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Manifesto for the Humanities

Smith, Sidonie Ann

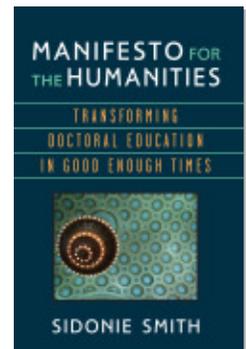
Published by University of Michigan Press

Smith, Ann.

Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times.

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

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Learning, Pedagogy, and Curricular Environments; or, How We Teach Now

Small liberal arts colleges have always valued teaching: that is what they do, that is their mission, their brand. It is what students and parents value; it is what they purchase; it has purchase. The hundreds of small liberal arts colleges, nested inside cities, distributed across country roads and small towns, distinguish higher education in the United States from that in all other countries. I come from the state of Ohio; and I knew growing up the names of the many fine liberal arts colleges in small Ohio towns: Oberlin, College of Wooster, Ohio Wesleyan, Kenyon, Denison, and the many religiously affiliated colleges across the state. In these intimate environments, a premium is placed on faculty contact, mentorship, advising.

Over the last five decades many liberal arts colleges have changed their expectations of faculty. Now they are expected to be totally dedicated teachers in the classroom and published scholars who compete for prestigious fellowships. At the wealthiest colleges, teaching loads have been adjusted accordingly. Some colleges now recruit faculty with the promise of a 2/2 or 2/3 teaching load. And the branding has been reoriented. Prospective students are promised access to research active faculty in student-centered classrooms and intimate campus settings.

Research universities have been another matter. In the mid-twentieth century great research universities restructured to support research, incubate new products and technologies, produce cutting-edge scholarship across all sectors, educate the next generations of faculty/scholars, and model a higher education system designed to provide a competitive edge in a world divided by the hot ideological warfare of the Cold War. Research universities attracted eminent faculty researchers, sought Nobel Prize winners, and recruited early-career faculty with great scholarly promise. Their ambitious faculty sought as much external funding to support their research as possible. And along the way, faculty and administrators privileged the research mission of the univer-

sity at the expense of the teaching commitment to undergraduate education, in a hierarchy of effort reaffirmed in successive stages of faculty evaluation. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s the “publish or perish” mantra defined life for faculty in the research university. It sounded sotto voce through departmental corridors. Criteria for tenure and promotion ratcheted up. In the humanities, the published monograph became the sine qua non of successful tenure bids, and at elite universities criteria expanded with expectations of a second book on the way.

Let me linger for a moment, here, on “the book” mantra. “The book” ecology encompassed a myriad of forces and activities: the expansion in the number of academic presses, a marker of seriousness as universities chased greater prestige and higher rankings; the expansion of lists by presses, and the ability of universities to quantify for other universities and the public the substantial achievements of their faculty; the pursuit of niche excellence and special series; the willing faculty whose service as press readers weighed as national or international recognition at the time of faculty evaluation; the traditional publication culture, dependent on a secure line in library budgets for the purchase of all humanities lists from academic presses. And it’s also important to note that along with distinction, prestige, and impact, the expectation of “the book” was a quantifiable, and seemingly neutral, measure of achievement in a tenure system reoriented, from the early 1970s on, to the principle, if not always the realization, of equitable criteria in evaluation and advancement.

By the 1990s, senior faculty in the humanities expected to spend their time researching and writing their monographs, enacting with even more intensity the “solitary genius” model of scholarship. By then, the faculty reward system reinforced the value of teaching less, teaching fewer students, teaching graduate rather than undergraduate students, upper-division rather than lower-division courses, seminars rather than lectures, of buying time out of teaching altogether. By then, faculty in humanities units evolved into a two-tier faculty: the tenure and tenure-track faculty with a 2/2 teaching load and the contingent and full-time non-tenure-track faculty with higher teaching loads. By then, students in their first year or two rarely took classes with tenured or tenure-track faculty. By then, graduate programs had expanded to bring greater prestige to humanities units and to provide a corps of faculty-in-training to staff lower-level undergraduate courses. And tuition continued to rise, and public funding to erode.

The pattern could not hold. Administrators and faculty came to recognize that the escalating cost of an undergraduate education brought an obligation to provide students access to senior faculty in undergraduate classrooms and an education whose immediate and long-range value justifies its cost. They

experienced increasing anxiety about the mounting pressures wrought by successive waves of technological innovation, and anxiety as well about the technological skills that students brought with them to college, the aptitudes and dispositional effects. They felt unease that the balance of teaching and research missions had become radically out of kilter. They acknowledged the need for major rebalancing. Gradually through the 1990s and with greater urgency in the 2000s, provosts, deans, department heads, and directors of undergraduate studies directed more attention to the undergraduate experience, attention now informed by research on learning and teaching and by the new analytics of student trends and achievements made possible by Big Data computation. Increasingly, externally imposed and internally adapted initiatives in assessment of learning outcomes motivated discussions of the value-added of courses, curriculum, and degrees. Of course, there's a troubling aspect of many assessment initiatives: the overinvestment in metrics of student satisfaction and measurements of utility with regard to degrees and curricular offerings. Nonetheless, the attention to undergraduate education is bringing with it exciting new initiatives and thoughtful reconceptualization of general education in the bachelor's degree.

