

Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Education in the Age of the MOOC

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Abstract

Even as online learning is increasingly embraced by institutions of higher education, the past decade has seen the arrival of yet another new educational vehicle: Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs). These courses are designed to disseminate knowledge at an unprecedented scale – even as they engender concerns about quality, learning efficacy, and the future of higher education. In this article, I discuss the MOOC phenomenon and describe a MOOC on negotiation that I developed and taught, exploring the advantages that such a course offers for negotiation and conflict resolution education in particular.

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Introduction

In May 2011, Christopher Honeyman – a conflict professional who specializes in identifying significant issues in the negotiation and conflict fields, and convening people to focus on them - gathered a small group of negotiation teachers to address a particular challenge: The knowledge and skills we teach are basic life competencies. How can we share these with those people who will never, *ever* be students in our negotiation courses?

In response, five of us collaborated to write a book chapter entitled “The Education of Non-Students” (Blanchot et al. 2013) that was published in the fourth volume of a series of books exploring recent developments and issues in negotiation pedagogy (see Honeyman, Coben, and Wei Min-Lee 2013). In that chapter, we suggested embedding elements of negotiation education within popular media – films, theater, and games.

But my intuitive response to Honeyman’s initial question at that first meeting was that perhaps we should reconsider the underlying premise that most people would never study in our classrooms. Would they, I wondered, if we were able to significantly change our classrooms?

At that point I had taught negotiation online for several years and had seen the educational capacity of online learning. I knew that many traditional limitations on access to education first and foremost, geography – had been diminished if not eliminated. The impressive geographic diversity of the students in my online introductory negotiation and dispute resolution course notwithstanding, however, such courses still typically serve only twenty to thirty students. Merely offering negotiation courses online would not create the “sea change” required to meet the challenge that Honeyman had posed.

The Rise of Massive Online Open Courses

In 2011, two Stanford University professors offered a course on artificial intelligence not only to enrolled Stanford students in their classroom, but to anyone wanting to take it over the Internet. Nobody – least of all the teachers – foresaw that 160,000 students would enroll from around the world. This phenomenon catapulted the massive online open course (MOOC) to the forefront of attention in higher education and beyond.¹ Throughout 2012 (colorfully dubbed ‘The Year of the MOOC’ by the New York Times) other universities offered MOOCs of their own, and three MOOC development service providers formed.²

Just what is a Massive Open Online Course? While various subtypes exist, common elements include:

- unlimited enrollment capacity (hence the possibility for “massive” enrollment),
- the absence of admissions requirements (hence the “open” nature – anyone with access to the Internet can enroll), and
- an internet-based learning platform (i.e., an “online course”).

Beyond these core characteristics, MOOCs vary widely. Some involve “live” instructors actively interacting with students; others are completely automated, with variations in between. Some set fixed start and end dates and impose deadlines designed to keep all students working on the same thing at the same time; others are self-paced or on-demand. And, while MOOCs are tuition-free by definition, some offer fee-based add-ons, such as certificates or statements of completion.

Since inception, MOOCs have generated debate, much of which has centered on their impact on contemporary higher education. Skeptics have questioned their academic value because they lack so many of the controls and feedback mechanisms traditional classes offer, but

other commentators have suggested that MOOCs can be developed in ways that ensure educational quality.

The widespread adoption of MOOCs could also have significant financial ramifications, potentially slowing the steadily rising costs of obtaining formal degrees, which has led some to argue that higher education should embrace MOOCs for their efficiency.³ Many universities have invested money in the creation of MOOCs and some have invested even more in the development of MOOC platforms and consortia (see *The Economist* 2014a and 2014b).

Although discussions over the relationship between MOOCs and higher education have certainly drawn attention, most have not addressed MOOCs' capacity to disseminate knowledge more broadly and to have an impact beyond the populations conventionally served by colleges and universities.

Who Takes MOOCs, and Why

A distinguishing characteristic of MOOCs is that they have the potential to equalize the participational playing field by eliminating such barriers as cost, age, prerequisites, or competitive admission policies. Some barriers may remain, however, because access to the Internet is far from universal, and bandwidth, Internet regulation and censorship, and inability to speak the language the course is offered in may all limit participation.⁴ These limitations notwithstanding, the advent of the MOOC has undeniably allowed unprecedented access to many university courses. Proponents of MOOCs have lauded them as the ultimate educational equalizer. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (2013: SR1) wrote, "Nothing has more potential to lift more people out of poverty – by providing them an affordable education to get a

job or improve in the job they have. Nothing has more potential to unlock a billion more brains to solve the world's biggest problems. And nothing has more potential to enable us to reimagine higher education than the massive, online open courses, or MOOC platforms that are being developed..."

But this great equalizing potential has yet to be realized. Demographic data on the students who have enrolled in MOOCs thus far shows them to be mostly young, well-educated, employed males, from developed countries (Christensen et al. 2013; Selingo 2014; Ho et al. 2015).

Students choose MOOCs for a variety of reasons. As noted above, they are free, and offer many students the only way to take advantage of the course offerings at a prestigious university such as Stanford or of courses taught by an internationally recognized expert. Because of the potential geographical diversity of their enrollees, some of these courses may allow students to access a broader social and professional network than a conventional course would, and like other on-line courses, they can be taken at home and with a great deal of time flexibility. (For more on student motivations for taking MOOCs, see Zheng et al 2015).

While many students have been motivated to enroll in MOOCs, far fewer have been motivated to complete them. One report shows that completion rates are generally between 2-13% of enrolled students (Perna et al. 2013); others suggest an average completion rate of 10% (*The Economist* 2014(a)).⁵ Some researchers have suggested that students do not initially enroll in the course with the intention of actively participating in it to completion, and that keeping student intent in mind is vital in assessing course completion data (Koller, Ng, Do and Chen 2013). However, nobody has yet determined what these students hope to gain from their partial participation, or how they might be encouraged to continue to participate. The gap between

enrollment and completion rates has caused many to question the educational benefits of MOOCs as well as their potential to transform higher education (see, e.g., *The Economist* 2014a).

A possible explanation for MOOCs low completion rates is the free price-tag. If people pay for something, this reasoning goes, they treat it more seriously; with no “sunk costs,” students find it easier to walk away from MOOCs. Would completion numbers go up, if MOOCs weren’t free? Perhaps, but this adds a significant barrier to their openness and the number of students completing the course could stay the same or even drop, but the *percentage* of completers would rise because fewer people registered for the course in the first place. In fact, most MOOC providers have shifted to for-pay models of taking MOOCs, by offering free auditing or participation, while charging for course completion certificates that might add value to a student’s portfolio (certificates that were, until recently, awarded free-of-charge) (Shah, 2015).

Another explanation for low completion rates is MOOCs’ limited credential value. They generally do not grant academic credit and have not been formalized in degree or professional certification programs and, for the most part, have gone unrecognized by employers, although many MOOCs do offer students certificate of completion.⁶ Some providers have also clustered MOOCs into “MOOC Pathways” or “MOOC Concentrations” to convey academic depth in a particular topic or discipline, but whether issuing such credentials has actually enhanced their holder’s standing remains undetermined. Moreover, the leading MOOC providers now charge fees for such concentration certificates. We currently do not know whether gold-standard credentialing and recognition or charging students for participation or credentials will lead to higher completion rates, or whether such moves will backfire. As the initial hype about MOOCs

has died down and given way to research, we can hope to see more grounded discussion emerging between MOOC skeptics and proponents.

