



Cloisters

The Magazine of The New Curiosity Shop - November 2005

Welcome to the first issue of 'Cloisters,' the online magazine of the New Curiosity Shop. With this monthly publication, we hope to keep you informed of the latest developments in online learning with the personal touch.

As you can see from this issue, we will be highlighting individual courses and their tutors. In future issues, you will meet students who have taken New Curiosity Shop courses and learn about their experiences with us.

Each month, Noel Chidwick will be helping you make the most of our courses with his regular articles on 'Being an Online Learner' and Arthur Chapman will keep you up to date with our new courses.

If there is anything in particular that you would like to see in 'Cloisters,' drop us a line for the attention of the editor, Mark Toner (editor@newcurioshop.com). We hope you enjoy this monthly read. Look out for a Christmas gift with our next issue and keep learning.

- Mark Toner, Editor, November 2005.

Contents

Courses at a Glance	1
News	1
November - Course of the Month	2
Teaching Online: an interview with tutor Sarah Pouezevara	2
Being an Online Learner	3
November – New Courses	4
Online Learning Parties	4
Our Courses	4



What is the New Curiosity Shop?

We provide online courses in a wide range of subjects. We encourage learning for the sake of learning, and our short courses are designed to stimulate thinking, provoke questions and provide opportunities for our students to explore ideas. We work in partnership with tutors to develop and support students. We believe learning is a social experience – even online. We call it “online learning with the personal touch.”

www.newcurioshop.com



Courses at a Glance

Astronomy for Beginners

Before we go to Paradise: the Development of the Garden Cemetery

California Dreaming

Coping with Change

Family History Begins at Home

Introduction to Forensic Psychology

HIV/Aids and Society

How to Learn Online

Introduction to Archaeology

Me, Myself and Others: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Mind

Scotland in the 13th Century

The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse: Urban and Rural Issues in the Scottish Short Story

The Write Way?

News

World AIDS Day 2005

The 1st December is World AIDS Day. HIV is one of the biggest social, economic and health challenges in the world. It is a global emergency claiming over 8,000 lives every day. In fact 5 people die of AIDS every minute.

Wear a red ribbon to show your support for those living with HIV and find out more at the official website www.worldaidsday.org. If AIDS is something that affects you in some way, or if you want to find out the real story of how HIV/AIDS affects society, you should enrol on our course: HIV/Aids and Society.

The Open University Moodles Up

'Moodle' is the name of the online learning environment at the heart of the New Curiosity Shop, and we think it is just wonderful: it makes online learning straightforward for our learners, and makes it more fun.

From 2006 the The Open University will be following in our footsteps and adopting Moodle as its online learning environment. This is good news for learners at the New Curiosity Shop. We think our courses are a good beginning for returning adult learners who want to tread the learning path before moving on to more formal learning - and that includes the OU. Now that the OU is taking on Moodle, that means that our learners can bring their Moodle experience to bear straightaway if they decide to study at the OU. It's one less barrier to overcome.

Find out more—

web: www.newcurioshop.com e-mail: contact@newcurioshop.com, phone: 0131 208 1900



November - Course of the Month

Each month we will highlight one of our courses that we think is a little bit more special than usual. This month it is the turn of:

'Before we go to paradise: the Development of the Garden Cemetery'.

tutored by David Borrill.

I am learning all the time. The tombstone will be my diploma.

-Eartha Kitt

"All Souls Cemetery Kensal Green, why would I be interested in an old overgrown cemetery in London?" You might well ask. However, these great cemeteries tell us much about the Victorians and their attitude to death. Far from shutting it away both literally and psychologically, as we tend to do, the Victorians celebrated our final journey with mixture of formality and sentimentality. They favoured elaborate funerals with professional mourners known as mutes. These were followed by periods of mourning governed by a precise code of etiquette. This produced a whole new industry in mourning ephemera. Graves and memorials were elaborate and richly decorated reflecting all the fashionable tastes of the time mixed with a complex language of signs and symbols.

There is much Kensal Green can tell us about Victorian society therefore: its hopes, fears, tastes and fashions. In doing so, it allows us to reflect on our attitudes to death in our post-Christian society - a society where all the old certainties, which formed the basis of belief in the Victorian age barely figure on our moral and ethical radar.