The renewed commitment to undergraduate education, however, is not a return to teaching as faculty in the humanities have understood that activity up through the 20th century. The churning on the teaching side of things in the academy is no less daunting than the churning related to how humanists pursue and communicate their scholarly interests. Daily, faculty at research universities and at small liberal arts colleges alike confront the ways that social media, technological prostheses, and cyberinfrastructural environments compel and complicate how they teach. Nothing about teaching remains undisturbed. How to understand what a student is. How to think about student learning. How to approach what a course can be and do. How to structure a curriculum adequate to a 21st-century education. Where to locate expertise. What pedagogical goals to set. How to scale courses. In the next decades, faculty and doctoral students in the humanities will be immersed in, negotiating, and innovating in this new ecology of teaching and learning.

Disruption comes from without, from the economic and political forces already assayed in earlier sections of this book. Large forces: cost and debt, utility of degrees in the marketplace, political pressures. Disruption comes from technological advances, the platforms and affordances of social media, Big Data, and cyberinfrastructure. Disruption comes from the open-access movement. Disruption comes from new research and theorizing about learning itself. Disruption comes from pockets of innovation in the curriculum and in cocurricular initiatives that emerge from student needs. Disruption comes from the changing demography of students seeking higher education.

Oh my! I'm exhausted just registering all this disruption. But I can't stay exhausted. True, humanities faculty and doctoral students cannot become "experts" in, say, research on learning or on posttraditional online higher education; but they benefit from gaining some perspectives on the new ecology of teaching, as they do on the new ecology of scholarly communication.

Let's start by registering the shifting demography of the student populations coming into classrooms. Numbers of students continue to be what is commonly understood to be the typical college student, a young person between the ages of 18 and 22, living away from home for full-time study on a university or college campus, whose parents assume much of the obligation of tuition and room and board. But according to *The Condition of Education 2010*, a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, this situation is the case for something like 15% of undergraduates.¹ The majority of students pursuing coursework, certification, and postsecondary degrees in the 2010s are not of that traditional age group. They are older adults, many of them part-timers. They are veterans returning from war zones. They are employees seeking career advancement, or retraining for new kinds of jobs. They are people responding to their employment situation or to shifting life course learning needs. They are transfers from junior and community colleges who hone the habits of sustained study. They are urban students living at home and working two or three jobs to support themselves and their families. They are low-income students bringing with them anxieties about belonging, and confidence, and facility in code-switching to the language of privilege. They are international students from all over the world, living far from home. Some of the young people are homeless, orphaned, on their own entirely or coming from foster homes. Deterred by inconvenience, inaccessibility, or incomprehensible cost, many students seek a way to learn in the place they find themselves, at any pace, in flexible programs, at some level of reasonable cost. They seek "posttraditional" higher education through online opportunities.

Diverse cohorts of students thus enter classrooms. Privileged students enter, ready to go, with the requisite aptitudes and technologies. So too do students who are new kinds of learning subjects, in what are for them new kinds of learning environments. Students enter with differential depths of preparation for college due to increasing inequalities in secondary school systems. They enter struggling to find their place in institutions of higher education, a struggle intensified by the unrepresentative distribution of students from marginalized communities and first-generation students across the different higher education sectors. Many come without the common technological accouterments of daily life, the laptops or netbooks or iPads that enable multitasking, instant networking, and access to vast databases and millions of texts. And beyond classrooms, around the globe, there are vast numbers of

people seeking educational opportunity in locations of educational scarcity. It's not just those who register for a seat that impact how humanists teach and think about learning now; it's also those out there seeking to get access to information, disciplinary knowledge, and certification.

I've registered the shifting demographics of student learners, of who they are. Let me register as well the changing subjectivity of student learners in a digital age. Cultural theorists such as Brian Rotman argue that the "alphabetic self" constituted through the written word, with attendant attributes of disembodiedness, interiority, and the boundedness of the singular, is giving way to an algorithmic subject that is increasingly distributed, networked, and plural.² Networking technologies may well be reorganizing desire as the desire to be "in the know" and increasingly the desire to be "locatable." Self-positioning technologies at once link subjects in networked sociality, intensify forms of social surveillance, and locate the subject as a concatenation of mineable data. The notion of privacy is recast as publicity in a world of instant dispersal through code. And the sense of embodiment itself may become technologized as so many digital circuitries calibrate and reroute synapses, hormones, and heartbeats.