I do not, in this article, purport to fully explore the MOOC phenomenon, to support either side in the MOOC debate, or to consider MOOCs' long-term relationship to higher education. Instead, my focus here is on the potential that MOOCs might offer to the negotiation and conflict resolution field in particular. For this purpose, I must raise and address two other general, interrelated and important sets of questions educators often ask about MOOCs:

1) What is their educational purpose? Is it raising awareness, teaching basic knowledge, supplementing traditional academic courses, or supplanting them?

2) What can be taught with MOOCs? Are they suited for some topics, and not for others? Can they deeply address complex issues? Can they modify behavior or enhance skills, beyond imparting knowledge?

Although many commentators have expressed strong opinions in response to these questions, *we do not yet know the answers*. No definitive MOOC guidebook exists. As of this writing, no data supports either their efficacy or lack of it. Thus every new MOOC – particularly in a new area or with a new purposes – contributes a bit of experimentation and expands our knowledge of this method. My own exploration, implementing a MOOC for negotiation education, began shortly after the more general MOOC phenomenon emerged.

The Negotiation MOOC

In 2013, Creighton University, where I teach, decided to conduct its first MOOC and issued a call for proposals to faculty. My proposal for a MOOC teaching basic negotiation concepts and

skills was selected, based on a survey of alumni showing that a majority of them found this topic to be the one most likely to interest them. Thus, *Negotiation: Navigating Professional and Personal Interactions* (or ‘NegMOOC’) was born.

Creighton University and I had complementary interests in offering a MOOC. The university wished to explore what might be done with MOOCs and what is involved in conducting them. The university decided that while the course would be open to the world at large, it would target alumni as potential course participants and limited its own publicity efforts to contacting alumni.⁷ My own exploratory agenda motivated me to propose and conduct the MOOC: Can topics of negotiation and conflict resolution, specifically, be taught through this vehicle? If so, what are the implications for our field?

I framed this inquiry, in four questions, which I will share up front to provide context for many of my course-design decision, and answer in detail in the latter part of this paper:

- 1) Can we provide the same quality of negotiation education using a MOOC format that the field provides in its traditional and on-line (small-scale) classes?
- 2) Can the signature pedagogy of the negotiation field, the experiential learning model, be implemented in a MOOC?
- 3) Can we provide students in a MOOC the same *experience* that has made negotiation courses so successful and popular with classroom students – complete with high volumes of meaningful interpersonal interaction?
- 4) Assuming positive answers to the first three questions, what implications might this have for negotiation and dispute resolution education? What strategies could the field consider? How could this affect individual universities and programs?

To gain input from the field and not rely solely on my own experience, I spread news of the course on alternative dispute resolution (ADR), negotiation and conflict resolution web sites, groups and listservs, including ADRHub.com, the Peace and Collaborative Development Network, the American Association of Law Schools' listserv for Dispute Resolution in Legal Education, and Indisputably.org. I invited professors, students, and practitioners in the field to participate and to share their ideas.

Platform Choice

Because MOOCs are so new, best practices for design and pedagogy are non-existent. Many universities have hired service providers to help develop and host MOOCs, supplying a development model, guidance on preparing materials, production services, and a learning platform. The price charged to the university is often quite high, however.⁸ Creighton chose to host the course on the Canvas.net platform, which is offered for free but which provides less pedagogic and design guidance than for-fee providers.

For me, this arrangement had pros and cons. On the one hand, I gained pedagogic freedom: within any constraints posed by the medium, I could do anything I wanted to without being told "That's not how we do it." On the other, I did not know how best to use this freedom. Thus began a long process of figuring each step out. Choosing this platform also affected the size of the course; the larger providers market courses more actively than Canvas.net. But overall, this choice enabled me to experience "independent" MOOC development, which I think is likely to be more typical of most teachers' experiences: I suspect many would receive some support from their university or other sources, but fewer work for schools with the resources available to work with the more expensive platform operators.

Design Challenges

Having designed and taught many on-line courses, I was familiar with the usual challenges to teaching and learning in this environment:

- teachers do not meet students face-to-face;
- time zone differences challenge any synchronous interactions; and
- many students are enrolled in an online class (or, in this case a MOOC) for the first time; more experienced students may not be familiar with the course's learning platform.

These challenges, I knew, would arise in a MOOC context, but be magnified by the size of the course. I at least had some experience and resources for dealing with them. In designing NegMOOC, however, I identified several new challenges. They included:

Students have different reasons for enrolling: Students in any class might have somewhat different purposes, but students who enroll in MOOCs are likely to have a far greater range of motivations. (For example, I learned that some students hoped to become skilled negotiators on the job, while others saw the course as the path to a new career, and still others hoped it would help them with negotiations in their personal lives; see discussion of student demographics later in the article for more information.) This poses a challenge: to design a course that will provide value to people who seek widely varied results.

Students have different participation intentions: Every course includes a variety of students: active and passive, introverted and extroverted, enthused and subdued. Some come to class regularly, others will do anything to stay away. They have varied learning styles, which

they implement as they participate. In a MOOC, up-close class-management and personal monitoring is challenged by scale, so special attention was required, at the course-design phase, to determine what course structure, material, and activities would work best for students with diverse participation intentions and learning styles.

Students vary in the amount of effort they are willing to extend: In academic courses, students' extrinsic motivations (passing the course, maintaining a grade point average, etc.) give teachers some leverage. How does the teacher ensure good outcomes without this? I could not assume students would comply with *any* of the usual requirements, such as reading assigned material or even obtaining a textbook, or anticipate whether they would participate for one hour a week or for six. MOOC-designers must ask themselves: "How can this course be designed so as to provide real (if differential) value to *everyone taking it* – whether they dedicate an hour or six hours each week?

The number of students challenges assessment: Instructors employ many approaches to assessing negotiation students, many of which are labor-intensive (Ebner, Efron and Kovach 2012). Because the sheer scale of a MOOC prohibits labor-intensive options, teachers have generally adopted two assessment models: automated multiple choice quizzes graded by the system and/or a peer-assessment system. Negotiation teachers have advocated the use of both quizzes (Ebner and Efron 2012) and peer assessment (Coben 2012; Welsh 2012) to assess negotiation students, but relying on either of them as a *stand-alone* method can be problematic (Northcutt, Ho and Chuang 2015; Young, 2012). Designers of MOOCs must overcome the assessment challenge before this method can gain pedagogical and academic credibility. At the individual course level, each designer must consider which mechanism will work best, in the context of the course, to provide meaningful assessment.

There are no models or best-practices for course design: Because of MOOCs novelty, when I was designing NegMOOC I could find no literature describing systematic approaches or proposing design recommendations.⁹ Providers kept their workflows to themselves, and no research existed to show these models to be valid. I was concerned that design would be no more than a shot-in-the-dark.