Finally, where else will you find such a fascinating and eclectic mix of personalities? For example:

- The composer of The Bohemian Girl
- The man who mortgaged his brain
- The famous tight rope walker who cooked an omelette high above Niagara Falls
- The writer who lies next to his 'Woman in White'
- The servant who put a pillar box on every street corner

To find out more, you'll have to enrol!

<http://www.newcurioshop.com/courses/ncs0037.html>



Teaching Online: an interview with tutor Sarah Pouzevara

We have a team of very special people who put together our courses and guide our students through them. This month we talk to Sarah Pouzevara, who is the tutor on our 'HIV/AIDS and Society' course.

Find out more—

web: www.newcurioshop.com e-mail: contact@newcurioshop.com, phone: 0131 208 1900

Cloisters: Sarah, you teach about HIV/AIDS and Society for the New Curiosity Shop. How did you come to this important subject?

Sarah: After taking a course on AIDS Education during my graduate degree program at the Teachers College of Columbia University. I realized that there was so much I didn't know about the subject, and I became convinced that the only way to turn the epidemic around is through education and prevention. Most importantly, I realized that HIV and AIDS affect everyone, not just those who are infected with the virus.

Cloisters: What kind of student group do you hope to reach with your online tutoring?

Sarah: Anyone who is active in their society, and who wants to make a difference in the world. This might be teachers, police, social workers or humanitarian workers. Or it might be any individual who wants to be more active, but doesn't quite know where to begin.

Cloisters: Does delivery online offer particular advantages to this group?

Sarah: I believe it does, because AIDS is still a sensitive and taboo subject for many people. It requires talking openly about sexuality, morality and politics, subjects that are often hard to discuss face-to-face. I hope that the online environment will make students feel more at ease, and more confident expressing what they really think, in a semi-anonymous environment. There are also a lot of great "tricks" of technology that make learning fun - animated videos, quizzes, online discussion boards.

Cloisters: You are something of an international citizen, being American and living and working in France. Did this aspect of your life lead you to start working via the web, accessing an international classroom?



Sarah: I became interested in technology for learning after working in international development for several years. I believe strongly that changes in society come through education and awareness, and I wondered whether distance learning through the web could finally be a way to bring progressive educational access - not just state-sponsored education, but "real" information from around the world, created by individuals for other individuals - to all.

Cloisters: So what does the future hold? Do you have any new HIV/AIDS projects in the works or anything new to be offered on the WWW?

Sarah: For the time being, I'm staying busy with my family, and a daughter who just turned one year old. I still work with the United Nations developing instructional materials for UN staff. I had discussed with NCS the possibility of developing a course on African history and culture, but for now I just want to concentrate on this one online course to make sure that it is the best possible product before launching any other new courses.

Cloisters: Thank you very much for your time, Sarah Pouzevara.



Being an Online Learner

Being an Online Learner is a series of articles for Cloisters that will explore what it is to be an adult learner here in the 21st Century, in the Age of the Internet. We'll look at what online learning is - and isn't; we'll find out where online learning has come from and all the benefits of life as an online learner. In this series we'll also investigate some deft strategies to help you make the most of an online course. As the months go by we may stray off the beaten track as we spot something interesting in the undergrowth - but that's half the fun isn't it?



-Noel Chidwick, partner New Curiosity Shop.

e-mail: noel@newcurioshop.com

1: What is this Online Learning thing anyway?

I hear, I forget; I see, I understand; I do, I remember.

-Homer

Online learning is learning via the medium of the Internet. An online course is a package of learning offered - and undertaken - through the Internet. Until recently, we did not need to put 'online' in front of the word 'learning', as most learning took place in a classroom, a tutorial room, a lecture theatre, anywhere that people gathered together to learn. Now people don't have to meet to study—we can do it quite well over the Internet, thank you.

Here at the New Curiosity Shop we do online learning: all our courses are available to learners over the Internet, and are only available online over the Internet.

What does an online course look like?

An online course is a beast with two heads: content and communication. The content is the subject material in question and communication is the vital interaction that takes place between learner and tutor, and between learners. The Internet is an amazing and versatile communication tool. Well used, the versatility of the Internet is what makes all the difference between an online course and a series of pretty web pages. We'll look at how this communication tool can be used in online courses next month.

In a classroom content would be what the teacher tells you, what she writes on the board, what handouts you are given, what textbooks you are told to read - the stuff of learning. Online, content can be all of these and so much more.