The technologies and dynamic media environments through and in which people now live their lives and make their relationships evidence the restless mobility of hyperattention. N. Katherine Hayles has written extensively on the way in which the neurocircuitry of the brain is changing with the intensification of life lived with technological prostheses such as laptops, smartphones, and PDAs of all kinds. The students who are coming to courses now, and will be there in the next decade, are less adept in processes of deep attention (and deep reading) and more adept in processes of hyperattention (fragmented reading). The pleasures in deep reading will be joined in "synergistic interactions" of "hyper reading" and "machine reading" as students gain facility in combining interpretation with algorithmic analysis to seek patterns as well as exercise interpretation.³ Further, according to Hayles, habits of deep reading will be tempered with the new pleasures of distributed readings across networks.⁴ She enjoins faculty to address this shift in pedagogies, precisely because "critical interpretation is not above or outside the generational shift of cognitive modes but necessarily located within it, increasingly drawn into the matrix by engaging with works that instantiate the cognitive shift in their aesthetic strategies."⁵ Naomi S. Baron, among others, enjoins humanities faculty to "think more carefully about students' mounting rejection of long-form reading, now intensified by digital technologies that further complicate our struggle to engage students in serious text-based inquiry."⁶

New kinds of students. New dynamics of subjectivity. And third, new relationships of students to delivery systems of higher education.

To suggest the complexities and conundrums of the capacities of cyberinfrastructure to shift the locus of learning and the relationship of learners to an institution and its bricks and mortar, and faculty to their students, let me consider the new rush to open in curriculum delivery. I explored in the previous section the open-access movement as it pertains to access to research, data, and scholarly publications. Within the arena of teaching, the open-access movement has given academics the discourse of open data, open-source software, open educational resources (OER), OpenCourseWare (OCW), open and distance learning (ODL), and a continuum of practices of open depending upon the kind of license attached to the content, the platform, and the software.⁷

Of course, it's not at all unusual for humanities faculty to adapt learning assets developed and digitized by other scholars, on their own campuses or across the world. Nor is it uncommon for humanities faculty to share their syllabi with others, in their department repositories, on listservs, on their personal websites, or through professional association "commons." Faculty in digital humanities collaborate with techies and librarians and project managers, all dependent on open-source software and open-source platforms. Faculty in all fields use shareware, such as Wordpress and Zotero, often incorporating such platforms into courses. They're already doing open teaching in modest ways. But in the last half decade, open has been scaling up.

As more and more databases become available, such as open government data and research data in the social and health sciences, for instance, humanities faculty will pursue opportunities to incorporate new kinds of projects into courses, though not without considerable support from IT professionals and librarians. They will also find themselves intrigued by new opportunities made available through the open-source software movement, which enables open access to computer programs and their code for use and modification under collaborative license provisions. One such program for use, reuse, and modification is the collaborative mapping program WorldMap, developed at Harvard, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and dedicated to compiling a global service registry of maps.⁸ For humanists, this open-source software has great potential for teaching as well as research; it promises humanities faculty the ability to draw upon, develop, and upload map data critical to the turn to the spatial humanities.

The discourse on and the resources available through OER will impact the pedagogical goals, strategies, and teaching practices humanities scholars will adapt in the coming decades. As defined by the 2012 Paris Declaration on Open Education Resources, under the auspices of UNESCO, OER encompasses

teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work.⁹

The ideal of OER is global access to open educational content, open-source software, and OCW, while preserving attribution of authorship. Anyone, including professors and students, can easily access open educational resources, as well as tools, training, and support systems through such sites as the OER Commons, created and curated by the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, a nonprofit supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

OpenCourseWare is a component of OER. The movement for OCW started at MIT when faculty voted to make syllabi and other course materials available to the public. As of 2014 some 1,000 institutions have some kind of OCW commitment “to distribute their own learning assets to the world.”¹⁰ “Digital Harvard” mounts on its website the video lectures of distinguished faculty as noncredit free courses sponsored by Harvard Extension School. Harvard’s Berkman Center began experimenting with the Coursera platform, “freely shar[ing] software platforms for free online lectures and discussions.”¹¹ These initiatives aimed in two directions: to address a general public with interest in lifelong learning and to develop and adapt credit-bearing online learning environments for on-campus students.

At the same time as MIT built OCW and blended learning environments took shape at Harvard, the two institutions joined together in launching edX, the online education platform that mounts open-access non-credit-bearing courses for people across the globe. Now edX has many institutional partners and offers a robust curriculum.¹² In excess of 100 institutions from around the globe have become partners in another venture, the public/private Coursera, described on its website as “a social entrepreneurship company.” Coursera, announces the website, “offer[s] courses online for anyone to take, for free. We envision a future where everyone has access to a world-class education. We aim to empower people with education that will improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they live in.”¹³ Enter the massive open online courses, the MOOCs.