The Pedagogical Model

The easiest choice would have been a fairly simple course design that would deliver basic content: a top-down course, relying only on videotaped lectures as sources of information, self-paced, with little interaction between teacher and students and even less between classmates, with little teacher intervention in real-time, and no interactive exercises requiring close monitoring such as negotiation simulations. This approach, known as “xMOOC,” is favored by the large MOOC providers.¹⁰

As any negotiation educator knows, such a design would run counter to much that is considered essential to good negotiation education.¹¹ Therefore, I chose to modify that approach and tailor it to negotiation education and my own goals, creating a model that I call an “interactive xMOOC.” This model incorporated four pedagogical elements absent in typical xMOOCs. These are:

Immediacy and social presence: Students enrolled in MOOCs typically lack a sense of teacher presence, i.e. they perceive a great distance between themselves and the course’s teacher, which is often lamented as a MOOC shortcoming (Jacobs 2013). This distance runs counter to effective online teaching (Lehman and Conceicao 2010) as well as to the style of teaching

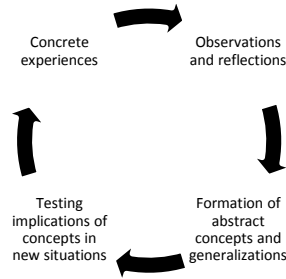
adopted by the typical negotiation teacher. To enhance immediacy and social presence, I decided to rely heavily on video rather than text, and developed videos, written materials, and course explanations that would also enhance *interactivity* (which is an element of social presence). My desire to encourage immediacy and enhance social presence at the student-to-student level also affected the course design.

Interactivity: Traditional negotiation classrooms are rich in teacher-student and student-student interactivity. The scale of MOOCs directly challenges interactivity, and in the xMOOC model teachers often do not interact with students directly at all. They convey information solely through pre-prepared video and discussion forum interactions are often an add-on feature, rather than a core learning activity. How to encourage high-volume and high-quality interactivity was one of the challenges that originally motivated me to conduct NegMOOC. To address this challenge, my design gave discussion forum participation center stage in NegMOOC's educational plan, and made participation a certification requirement (see below). I also sought to encourage student-student interactivity with student-driven forums (for social interaction, mutual help with tech issues, etc.) and by making a simulation one of the course's core components.

Experiential pedagogy: A core goal was to explore whether the most commonly used pedagogical model for teaching negotiation could be implemented at scale. In the experiential learning model, as described by David Kolb (1974), students undergo the cyclical four-stage process shown in Figure One.

Figure One: Experiential Learning Process

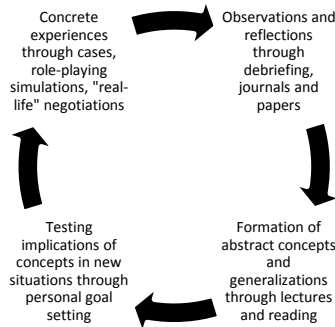
[Insert Figure One Here]



Roy Lewicki (1997) illustrated how this method is typically adapted for teaching negotiation:

Figure Two: Experiential Learning in Negotiation Courses

[Insert Figure Two Here]



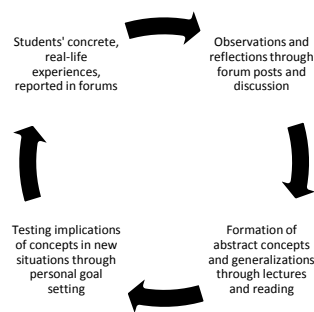
I decided that no matter how challenging its setup, conduct, and debriefing would be, the course would include a negotiation simulation. Conducting simulations online poses no insurmountable challenges (see Matz and Ebner 2010). Committing to doing so for hundreds of

participants, however, presented a new set of scale and labor -related challenges to overcome - but an invaluable exploratory opportunity for negotiation education.

Relying on a *series* of simulations to provide concrete experiences for each topic to be covered (as is the norm in negotiation courses) was impractical. To develop alternative sources for concrete experiences, I decided to draw upon from each student’s own negotiation history. Each week, students’ primary discussion forum assignment would involve relating a concrete experience of their own, reflecting on it, applying the concepts in the reading material, and identifying areas for future improvement. . Each weekend, I would prompt students to identify an upcoming negotiation in which to implement their insights – providing opportunities for goal-setting and implication-testing. NegMOOC’s experiential cycle, therefore, looked like this:

Figure Three: Experiential Learning in NegMOOC

[Insert Figure Three Here]



Variety: In addition to my own lectures, I invited a dozen negotiation practitioners and academics to prepare video lectures or record video conversations with me, introducing multiple

voices to the course. I also encouraged the course's six teaching associates to share their own views about negotiating in the real world. (See section on support and staffing below for more information about the teaching associates).

Structure and Content

The four pedagogical elements noted above guided the course's ultimate structure and content. Because of student's varied intentions with regard to time investment, I chose to include modular elements so that students would benefit from any individual bite they took, even if they did not clear their plate.

The result was a four-week design, with each week constituting a discrete unit, which then included four discrete sections. Participants were free to engage with any or all of these units, and with any or all of a unit's individual sections, according to their own preferences, and gain a standalone learning experience from each, focusing on self-reflection, content learning, or both. Each unit's "Main Unit Content" section introduced a central negotiation topic. Students wishing to explore that topic in greater depth were encouraged to engage in an "Initial Reflection" section, exploring their own initial and intuitive approaches to the central topic, and identifying pertinent episodes from their own lives to provide context and a backdrop for the week's main material. Students wishing to study still more about the week's topic could pursue the "For Further Exploration" section, which includes short articles, video lectures, and videos of negotiation role plays for viewing. Finally, students seeking knowledge of other areas of negotiation not covered in the "Main Unit Content" could study each unit's "Digging Deeper" section, in which a separate, but somewhat related, topic was introduced.¹²

The core content of the course reflected the six central themes that Chris Honeyman and Andrea Kupfer Schneider (2004: 643-644) identified as common to all negotiation courses:

- personal style, strategy, or personality (i.e. competitive or adversarial versus interest-based or principled or problem-solving orientation);
- communication skills – both listening and talking;
- integrative v. distributive negotiations;
- bargaining zone, best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), and reservation price;
- brainstorming and option creation; and
- preparation.

Additional topics, covered in the “Digging Deeper” sections, included negotiation ethics, negotiating online, and mediation. The chart below depicts the course’s content structure.

Table One: NegMOOC Content Structure

Unit	Initial Reflection	Main Unit content	For Further Exploration	Digging Deeper
1	Individual Style / Orientation	Moving from personal style to strategic choice	Avoiding negotiation; Raising difficult issues	N/A
2	Facts about Bargaining; Bargaining and me: QandA	Distributive negotiation: Bargaining	Bargaining process - video and commentary	Ethics in Negotiation
3	The Negotiator’s Dilemma;	Integrative and Interest-based Negotiation	Interest-based negotiation process -	Mediation

	Cooperating and me: QandA		video and commentary	
4	Me, at the table: Q andA	The Negotiator's Toolbox: Preparation, Creativity, Communication and Persuasion	Video exercise: Naming communication tools	e-Negotiation

The course was asynchronous – no events or interactions took place in real-time. Students could log onto the course at any time, study and engage, which enabled them to participate fully regardless of time zones, work hours, and family commitments. The course was not intended, however, to be self-paced. The one-unit-per-week schedule, with open and close dates set for each module, ensured that students progressed through the course as a class, focusing together on a different topic each week.

