

The courses are free and open to anyone. They are offered from a wide range of institutions from around the world, such as the University of Pennsylvania, Penn State, Yale, Princeton, the University of London, Tel Aviv University, the University of Tokyo, the National Geographic Society, the World Bank, The Museum of Modern Art and many more.

Some courses offer a paid option that allows you to earn a Certificate of Verification from the participating school and Coursea if you successfully complete the course. The site also offers Specializations, which are a

series of related courses and a capstone project. There's a fee for each course and you have to earn a Certificate of Verification for each course in the series, and complete your capstone project, to earn a Specialization Certificate.

Commitment required

Some courses can be taken whenever you like and completed at your own pace. However, most are conducted over a set period of time, with work due on a weekly basis. There are quizzes and graded tests, as well as online interaction with other students and, occasionally, instructors. There are no set class times, so you can view the content whenever it is convenient during the week, as long as it's turned in on time. Obviously, these courses require a commitment. The courses I looked at ranged from five to 17 weeks in length.

Most of the course content is presented via videos. There are interactive quizzes, questions and activities interspersed throughout the presentations. Some courses also have required reading and/or suggested reading.

There's a wide range of subjects covered, from the arts to the sciences to business, education, technology and more. The courses can be searched by name, category, university or instructor. Each course listing has the name of the institution offering it, the instructor's name, the course name, the start date, duration and if it's eligible for a Verification Certificate or part of a Specialization.

Selecting a course takes you to its sign-up page. The individual course pages feature a brief synopsis and a syllabus. Since the courses are offered by different schools and different instructors, there's a wide range of information covered on these pages. Some are very specific, detailing what will be covered and when, as well as listing the recommended background for the course and suggesting related material that might be of interest. Others are more general, just giving a brief overview of what to expect.

There also are links to short instructor biographies on the page, profiles of the institution and related courses. You can sign up for the course here as well.

Easy to use

Coursea is cleanly designed and has intuitive navigation. The home page features a prominent search bar in the top banner. Below that is a grid of clickable images for featured courses. At the top of the page are links to the course listings, the specialization listings, the participating institutions and an about section.

Each section is well organized, with clickable images to take you to more information about the featured content, such as institutional profiles or short staff bios.

If you're serious about taking an online course, this site looks like it has some good offerings.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.