Collaborations joining universities, venture capitalists, nonprofits, and corporations, xMOOCs represent a radical rescaling of the delivery system of higher education. They are products of the new knowledge economy, involv-

ing rapidly expanding cyberinfrastructure, distributed learning, networks of knowledge workers, Big Data analytics, resource pooling, and entrepreneurial savvy. In these collaborations, elite universities join venture capitalists, the big players edX and Coursera, and also Udacity and NovoEd. Entrepreneurs spin off a proliferating number of smaller start-ups—Udemy, Mooc2Degree, Thinkful, Accredible, Codecademy, Peer2Peer University, OpenStudy, UIU Link, to name a few. And now pop-up initiatives emerge to address the high costs of MOOCs themselves. One such initiative is “Mechanical MOOC,” a mash-up of platforms from start-ups designed to provide the “building blocks” for delivering MOOCs and for credentialing students at bargain prices.¹⁴

Since the buzz generated when two computer scientists offered the first xMOOC out of Stanford in fall 2011 and drew 150,000 initial registrants for the course, debates about MOOCs as the new frontier of an affordable, scalable higher education have swirled around campuses and in the pages of the education journals and national press. When open teaching reaches for this kind of scale, the hype goes viral, captured in the *New York Times* article announcing 2012 as “the Year of the MOOC”: “Nothing has more potential to lift people out of poverty—by providing them with a free education to get a job or improve the job they have.”¹⁵ A mere three years later, the buzz had subsided, and the reality set in as people sorted through the mix of utopian, opportunistic, and troubling aspects of MOOCs.

At this point in time, here’s what the research reveals about MOOC offerings.¹⁶ Nearly two-thirds of registrants come from countries other than the United States. For those who complete MOOCs, the satisfactions can be multiple. They deliver learning to anyone anywhere with an access device. They enable students to pace learning to meet their needs. They may locate individuals in a transnational network of peer tutors. For some entering new job markets and new conditions of employment or seeking to advance in their professions, MOOCs deliver certificates or “badges” for the completion of series of courses (as MITx now does).¹⁷ For a few, they offer a route to admission to a prestigious U.S. university. While the platforms for delivering MOOCs originated in the United States, MOOC platforms have launched in Spain, Germany, Australia, Brazil, China, and Rwanda.¹⁸ In these ways, the utopian impetus for higher learning without walls, for sharing learning assets around the world, seems to be partially satisfied.¹⁹ On the upside, then, the MOOC delivery ensemble may turn out to be, as Nina Augustsson observes, “the ‘leapfrog’ solution that allows countries full of undereducated youth to move into the middle classes.”²⁰

But the utopian and utilitarian hype about MOOCs remains hyperbolic. The vast majority of courses come from science, engineering, math, and computer science fields. Researchers report that while thousands register for

courses, small percentages of registrants complete them. At the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, researchers from the Graduate School of Education in 2013 found the completion rate of Penn's online courses to be only 4%.²¹ A 2014 article by Jonah Newman and Soo Oh, on data from the first 16 edX MOOCs offered by Harvard and MIT, reports that the majority of those who register for MOOCs already have a postsecondary degree of some kind, that some even have doctorates. Those data also reveal that "nearly half of registrants never engage with any of the content."²²

Beyond the data, there are other troubling aspects of MOOCs. On the whole, they are not radically posttraditional projects. They are offered open and online for sure. But their format is fully traditional. The teacher often stands at the center of the video, radiating expertise. Thousands of students attend to that figure as the authority in the virtual classroom. Moreover, as Neil Butcher observes in "A Guide to Quality in Post-traditional Online Higher Education," "xMOOCs tend to follow traditional behaviorist approaches to learning and the structure of existing educational practices. They typically have traditional course structures, content, and methods, with videotaped lectures, online quizzes, and weekly assignments. Their primary innovation is scaling."²³ The disruption of traditional teaching is in scale, not in the pedagogy or in the power relationships of faculty to students.

Nor is the faculty delivering MOOCs a diverse one. The MOOC business thrives on star-quality performers, faculty who dazzle on the small screen. There's already a two-tiered professoriate made up of large numbers of non-tenure-track or contingent faculty and a shrinking percentage of tenure and tenure-track faculty. What happens when there's a third tier added to the mix: the online megastars, the rest of the tenure-track and tenured faculty, and the contingent faculty? Further, star professors come primarily from elite private and public universities; and those who deliver MOOCs are overwhelmingly male, as a spring 2013 survey by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* confirms.²⁴ As well, the Harvard and MIT data reveal that "the overwhelming majority of MOOC students are male."²⁵ So if the MOOC world functions as an extrainstitutional academy of learning, founded on the values of sharing and distributing learning assets around the globe, then it's a problematic world. Educators, humanists among them, would be hard-pressed to see it as a diverse community coming from and presenting diverse lived experiences and cultures of scholarly inquiry, on the faculty side or on the student side.