Course Material and Activities

The teaching material included different types of video: studio-recorded lectures, classroom-filmed lectures, voice-over presentations, video recordings of role play negotiations, guest presentations and interviews, and animated negotiation scenarios I created together with the instructional design expert Creighton dedicated to the course (see below). Each weekly unit featured a variety of these types of video (although not every type was included in every week). Altogether, I created nearly one-hundred videos – more than seventeen hours’ worth –for the course.¹³ I also assigned students 140 pages of reading material, most of which I created especially for the course.¹⁴

Course activities broke down into four types: independent learning, interactive asynchronous group-based learning, a negotiation simulation, and quizzes.

Independent learning: Conducted by each student independently, these activities included reading short articles, viewing videos (lectures, interviews, discussions, and vignettes of negotiation simulations) and responding to self-reflective questionnaires.

Interactive asynchronous group-based learning: Each week we offered students three different discussion forums to interact in: the first focused on the initial reflection, the second on the week's main topic, and the third on the 'Digging Deeper' topic. Each forum included an initial trigger-question or prompt, framing the topic of discussion and giving guidance for responding to it well. As discussed below, the teaching associates and I were constantly present and engaged in these discussions

Negotiation simulation: Throughout the third week of the course, students could opt-in to a negotiation simulation, be assigned a counterpart from among their classmates, and jointly receive access to a course area providing them with videoconferencing, text messaging or discussion forum options for conducting the simulation in Week Four.¹⁵ The simulation used was *Live8.org* (Ebner 2009), in which a U.S.-based organization negotiates with a Turkish company over usage of an Internet domain name.¹⁶ After completing the simulation, participants posted reflective posts in a dedicated debriefing forum.

Quizzes: Each unit included a multiple-choice quiz, with an additional quiz at the end of the course. These quizzes served both as assessment devices and learning tools. The system corrected the quizzes, and recorded the fact that a particular student had *taken* the quiz (a requirement for receiving a certificate of completion), but did not record those grades. Where

students answered incorrectly, it linked them to specific course content featuring the correct answers. For the final quiz, a grade was recorded.

Certification

This course, like most MOOCs, was offered without institutional credit toward a degree.

Students who completed a set of requirements within the course, however, were eligible for a certificate of completion. To qualify, they needed to participate in each week's main discussion forum (participation in the other forums was optional and not required for certification), take all weekly quizzes, pass the final quiz with a 10/15 grade, and conduct and debrief the negotiation simulation. These requirements required about three to four hours of effort per week; the final week required additional time for conducting the simulation.

Support and Staff

Developing and implementing NegMOOC was a significant undertaking, and I was fortunate to have assistance throughout the process. Two experts from Creighton's Center for Academic Innovation (CAI), a videographer and an instructional designer, worked with me intensively to shoot and edit the videos and to construct the course's layout on the Canvas platform. The instructional designer also led aspects of technical support throughout the course.

Because more than two thousand students enrolled, I recruited six teaching associates for the purposes of giving students as much personal attention, and personalized substantive feedback, as possible. All were graduates of the Werner Institute's master's degree program in negotiation and conflict resolution. Their significant negotiation and conflict education and

experience, as well as their experience with online learning and familiarity with the Canvas platform, made them excellent candidates for assisting me in teaching the course.¹⁷

Students

One intriguing element of MOOCs is the elusive nature of their student bodies. To enroll in a MOOC, all one needs is an e-mail address. Students may use their real identity or a pseudonym and provide no other identifying features. Even the most outgoing MOOC teacher knows a lot about some students, a little about others, and nothing at all about most – NegMOOC was no different.

But I did have access to some information about students from their self-introductions in the Student Lounge, their responses to the entry survey, a Google Map that they pinned themselves on, and YouTube analytics (providing some information on viewers of the course’s video). What I know about NegMOOC’s participants is reported in Table Two below.¹⁸

Table Two: Student Demographics

Participants	2,156 (at peak enrollment)
Gender	Female: 64% Male: 36%
Countries of origin	85 total. North America: 78% Europe: 9% Rest of world: 13%
Education	College degree: 95% Advanced degree: 58%
Age	<= 24: 7% 25 to 54: 73%

	>= 55:	20%
Primary Language	English:	83%

Finally, as I alluded earlier in the article. Asking students “How will this course help you meet your personal or professional goals?” on NegMOOC’s entry survey uncovered the diversity of their motivations. Some answered “I’m not sure,” but others reported a desire to become skilled negotiators on the job, to prepare for specific upcoming negotiations, or to improve their negotiation ability in personal settings. Some students viewed NegMOOC as a step on a specific career path – as a lawyer, a hostage negotiator, or a manager. Others wanted to test the waters of negotiation study before undertaking a degree program. Mediators sought to improve their negotiation skills while teachers sought to explore online learning or to experience a MOOC.

Course Conduct

After months of preparation, NegMOOC went live. I posted a welcoming announcement and the first student introduced herself in the Student Lounge forum within the first hour. Within two hours, twenty students had introduced themselves and others had added themselves to the Google Map. Students began responding to other’s introductions, and the course became interactive.

Within five hours in, more than two hundred students had viewed the course welcome video. By the end of the first day, more than five hundred students had viewed the course welcome video, more than two hundred had viewed the first unit’s substantive videos, and students had posted in all eighteen substantive discussion forums.

Most students mastered the learning platform quickly, while others were guided by the teaching team or by other students.

As I've noted, encouraging active student participation in discussion forums was a pedagogical goal in the course. In order to achieve this, we broke the student body down into a number of smaller groups each week, for their discussion forum interactions. In smaller groups, students would be less likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer mass of posts that can flood one heavily populated forum. Students can more easily track, and participate in, ongoing conversations. Additionally, they can get a better sense for other individuals who are studying with them. On the teaching side, working with smaller groups has pedagogical and administrative benefits as well. Working in small groups, teachers are more able to identify and raise themes for discussion, to relate personally to students, to be aware of group dynamics, and to respond to these intentionally. By assigning specific teaching associates to monitor each group, I was able to ensure more deliberate student monitoring and engagement. Of course, 'small' is a relative issue. We made the decision to break the class down into nine sub-groups with about 250 participants in each, for the first week.¹⁹ We assigned each group one forum "room" for their Initial Reflection and another for discussing the Main Unit Content, focusing on personal negotiation orientation. In addition to the teaching associate facilitating the discussions in each forum; I participated in all groups' discussion forums.²⁰

The next week, we shuffled the students and redivided into six discussion groups, with a teaching associate assigned to each. This remixing ensured that students would interact with a variety of classmates and teaching associates, while still seeing some familiar names in their group. At the end of the week, I opened a new forum, open to all students to engage in a cross-cultural discussion about that week's topic, bargaining and its dynamics. We contrasted bargaining culture in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and other African locales with a variety of bargaining cultures, in the United States and Europe. Participants described bargaining situations

ranging from haggling over the animals to be included in a bridal dowry, to yard sales, and described parties ranging from union negotiators to tourist-trap street vendors. They compared stories of crossing from a bargaining culture into a non-bargaining culture – and reflected on their coping in such foreign environments.

The third week focused on interest-based and integrative negotiation, which elicited the same kind of discoveries and lively conversations it regularly does in traditional classrooms. Although the number of students engaged in the course had diminished by this point, student enthusiasm and engagement, seemed to be on the rise. Behind the scenes, we paired up those students who chose to participate in the negotiation simulation, assigned them role material, and re-matched students unable to contact their counterparts.