Then there are the corporate aspects of MOOCs. In the land of MOOCs, the brand is all. Like T-shirt franchises, the public-private ventures that are MOOCs bring a university's intellectual brand to "millions of people" around the world. Students and learners abroad seek the imprimatur of the best of U.S. universities—Stanford, the Ivys, Berkeley, Michigan, and so on. They

seek prestige badges and certificates of completion. Further, the development of MOOCs has been accompanied by experiments in outsourcing the curriculum at small colleges and starved state universities to the star brands and the higher education entrepreneurs. And in developing nations, the concern for some critics is that the importation of platforms and curricula and expertise from the brands of the developed world has the potential to occlude local educational cultures and to create and sustain a “two-tier system of global higher education, with a small number of elites able to participate in traditional university educational environments . . . while the vast majority of students, especially those in developing countries, have to make do with participating in watered down education experience delivered through MOOCs.”²⁶

And there are issues related to the differential potential for scaling the curriculum delivered by xMOOCs. The MOOC agenda often directs resources to easily scaled curricula that are also priority curricula in a time of an instrumentalist educational ethos. The number of humanities courses offered has been modest, though with each year that number is increasing, and the courses offered diversifying.²⁷ Further, while humanities faculty in the virtual classroom of the MOOC may be able to model deep reading, archival serendipity, and the rhetorical styles of humanistic inquiry, the scaling of MOOCs precludes assigning significant reading and diverse writing exercises typical of humanities courses. The labor involved in grading, say, 2,000 or 20,000 five-page essays, in a for-credit course, is prohibitive: it would require exploiting graduate students and contingent faculty. The alternative to the use of human labor is to automate grading of written assignments; but machine grading, though a subject of ongoing study, is obviously controversial, and premature given the state of the programming. As my colleague Paul Conway observed to me, this is the dilemma in the state of play of MOOCs—exploited labor or machine grading. Equally concerning for humanists, the language of instruction is almost always English. And the occasions where translations are available may depend upon volunteer labor. Thus, many humanists, who consider learning to speak, live, and imagine in multiple languages central to a liberal arts education, find themselves enlisted to deliver an open-access opportunity that shores up the global currency of English and may well exploit volunteer translators for the profit of corporations in the education business.

Finally, there are the issues related to the practical aspects of MOOCs. The business model for MOOCs is not yet viable, as an answer to keeping tuition costs from escalating on campuses, to constituting new profit centers for universities, or to generating big profits for education entrepreneurs. The thorny challenges to operationalizing MOOCs at scale are mounting: accreditation, credentialing, badging, credit transfer, quality assessment, copyright, compensation, among them. The negative side-effects of the vir-

tual classroom are scaled up—absenteeism, plagiarism, and cheating. Nor is the model for on-campus development adequately worked out. And the time and effort required of faculty to develop a MOOC are significant. Here's the message implicit in Michigan's guidelines for proposing a Coursera MOOC over the last couple of years: Design tightly. Record charismatically. And do so on your own "research" time. Some resources will be available to you for the development and piloting of the course; but course preparation will not be part of your course load. It will be approached, in evaluative contexts, as equivalent to preparing a textbook on your topic. Given the faculty labor, and the ensemble of people with different kinds of expertise required to develop and pilot a MOOC, the activity will be concentrated in the major research universities. And in the end, the degree of open is less than the ideal: courses and course contents remain licensed and as such cannot be reused without the payment of fees.

The short-lived rush to MOOCs can be thought of as part of the corporate strategies adapted by universities to address financial challenges. The people most enthusiastic about the potential of MOOCs to transform higher education have been Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and members of university boards. For the entrepreneurs, MOOCs promise access to Big Data on registrants, data that can be monetized and sold to college recruiters and to businesses seeking the best candidates for the new kinds of jobs in the knowledge economy. And boards of governors, such as the board that fired President Theresa Sullivan at the University of Virginia (and then was forced by intense pressure from multiple constituencies to rehire her), gravitate to the promise of online learning and MOOCs as a way to solve the problems related to the escalating costs of higher education; they seem the way to efficiency, branding, and profit centers within the university.

University presidents themselves have been and continue to be far more circumspect in their assessment of MOOC potential, as Sullivan was at Virginia.²⁸ And skeptical faculty have warned of the unintended consequences of going open on a large scale via this model. In a late 2013 commentary for *Liberal Education* Aaron Bady spins out the dystopian scenario, provocatively elaborating the insidious logic of equivalence that shadows the xMOOC. He writes:

Once market equivalency has entered the equation, once the market recognizes an equivalence between a MOOC and an in-person class, pointing out the difference that is experienced by the student will be trumped by the equivalence of market logic, which will dictate paying for the cheaper of the two. An in-person education will become an unnecessary luxury, an ornamental marker of elite status.²⁹

Bady applauds the vision behind the first MOOC (referred to as a cMOOC), developed at the University of Manitoba in 2008. It was an experiment in community-organized, student-centered learning, an open online opportunity for student learners to follow their own paths, collaborating in a social network as they remixed open course content aggregated from “experts, educators, and instructors.”³⁰ By contrast, he observes, “Instead of building social information networks, the neoliberal MOOC is driven by a desire to liberate and empower the individual, breaking apart actually existing academic communities and refocusing on the individual’s acquisition of knowledge.”³¹

Hype. Jeremiad. Utopian fantasy. Dystopian scenario. The achievement of the MOOC movement is, at this moment, very modest.

But online ecologies of higher education are nonetheless important to understand, and established and emergent humanities scholars can find thoughtful approaches to the MOOC concept out there, as in Jonathan Haber’s MOOC³² and in the experiments of their colleagues. For one thing, humanities faculty have been developing MOOCs. In winter 2014, Cathy Davidson offered a Coursera-Duke MOOC titled *The History and Future of Higher Education*; and she blogged about MOOCs and the process of developing one on the HASTAC website in “Clearing Up Some Myths about MOOCs.”³³ In her iteration of a MOOC, Davidson sought to realize the alternative legacy inherent in the promise of the earliest iteration of the cMOOC as networked, participatory, collaborative, student-centered.

Humanities faculty are also innovating anti-MOOC initiatives. One such initiative is that of FemTechNet, a collaborative of feminist technology scholars from multiple institutions of higher education.³⁴ They have designed what they term a DOCC, a distributed open collaborative course entitled *Dialogues on Feminism and Technology*.³⁵ Different institutions sponsor and record dialogues among feminist scholars on particular topics, such as “technology and the body.” The open events are taped, and the tapes edited into usable 45-minute to one-hour units; then tapes are uploaded to the FemTechNet website; there they are open for reuse in anyone’s course. Ultimately, the DOCC is an antibranding praxis that takes advantage of digital technology but for a different vision of higher learning. No one brand is attached to the conversations. There is no one source of expertise. Video conversations archived online are free for reuse and remixing in classrooms around the nation and the world. And feminist issues and analyses are inserted into the practices and intellectual core of online learning.

It may be that only a modest number of humanities faculty will develop a MOOC or a DOCC; but humanities faculty will be among those who adapt, remix, and incorporate open online content available to them without licensing fees for incorporation in hybrid on-campus courses.³⁶ And it is certain that

many will be expected to deliver courses to online instruction at their institutions. Online courses and degrees are an expanding sector of the academic curriculum for enrolled students. ASUOnline offers a roster of undergraduate and graduate degree programs online, for which faculty are expected to adapt their courses. The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) offers students upwards of 100 online or hybrid general education courses, among them a good number of humanities courses.³⁷ Other universities, the University of Florida, Penn State University–World Campus, San Jose State, and Central Michigan University, to name a few, have robust online degree programs. The trend to posttraditional online educational opportunities for enrolled students will impact how humanities faculty approach teaching; it will put a premium on pedagogical innovation, media savvy, and instructional flexibility. It will immerse faculty in new teaching platforms, new teaching pedagogies, new operative discourses. It will encourage humanities faculty to think about the ensemble of actors and the repertoires of expertise necessary to make the transition to online learning environments successfully.

Ethically driven and thoughtfully conceptualized online learning can strengthen humanities education and contribute to the development of mobile transdisciplinary laboratories of faculty, enrolled students, and even lay researchers. It can make the epistemic infrastructure available to those for whom an on-campus college education may be too costly to pursue; or those who cannot travel to centers of learning. It can enrich the curriculum in less-commonly-taught languages, through consortial arrangements for sharing language instruction across regions. Moreover, a 2013 *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey suggested that reorienting course design and pedagogical strategies for online teaching environments yields considerable benefits for on-campus teaching.³⁸ In preparing videos of lectures, sets of materials, and evaluation instruments, faculty discover ways to improve their on-campus teaching. Information gathered on how students interact with the site, the materials, the assignments, and the community of class members offers a fund of data for faculty keen on gaining knowledge about how students learn now.

And what of on-campus, in situ, learning, not on the scale of the MOOC or in the venue of online offerings? Derek Bok noted in *Our Underachieving Colleges*: “New courses and new knowledge regularly find their way into the curriculum, but teaching methods change very slowly.”³⁹ Humanities faculty may be eager, or merely dutiful, or even reluctant curricular tinkerers; no matter the posture, they are constantly engaged in curricular revision. Successive generations of scholar-teachers remake standard courses into their own versions, design new ones that bend toward the horizon of disciplinary change, imagine new configurations for majors or minors or general education courses.