In the fourth week, we again reshuffled students into new discussion groups. In addition to learning the week's regular lesson, students conducted their negotiation simulation, posted self-debrief posts in a dedicated discussion forum, and interacted with each other's debriefs. Towards the end of the week, many students shared their end-of course reflections in a forum I created called "Wrapping up, Final Thoughts and Goodbyes."

Course Outcomes

The outcomes for NegMOOC can be assessed in several different ways. In this section, I will discuss a variety of these.

Out of the 2,156 students who enrolled in the course, 125 students (5.8 percent of course registrants) received certifications of completion. As I noted earlier, course certification rates offer one limited measure that does not indicate the amount of learning that actually occurred. To

gain a clearer picture of learning outcomes, I have also examined course completion, learning activity measurements, and the course's exit survey.

Course completion: I estimate that 250 to 350 students (11.5 to 16 percent) of the students completed the course. In this estimate I include the number of students deemed eligible for certification, as well as those other students who saw the course through to the end based on student views of pages and videos for Unit Four.. Some of these students may not have completed the certification requirements (they may have participated actively in all the learning and interactional aspects of the course without taking the required quizzes, for example) or, they may have fulfilled those requirements, but chosen not to request certification. This number is an estimate because I lack clear guidelines for this category – monitoring each student's participation in every area in the course would have required a prohibitive amount of legwork – and would only have provided a still-imprecise number.

Learning activity data: Another way to assess the course's learning outcomes would be to look at the overall degree of interaction with the learning material. Two pertinent data points are the overall number of posts the class posted in the discussion forums, and the number of minutes the class spent viewing the course's videos. We can tally the former using the learning management system and calculate the latter using YouTube's analytics software.²¹

The table below, breaks forum posts down in several ways. First, it charts the weekly number of posts in the substantive weekly forums, showing that the numbers diminished as students stopped participating or changed their participation habits. It then adds on the posts in other substantive forums, most of which were created as the course went along to address specific issues (e.g., culture) or specific assignments (e.g., the simulation debriefing forum). In addition, it shows posting activity in non-substantive forums, such as the Student Lounge or the

technical assistance forum. The forum discussion data illustrates lively interactive learning activity.

Table Three: Forum Posting Activity

	Unit	Posts
Number of posts in weekly discussion forums, by unit:	1	1170
	2	1008
	3	736
	4	658
	Total (weekly forums)	3572
Number of posts in other substantive forums		435
Total posts in substantive forums		4007
Number of posts in non-substantive forums, overall		775
Number of posts in the course, overall		4,782

The course video statistics, illustrating learning activity in which students *independently* engaged with class material, are similarly impressive. YouTube analytics indicate that the course’s videos were viewed 17,332 times. Most of the course videos were five to twenty minutes long, with a few outliers in either direction. On average, viewers watched 75 to 85 percent of the clip. This compares favorably with typical patterns of engagement with videos demonstrated by MOOC students in general (Guo, Kim & Rubin, 2014), suggesting a high level of focus, motivation and persistence amongst NegMOOC’s students. Participants collectively viewed more than 2,000 hours of video for the course.

Exit Survey and Other Feedback: We gained insight from the responses to the course's exit survey, which 157 participants completed. Survey respondents reported they were highly satisfied with the course, with 92 percent giving it a 4 or a 5 (on a 5-point rating scale), and the remainder giving it a 3. Eighty-nine percent of them agreed (or strongly agreed) that the course's learning material was beneficial to their learning, and 86 percent agreed (or strongly agreed) that the course's learning activities benefited their learning. Nearly all survey respondents replied to open-ended questions as well, in which they identified a variety of material and activities they particularly liked, which suggests that providing a wide variety of material-types and activities suited students' wide range of learning styles.

Respondents also reported they were inclined to recommend a Canvas.NET course to a friend (on a 10-point scale, 91 percent scored this in the positive zone, with 50 percent giving it a 10-point rating), or to take another MOOC from Creighton University (on a 5-point scale, 87 percent scored this in the positive zone, with 56 percent giving it a 5-point rating).

Students also responded to an open ended question asking: "In what ways has this course helped you meet your personal or professional goals?" Several students reported that the course empowered them and built their confidence as negotiators.²² Others reported they believed they would be better able to plan their negotiation strategies. Students also reported that they gained appreciation for the emotional elements of negotiation, developed greater insight into their own personal orientations, and improved their interpersonal communication skills. What surprised me most about the NegMOOC feedback was how similar it was, in content and in style, to feedback I had received for other generally successful negotiation courses.

Students also offered significant valuable feedback directly, during, and after NegMOOC. One example of on-the-spot feedback was provided by a couple of students who

shared, during the first week of the course, that they were having trouble posting in the discussion forums. The course's instructional designer immediately created video screencasts showing exactly what to do, and we sent these out to all of the course's students in order to preempt any further confusion. After the course, one student wrote me an email including an in-depth comparison of his engagement levels with the different types of video material included in the course, summarizing that videos of conversations between negotiation teachers were far more compelling than traditional-lecture style videos and explaining why he felt this was so. This letter helped me to qualify comments other students had made in the exit survey, and will guide me in preparing further material for future courses. Creighton University also engaged in a review of the MOOC- experience, by means of a committee surveying the inception and development process, the budget, and all of the course data; the committee reported that the course provided a positive experience for its participants and enhanced the university's outreach and visibility. Canvas.NET also reported its own satisfaction with the course and has invited a second iteration. Finally, I gained many instructive insights from peers (negotiation professors, mediation and negotiation professionals, and alumni of Creighton's graduate program on negotiation and dispute resolution) who took the course or viewed parts of it.

Improving the Course

Based on the feedback, I have developed a lengthy list of possible future improvements for the course.

Content: Colleagues have suggested adding such additional topics as game theory and the underlying mathematics of bargaining, as well as the effects of context on negotiation. Without

extending the course, I will do this by adding materials to the “For further exploration” section of the course, or by adding on an “Advanced Topics” section to each unit.

Duration and balance: The last unit of the course included a longer-than-average set of videos to view as well as the simulation. Several students, finding this challenging, suggested extending the course by one more week. I agree with this, and in a future iteration, I will spread the fourth unit’s material over these two weeks and allow two weeks to conduct the simulation.²³

Student-Student interaction: I will seek to increase student-to-student interaction, by (a) adding a live chat feature to the course that would allow students to converse with any classmate online at the same time, in real time; (b) promoting student-to-student interaction more heavily in the course’s explanatory material; and (c) adding as an additional requirement for certification that the student must respond to at least one other student’s post in each unit’s main forum.

Synchronous communication: In addition to the chat feature noted above, I will conduct one live webcast using videoconferencing software, in which I will engage with whichever students choose to participate.

Implications of NegMOOC for Negotiation Education

I did not conduct NegMOOC because of a general interest in online teaching, but rather because of my curiosity about conducting such teaching at scale, with the kind of student body that MOOCs attract: random, self-selecting, unfettered, and multi-motivated. Can professors harness this educational vehicle for conflict and negotiation studies? As I noted above, four questions were with me, right from the outset:

1. Can we provide the same *quality* of negotiation education in a MOOC format that the field provides in its traditional and on-line (small-scale) classes?
2. Can the signature pedagogy of the negotiation field, the *experiential learning model*, be implemented in a MOOC?
3. Can we provide students in a MOOC the same *experience* that has made negotiation courses successful and popular with traditional students – complete with high volumes of meaningful interpersonal interaction?
4. Assuming that the answers to the first three questions are generally positive, what implications might this have for negotiation and dispute resolution education? What *strategies* should the field consider? How do individual universities' or programs' goals fit into this?

Quality

With regards to quality, caution is called for. Although several indicators suggest that students experienced a subjectively valuable learning experience, this fact alone does not enable a direct comparison to the experience those same students might have had in a traditional course. But the question itself may not be the best way to think about the value of MOOCs, because, with a focus on comparison, it generates binary thinking and also suggests that one method could supplant the other, which was not my intent.

Students expressed satisfaction with the content and with their learning but quality cannot always be measured by satisfaction. To the extent that this is, nonetheless, at least an *oblique* indicator of course quality, NegMOOC's exit survey did demonstrate, as noted above,

high student satisfaction with the course, across a number of quantitative and qualitative measures.

I also take a cautious approach to deriving conclusions from the course's completion rate, which, at somewhere between 5.8 percent (those receiving certificates) and 16 percent (an estimate of those who actually completed the course), was in line with most other MOOCs. Completion may have some relationship to satisfaction, but what it tells us about quality is unclear. Conversely, although educational quality may indeed affect motivation to continue with a course, there are a great many other factors affecting a student's decision to complete or abandon a course he or she has signed up for.

A more pedagogically question relevant to quality is: did students actually achieve the course's learning objectives? Those objectives, as laid out in the course syllabus, were that by the by the end of the course, participants would:

- recognize the wide variety of situations in their professional and personal lives that can be improved through enhanced negotiation skills;
- reflect upon their personal orientation to negotiation, identifying how it serves them well and when there might be value in intentionally changing ingrained habits;
- distinguish between different strategies in negotiation, and apply this by choosing strategies suitable to specific situations;
- study two models of negotiation: A cooperative model, and a more competitive model; and
- familiarize themselves with an array of preparation, communication, and persuasion tools for use in negotiation interactions.

These objectives were directly supported by the experiential learning model, as adapted for NegMOOC. (The course did not stretch to include behavior modification and skills improvement, which a traditional course often includes.)

The course was designed to ensure that students who completed it would achieve those objectives; it is retrospectively difficult to determine whether they did or not. Their work product in the course – including their comments in the discussion forums, their comments on open-ended survey questions, and other communications – indicate that the course activities did help them achieve these ends.

Another possible measure is success on an exam or a successful final grade. The final quiz in NegMOOC covered all the required material in the course, focusing on both concept understanding and application. The exam was taken by 184 students who achieved an average grade of 87 percent, a strong indicator that students following the course plan throughout the course succeeded in achieving the stated learning objectives.

Can a MOOC provide the same quality of education that our regular, for-credit negotiation courses do? Interestingly, the standards for assessing the quality of *traditional* negotiation courses have been somewhat vague both in terms of outcomes within the course (Ebner, Efron, and Kovach 2012); and with regard to the student's performance in subsequent negotiations. To the extent that we judge the quality of our courses to be high if they have a good plan in place, guide students through the steps of that plan, evoke tangible student learning, and receive positive student feedback, NegMOOC was, simply, *no different than any other negotiation course*. As noted above, however, there is no comprehensive measurement for comparison between this MOOC and a comparable academic course, so going any further than

this, and declaring, based on the NegMOOC experiment, that MOOCs can deliver anything a classroom setting can, would be premature.

Comparing a MOOC to a for-credit course designed to, for example, turn high-level executive or graduate students into better professional negotiators, may be setting too high a bar in the first place. Use of MOOCs for academic credit or advanced professional training may not even be the goal. If we lower the bar, asking instead “Did the course give students a general introduction to the negotiation field?” or “Did the course spread the word about negotiation and conflict resolution topics and studies?” our basis for judging quality shifts, and comparisons between a negotiation MOOC and the conventional negotiation classroom become less meaningful.

Experiential Learning

Applying the experiential learning model to a MOOC required going beyond the traditional approach, which might be summarized as “learn, simulate, debrief, repeat.” We did this in NegMOOC by incorporating two major experiential elements: students’ past experiences and a negotiation simulation.

Students’ experiences provided substantial fodder for the discussion forums. For example, in the first week, a student described a salary negotiation she had conducted, connecting her goals to her choice of a competitive strategy. Another student weighed in, raising the issue of assertive pushback against lowballing. A third student offered a gender perspective, suggesting that gender would affect perceptions of pushback. I weighed in, connecting these three aspects of the negotiation and related this negotiation to one that was currently in the news. The story was brought up again the following week in at least two different forum groups by

students who had participated in, or observed, this conversation. This happened often – sometimes with many more students weighing in, as well as several of the teaching staff. The original poster’s actual experience became a vicarious or observational experience for others, and responders – teachers and students alike – helped the original poster, themselves, and other forum participants work their way through the learning cycle.

I believe this approach absolutely served its purpose. The stories’ role in the experiential learning cycle was obvious. The teaching associates and I helped students connect and contrast their experiences with the course material and identify upcoming situations in which to practice specific approaches; students often assisted each other in this process. I did not ask a direct exit survey question about this element of the course, so have no quantitative data regarding its effectiveness, although in their answers to general open-ended questions, students certainly noted that this approach helped them learn.

Conducting a negotiation simulation in NegMOOC had clear benefits. As we expected, organizing and implementing the simulation was challenging and ultimately chaotic (no-shows, last-minute opt-ins, monitoring, reorganizing, etc.) Nonetheless, only 18 percent of students reported that they found the pairing-up and making contact phases difficult to manage. More importantly, 81 percent of respondents reported that they felt the simulation presented them with a worthwhile learning experience, with only 6 percent disagreeing with that statement.

Pedagogically effective negotiation simulations require good debriefing processes, and all the students who participated in the simulation also participated in a dedicated discussion forum. After describing the details of their simulation experience (medium used, outcome, etc.) in a “self-debrief” post, they discussed some of the negotiation’s dynamics, relating them directly to

at least two of the topics discussed in the course. Finally, they identified and shared one take-away lesson from the experience.

While some posted their debrief post and left (or, remained to lurk silently), many students engaged with each other to discuss their experiences or develop themes. The entire teaching staff also participated in this forum. On the exit survey, 78 percent of respondents agreed that the simulation debriefing forum provided them with a learning environment conducive to gaining insight from the simulation experience.

Interactive Experience

Can a MOOC offer students an experience that mirrors a traditional negotiation course, in terms of the high levels of interactivity that have always characterized our classrooms? I believe it can – the question of how to do this *optimally* requires more study. For purposes of this discussion, I differentiate here between student-student interaction and teacher-student interaction.

The exit survey data shows that many, but not all, students did engage with each other, with just over half (53 percent) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they “had sufficient meaningful interactions with other students in the discussion forums,” while 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Roughly half (47 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they “enjoyed engaging with other students in the discussion forums,” and, again, 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, roughly one-third (36 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that “I’m left with the sense of knowing at least one other student in the course,” a statement that 25 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with.

Responding to an open question on the topic, many students wrote that they saw these interactions as a huge benefit of the course. A few wrote that they had formed real friendships, but others or expressed that they would have wanted more meaningful student interactions. In retrospect, I wish I had set student-student interaction as a higher priority, but I am pleased that these results suggest such interaction is indeed possible within the MOOC environment.