As an example, the undergraduate major in English has changed without

necessarily changing formally, as colleagues introduced into their courses sexuality studies, hemispheric studies, global studies, transatlantic studies, comparative studies, material studies, visual studies, disability studies, and digital studies. Language departments have been reconceptualizing what a major is, what a minor might be, often focusing on cultural studies rather than literary studies approaches. And so on across humanities disciplines. Multitrack majors. Integrative majors. Interdisciplinary majors. Individually configured majors. The motivations are multiple. They are intellectual responses to changes in humanities fields. They are pragmatic—keeping up enrollments and attracting more majors, those consumers across the curriculum. They are also responsive to student needs in a changing economy and world of work, knowledge based, skills based, praxis based. They are cognizant of the technological devices, media, platforms, and affordances through which students live their lives and through which they themselves do their work.

And with respect to the curriculum writ large: In the last decade and a half, a succession of undergraduate initiatives have been incorporated into higher education, including the freshman seminar taught by tenure-track faculty, the sophomore experience, the capstone experience for graduating majors, the integrative experience of the general education program, and writing across the curriculum. Opportunities for study abroad have been expanded and alternative spring break experiences introduced. Undergraduate research opportunities have been implemented as well as engaged and community-based learning, and most recently the internship experience, the experience in entrepreneurship, and integrative courses that tie the classroom to the performing arts and exhibition cultures on campus. These initiatives are “high impact”—because research shows they are paradigm-shifting, mind-blowing, memorable, and personally transformative for students; in other words, they bear long affective and intellectual tails.

Increasingly, academic leaders are speaking passionately about reimagining institutions of higher education for the 21st century. Nancy Cantor, chancellor of Rutgers University–Newark and former chancellor of Syracuse University, calls for institutional transformation that would involve shifting from the ivory tower model of the university to a model of the engaged institution, from a meritocracy to a talent incubator, from a rigidly structured set of disciplinary silos to collaboratories of academics and nonacademics, from the cult of the expert to the common good of distributed expertise.⁴⁰ Randall Bass, vice provost for education at Georgetown University, speaks out about the “shift from the instructional paradigm to the learning paradigm” in what he terms the “post-course era.”⁴¹ The phrase references the way in which the formal curriculum through which higher education has been structured is being decentered as the locus of learning. Now learning is recognized to take

place in non-traditional-course-based venues, in zones of informal learning, in the dynamics of participatory cultures, in the intensities and curiosities of high-impact practices, and in the experiential cocurriculum of internships, study abroad, and public projects. Courses won't go away; but the unifying and reifying concept of the course is no longer adequate to capture where and how learning occurs in higher education.

Recognizing this new environment of learning, Bass, Davidson, and Goldberg, among many others, advance the importance of cultures of participatory learning that aim to tutor students in how to speak from positions of authority, how to recognize disciplinary competence and interdisciplinary synergies. To focus on learning, writes Bass, is to recognize that “the connection between integrative thinking, or experiential learning, and the social network, or participatory culture, is no longer peripheral to our enterprise but is the nexus that should guide and reshape our curricula in the current disruptive moment in higher education learning.”⁴² To focus on participatory learning turns upon what happens with students as they engage new information, new models of inquiry and practice, new disciplinary imperatives, new applications of thinking, new venues for self-reflection. It is to shift from the teaching dyad to the learning ensemble. It is to shift from the subject positions of teachers “showing what we know” and acolytes absorbing that knowledge to fluid subject positions within exchange network and collaborative. It is to shift from a singularity of purpose to a heterogeneity of worldviews. It is to shift from the ends of accumulating knowledge to the practices of producing and performing knowledge.

The affordances of technologies—among them social media, digital archives, platforms for online composing, multimedia open educational resources, and online and offline learning networks—have brought disruptions of the formal curriculum and enabled new possibilities for the dispersed, informal curriculum. Yet, this is learning and teaching derived from the goals of education rather than the affordances of technology—though technologies are central to achieving these goals. Bass's challenge to administrators and faculty alike becomes “how to reinvent a curriculum that lives in this new space,” and in a “post-course era.”

Humanities faculty are out there, in this new space, breaking through the routines of faculty exchanges with students around reading, writing, and testing. Bass foregrounds new student-centered assessment formats, such as e-portfolios. He talks about a new model for organizing courses and curriculum, one he adopts from John Seely Brown termed “reversing the flow”: forgoing the model that begins with inculcation of expert knowledge and then follows with practice in applying that knowledge, in favor of a model that entwines learning and practice from the get-go.⁴³ Eric Rabkin talks, blogs,

and writes about his concept of “real work not home work.”⁴⁴ Homework he describes as the usual kind of assessment instruments faculty ask students to fulfill: formulaic, deadline-driven, inconsequential after submission. Effort, deadline, grade. Real work, by contrast, engages students in activities and writing projects that contribute to the shared classroom experience; it advances the conversation and enhances the learning environment. It links to the vision of participatory learning elaborated by Davidson and Goldberg with high-impact experiences Bass locates in the informal curriculum.