On the other hand, testing the limits of teacher-student interaction – one clear area where good negotiation teaching and MOOCs seem to be at odds – was one of my main priorities in the course from the beginning. I intentionally enhanced teacher-student interaction by:

- expanding the teaching team to include myself and six teaching associates;
- introducing myself informally in the Student Lounge and responding individually to each of several hundred students who introduced themselves there;
- creating multiple discussion groups of a manageable size, and assigning teaching associates to maintain teacher presence in each;
- participating in each discussion forum myself, nearly every day, in almost every group;
- making course announcements regularly; and
- inviting and initiating interaction with students in other ways (email, social media, etc.)

The exit survey data show great success in this area. Nearly every respondent – a whopping 96 percent – agreed (35 percent) or strongly agreed (61 percent) with the sentence “I had the sense the teacher and the teaching assistants were present and engaged with the course,” and 91 percent agreed (35 percent) or strongly agreed (56 percent) with the sentence “The teacher promoted engagement and interaction in the forums.” In addition, more than half the

respondents agreed (41 percent) or strongly agreed (18 percent) with the sentence “I had sufficient meaningful interactions with a member/members of the teaching staff.”(Only 7 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentence).²⁴

Students’ responses to a direct open-ended question on this issue reinforces this data. Many expressed how happy they were with the level of interaction; and while some expressed a desire for *more* interaction, only one shared a sense of a *lack* of interaction. On the other extreme, one student wrote that the course experience involved such familiarity and interactivity that it was more reminiscent of the small, intimate, seminar classes she had taken in college than of a mass-participation class.

Obviously, the size of a MOOC puts strains and limits on teacher-student interactivity. More than two thousand students registered for NegMOOC but some MOOCs are even larger. Although I encourage designers of negotiation MOOCs to not abandon a design that places an emphasis on interactivity, I can offer no assurance that such an approach would be feasible with twenty thousand students in a class. But I believe that NegMOOC demonstrates that an interaction emphasis in both design and strategy, which includes teacher attention and staffing, can achieve a high level of educational interactivity at a surprisingly large scale. Expanding the teaching staff by partnering with other professors, engaging more teaching associates, or creating other internal roles are all ideas teachers could experiment with in future MOOCs.

Broader Implications for Negotiation Education

What are the broader implications of NegMOOC for negotiation and conflict resolution education more generally? This is, to me, the most important questions but also the hardest to answer.

Universities might support conflict resolution and negotiation MOOCs for the same reason they do any other MOOC: to draw attention, to engage alumni, and to increase enrollment. But a MOOC on negotiation offers particular opportunities – universities could also use them to enhance their own, internal, conflict capacity, or to capitalize on the positive publicity and recognition that offering a MOOC on a negotiation, conflict resolution or peacemaking topic in particular might have beyond that associated with other topics. And dispute resolution graduate programs could utilize MOOCs to introduce their program and its unique foci, perhaps designing them as feeder courses leading into their programs.

But MOOCs, I believe, could have an even more significant impact on the way negotiation is taught in traditional classes. Materials from MOOCs could, for example, be used for educational purposes in other frameworks. Teachers can assign students to watch a particular MOOC video – in essence, providing their course with a guest lecturer. Teachers can “flip” their classrooms, assigning students a MOOC unit to study at home and using class time to conduct simulations that incorporate concepts from that unit. Teachers could go so far as to incorporate an entire MOOC within the framework of a course that is “wrapped around” the MOOC. An entire MOOC’s pre-prepared content can be translated into other languages through subtitling videos and translating text – and then conducted by a teacher fluent in that language. The return for the effort that goes into preparing a MOOC can therefore be measured not only in terms of the students who enroll in that particular MOOC, but also by its contribution to the educational infrastructure of the field.

Finally, I suggest that MOOCs could help address one of the field's most fundamental and enduring challenges. I began this article by repeating the question that Chris Honeyman posed several years ago: "How can we teach everybody about this?" At the heart of that question lies the idea that negotiation and conflict resolution aren't just for executives, MBA students, or lawyers, that these skills should belong to everyone and that the world would be a better place if they did. This mission motivates many teachers in the field.

I suggest that MOOCs focusing on negotiation and conflict resolution offer a tool for advancing the mission of disseminating negotiation knowledge and skills to the broader public. Because they can reach so many more people with far fewer barriers to participation, MOOCs have unprecedented potential to create a significant educational shift that could help us reach the vast majority of the population who will never study in our traditional classrooms. This vehicle holds tremendous promise for helping us to rise to the challenge of disseminating knowledge about effective negotiation and peace making across the population in ways we have never been able to do before.

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¹ The first MOOC, a quiet affair sparking no media storms, was actually launched in 2008, when Stephen Downes and George Siemens offered an online open course on learning theory at the University of Manitoba, with about 2,300 students enrolled (see cck11.mooc.ca/).

² These were Coursera, Udacity and EdX. Additional providers have launched since then, but Coursera and EdX remain the leading MOOC providers, with Canvas.Net (which I used for my course) currently placing third.

³ Advocates argue that MOOCs can save money by, for example, reducing redundancies. They argue that many professors teach the same topic, in large lecture-style classrooms with no significant interaction with students. The same experience could be gained, some suggest, by students watching a video of a well-regarded professor – eliminating the need for each institution to hire a professor for this course on its own. This notion often appeals to administrators and politicians but enrages educators, who argue that their work is not redundant (see, e.g., Kolowich 2013).

⁴ I learned that censorship may have affected the participation of students from China, which was lower than I expected, when a Chinese student shared that he was unable to follow NegMOOC, given that the Chinese government bans much of the content on YouTube, where I had posted the class videos.

⁵ Recent data suggests completion rates may be rising toward 15 percent, see Jordan (2015).

⁶ Research indicates, though, that as employers become aware of MOOCs they are positive about utilizing them in their recruitment, hiring and professional development practices. See Radford et al (2014).

⁷ In this way, the university hoped to maintain connection with alumni, as well as reduce some of the risks inherent in hanging up a shingle on the internet and waiting to see who shows up. Intentions aside, I'll note that given the MOOC's limited gathering of demographical data, there is no way to know how many of NegMOOC's participants or completers were actually Creighton alumni. There were certainly many of these in the group, based on introductions in the Student Lounge, comments in the discussion forums, and responses to open-ended survey questions. However, the proportion of alumni to external is unknown.

⁸ Without getting into individual companies' pricing schemes, producing a MOOC in partnership with any of them is a six-figure prospect. See, e.g., www.lindenwood.edu/r2p/docs/ChenBarnettStephens.pdf and www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/2014_Almanac_Saltzman.pdf.

⁹ Although research on MOOCs, including design guidance, has begun to emerge more recently, little was available at this early stage. By the time Creighton's call for proposals in November 2013, only 652 MOOCs had been started or scheduled. About five times this number have been taught *since* then: 3,800 MOOCs have been taught through February 2016 (Wexler 2015).

¹⁰ As a typology of MOOC design approaches has developed, courses following this design approach have been dubbed 'xMOOCs' – as their underlying pedagogical philosophy involves *extending* the traditional lecture-hall classroom by replicating it online. The most commonly discussed categorization is the one differentiating between cMOOCs and xMOOCs. cMOOCs are an organized learning network, in which a facilitating expert plays a role, but the main educational legwork is done by the learning community as a whole. With C standing for "Connectivist," the underlying philosophy of this pedagogic approach is that in a learning network, knowledge does not reside at any particular hub in the network, but rather is maintained and flows throughout the network of learners, the caretakers of distributed knowledge (see Kop and Hill, 2008). The expert facilitator convenes the group, and provides shared access to learning resources. The MOOC's success, however, depends on active engagement by its participants. These bring in their own knowledge, experience, and self-organize their participation (with the facilitator's encouragement, and often without it) according to their individual learning goals and interests. Students bring material into the course on their own, and express their opinions on material

introduced by other students and by the facilitator. They can choose to engage (and are encouraged to do so) on the platform on which the course is conducted, or through other platforms, or to combine these options. Students, facilitators, and technology itself therefore all have impact on how the course plays out. (see Skrypnyk, Joksimović, Kovanović, Gašević and Dawsonl 2015). The nature, content and flow of the course is therefore, to a large extent, self-defined and emergent – rather than something to be dictated ahead of time (something the typical higher education course syllabus does very neatly) or even anticipated. (See McAuley, Stewart, Siemens and Cormier 2010; Rodriguez 2012).

As George Siemens, a leading figure in the connectivist approach to education and MOOCs framed one key of the differences between these two pedagogical approaches: “cMOOCs focus on knowledge creation and generation, whereas xMOOCs focus on knowledge duplication.” (Siemens, 2012). Another important distinction is the question of power and control. While of course a spectrum of possibilities exist, there are still clear differences: in xMOOCs, the instructor retains a great amount of control over course direction, content, pace, and activities; in cMOOCs, the instructor relinquishes control over these to a great extent (Edugeek 2014; Skrypnyk et al, 2015). A third difference is the degree of interactivity. While in xMOOCs teacher-student and student-student interactivity is generally allowed (and learning platforms generally provide forums for student discussion, and an email address or a special forum for student help requests), it is not seen as a key learning feature of the course; these are all concentrated in the learners interaction with the material. In cMOOCs, interaction is seen as essential for knowledge creation and for mutual teaching and learning (Skrypnyk et al, 2015). (For more on different design principles between cMOOCs and xMOOCs, as well as their influence on course conduct, see Rodriguez 2012, Mackness, 2013; Bates, 2014).

¹¹ See, e.g., the work of the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching, available at www.hamline.edu/law/dri/rethinking-negotiation-teaching

¹² It is hard to estimate how many participants participated in the Digging Deeper units. Many did, but clearly, far fewer than the number of students who studied the Main Unit Material each week. For example, the number of posts in the Week 2 Digging Deeper discussion forum, focusing on negotiation ethics, was only 20 percent of the number of posts in the Main Discussion Forum for that week, focusing on bargaining (in which students were motivated to participate to receive certification). The video most viewed in Week 2’s Main Unit was viewed more than 700 times, but the video most viewed in the Digging Deeper material was viewed only 450 times.

¹³ This video material is freely available for educational use, on the author’s YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgk5FU8Xr2JADtt8ZRNYKmg>.

¹⁴ This series of short articles, presenting key negotiation topics in a nutshell, is available at papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf_dev/AbsByAuth.cfm?per_id=425153.

¹⁵ Alternatively, participants could decide to negotiate through any other media they chose; indeed, some pairs chose to negotiate by phone, Email, Skype, Google Hangouts, Facebook Messenger, and face-to-face interaction.

¹⁶ The simulation is freely available for review and for educational use at papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2385486.

¹⁷ In this section, I’ve noted only those people who took an ongoing role in the process: Instructional designer Kathy Craig, videographer Derek Horton, and teaching associates Geoff Woolf, Jen Vettrus, Joanna DiStefano, Glenn Snow, Russ Dittmer, and Steve Lioi, were all, essentially, my partners in designing and/or teaching the course. However, many others were involved in creating, promoting and

supporting NegMOOC, and through thanking them here, I hope to give readers an appreciation for the wide range of support they would do well to obtain for themselves should they consider teaching a MOOC: Prof. Patrick Borchers, former director of the Werner Institute for Negotiation and Dispute Resolution at Creighton University School of Law, suggested I propose and teach the MOOC. My colleagues at the Werner Institute provided any support I asked for, and more. The President's Council, and the Office of Alumni Relations at Creighton University, provided the initiative and the institutional support for this course, and the Center for Academic Innovation's director and entire team were at the forefront of this effort. My research assistant, Rebecca Healea, and Yael Efron tirelessly reviewed the course material. A dozen guest speakers donated their time and wisdom to the course, and other colleagues allowed me to use their own material – articles and videorecorded role-plays – in the course. Instructure, the company behind the Canvas learning management system, allowed us to offer NegMOOC on the Canvas.net MOOC platform, and provided guidance and assistance. To all, my deepest appreciation.

¹⁸ Although the Creighton Alumni Office helped me promote the course, all the data collected in the course relates to the entire student body; we did not gather statistics on alumni specifically.

¹⁹ We formed a different number of groups every week based on our best guess of how many students were actively participating that week – this was not something we could ever know for sure because there was no dashboard function that told me that, for example, that “838 students remain engaged with the course.” Initially, I assigned four teaching associates to monitor and engage substantively in two groups each. A fifth, who had a knack for troubleshooting Canvas, was assigned a ninth group, and also asked to provide general technical and navigational help for the entire course. The sixth teaching associate was assigned to engage, like myself, in all of the discussion forums; thus three teachers engaged substantively with the students in each forum. Overall, this system worked out well and while some of the forums were crowded with active participants, we managed to keep the forums lively but manageable. In the following weeks I collapsed the course into fewer and fewer groups, anticipating that each week additional students would disengage from the course.

²⁰ This involved several hours' work every day, reading through posts in each discussion forum and responding to some of them. I did this strategically, usually responding to at least one student post every day in every forum, in order to make my engagement with the course visible to students, before moving on to the next forum. I also made prioritized responding to any students who had posed me a direct question in the forum. Having demonstrated presence in all forums, I would participate further in some of them, as time allowed. As each week progressed and more students posted in each forum, this further participation would often take the form of pointing out themes developing in the forum or throughout the entire course, sharing input on them and posing follow-on questions. I'll note, that for all the benefits of teacher- presence and activity, it is important not to overwhelm a discussion forum with too many teacher-posts. In considering this, I needed to take into account the work that the teaching associate in

charge of the forum was doing as well. The degree of my visible participation, therefore, needed to be considered each day, for each forum, throughout the course.

²¹ Of course, both of these data points are only indicative of learning activity – not of the depth of learning that actually occurred. They do not measure the quality of the posts students wrote, nor the level of understanding achieved while watching the videos.

²² Of course, confidence alone can be as harmful as it can be helpful; I can only hope this new-found confidence is based on a sufficiently solid foundation of new skills and understanding gained throughout the course.

²³ I would also dedicate thought to improving the simulation by using automation to pair up the students, and through other technical and administrative changes to that process. Finding ways to further enhance personalized feedback is also worthwhile.

²⁴ In addition, 60 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “I’m left with a sense of knowing the teacher and/or another member of the teaching staff” (only 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed); and 74 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “The teaching staff were quick to address issues raised in class.”