Humanities faculty are imagining the end point of their courses as something left behind or something spanning semesters: a link on the department website; databases upon which later researchers draw; a digital curation; an open-access journal. One of my colleagues, Anne Curzan, is a scholar of language change and an inspired classroom teacher. In a course on grammar, she had upwards of 100 students enter three of their past papers into a searchable database of student essays. That database, combined with historical databases, then became the evidentiary material through which students explored shifts in language usage. She had her students doing real work, developing hypotheses, searching for patterns across time, rethinking the constantly changing action of linguistic usage, recognizing it in their everyday exchanges. David Damrosch talks of the classroom as an island of wikis through which he asks students to do the real work of teasing out transnational interfaces in national literatures and leaving the knowledge gained behind as an archive for the next group of students.⁴⁵

An increasing number of humanities faculty at big universities and small colleges are imagining new designs for blended classrooms, joining students on different campuses together for project-based learning, as William Pennapacker is doing with his “Digital Liberal Arts” initiative at Hope College and within the Great Lakes Colleges Association.⁴⁶ Some are designing courses attractive to the public, to autodidacts and lifelong learners. Some are trying experiments in slowing down, as Richard Miller does in his course “reading in slow motion.” Here are his rules: one book read during the entire term; weekly three-hour sessions; no technology in the classroom; no reading ahead; a final paper based on anything except the assigned text. Miller calls this “teaching for resourcefulness.”⁴⁷ Others are rethinking the notion of skills as forms of knowledge. Some are developing multicampus courses for delivery of less-commonly taught languages.

In the next decade, humanities faculty will be challenged to innovate in their courses in ways that introduce real work, reversed-flow, participatory learning. “In this new space,” the urgent issues confronting humanities faculty multiply. How to understand the ways students study, research, process, and compose now? Where to find attention and how to mobilize it? How to

model “reading” on multiple levels simultaneously? How to negotiate student participation and resistance to participation? How to “assess” learning within the context of new technological environments? How to insist on and demur from reinforcing faculty expertise? How to collaborate with the experts upon whom faculty depend to realize pedagogical visions? How to even know what needs to be known of this emergent environment?

How humanists teach now is a changing assemblage of software and platforms, politics and economics, student interest and institutional structures, infrastructure and generational competencies, people and objects, expertise and curiosity. How they teach now is a hybrid of traditional classroom practices and participatory or practice-based learning. It takes place in hybrid formats combining face-to-face and online environments. Learning is close and distant, course-based and postcourse, flexible and adaptive to meet student needs.⁴⁸ Classes are flipped. Expertise distributed. Sociality networked. Learning collaborative. And students become “open scholars,” a subject position of the new posttraditional education and of the participatory ethos of online and offline hybrids. Here is Neil Butcher’s parsing of the concept. “Open scholars” he writes, are

able to create, use, and contribute OER, self-archive, apply their research, do open research, filter and share with others, support emerging open learning alternatives, publish in open access journals, comment openly on the works of others, and build networks. This can also improve research, as academics can focus on teaching research skills, and developing students as producers.⁴⁹

In this world of traditional, flipped, and feral learning activities, concepts of expertise, authority, ownership, and the provenance of learning come unmoored from their traditional significations.⁵⁰ In these environments, learning joins teacher and student, peer to peer, and student to crowd and cloud. It unfolds through multiple modalities, involves all the senses, the powers of the textual, visual, oral, aural, and haptic. In these encounters, students gain critical intelligence about what it means to live in new environments of information, communication, ethical exchange, and social identities; and the interpretive skills to assess the impact of technologies on society, the environment, the global economy, and their own self-understanding.

It’s a stressful time. It’s an exhilarating time. Humanities faculty and graduate students will be overwhelmed by the work of preparing and uncomfortable with the sense of inadequacy before the tasks. They’ll need to pressure institutions to provide adequate resources to support new kinds of courses, new laboratories of inquiry. They’ll be challenged by the new kinds of learners

in classrooms and their needs, and disturbed by the inequality of access to those classrooms, the insufficient diversity, the off-putting climate for some.

And so this time must also be a creative time, a time to affirm and demonstrate how critical a humanities education is in this moment. In a world of information abundance and constantly shifting ecologies of labor, work, and profession, undergraduate students need the breadth of knowledge and practical competencies the humanities provide, for a capacious imagination, for deft interpretation, for sophisticated skills in myriad forms of writing, composing, and communicating, for a sense of pleasure in human creativity, for an ethical commitment to egalitarianism and the sustainability of the planet. The challenge is to adequately prepare doctoral students in the humanities to become the teachers undergraduates deserve, whoever they are, whatever needs and aspirations they bring, however they engage with their teachers and mentors.