Now that the Internet can do so much, enlightened teachers in schools, colleges and universities are as happy as pigs in

an orchard on a windy day. The world-wide web is a publishing tool that would make Gutenberg drool into his printing ink. On the web you can publish: video; pictures; sound; animations; simulations - a whole range of interactive multimedia. The web is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow where all the knowledge of the human race is published: take a look at Wikipedia to see just one website where a community is beavering away to inform the rest of us.



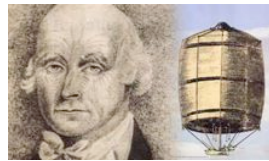
But an online course is more than just links to websites. A well-written course, online or otherwise, is a well-crafted map drawn up to guide the learner through the dark maze of information and misinformation and into the light of understanding. An online course can include any of the digital elements listed above, but a good online course will only include them as necessary: a well-crafted sentence can often be the best way to make a point. A good online course also has a structure that makes life for the learner as straightforward as possible. After all, if you are learning a new subject you don't want to struggle with a complicated web navigation system. That is why we make it clear to our course writers that a course must be broken down into logical chunks', and each chunk must be clearly organised.

What do you do in an online course?

A good online course will also have plenty of learning activities, and again the Internet and the power of the computer makes possible what a few years ago would not even have been imagined. Activities could be as simple as answering questions in a quiz up to a full-on online multi-player game: who, for example, could argue that playing The Sims is not a learning activity? We'll look at online learning activities in more detail later on in this series.

But an online course shouldn't be about staring into the glow of a computer all the time. At The New Curiosity Shop we are conscious that there is more than enough screen-gazing happening in this world, and we stress to our tutors that, where appropriate, an activity should take the learner away from their computer. In 'Astronomy for Beginners' the student is sent out to look at the stars straightaway. In 'Beyond Paradise' (featured this month) the tutor sends his students off to explore the local graveyard.

Where Next?



If this has set you wondering, why don't you join in our free demonstration course, the Fire Balloon? This is a very short sample of a course about the history of the hot-air balloon. It will give you a taste for being an online learner - and you'll find out who this man is.

Next month: we will look at how the communication tools of the Internet make all the difference to an online learner.

Websites to visit

The Fire Balloon (You'll be asked to register on your way in). Enter via our website.

WIKIpedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

The Invention of Printing <http://ulibnet.mtsu.edu/SpecialCollections/CMSPrinting/>

The Sims <http://thesims2.ea.com/>

Find out more—

web: www.newcurioshop.com e-mail: contact@newcurioshop.com, phone: 01 31 208 1900

November – New Courses

It's exciting times at the New Curiosity Shop with a number of new courses ready to roll.



Me, Myself and Others

If you've ever come across the phrase "cogito ergo sum" and wanted know what it means; have wondered

how or indeed whether you can be certain that other minds exists; or reflected on whether machines may one day be able to think, then "Me, Myself and Others" is the course for you. It's a great introduction to some of the fundamental ideas in the philosophy of the mind – so don't hang about, sign up now and start this fascinating course with Jenni Jenkins as your tutor.



Family History Begins at Home

You might already be interested in your own family history but are not sure how to go about getting started. If

so then "Family History Begins at Home" is just the course for you. It takes you step by step on the road to the discovery of your past – starting from where you are and what you know, or perhaps more importantly what your relatives, mother, father, uncles, aunts, or grandparents know. Kathryn Senior is ready and waiting to start you off – and the more the merrier, so if you have any friends or relations who would like to join you then tell them about it – remember if 4 or more of you join a course together you will each receive a discount of 10%.



Introduction to Forensic Psychology

How to help out the TV detectives

Have you ever wondered if the TV detectives follow "standard procedure" in investigating a case? How have procedures changed from Poirot and Miss Marple to Frost, Barnaby (Midsommer Murders), Jericho and the like – not forgetting Morse? Do they use forensic psychology? What is forensic psychology? Does applying forensic psychology help solve crimes – in fiction or in real life? Take this new course at the New Curiosity Shop and see if you can beat the TV detectives in solving crimes. Even if you don't, your enjoyment of the stories will be increased with the help of this valuable introductory course. Dave Webb – over there in Spain – is looking forward to working with you, wherever you are, so sign up today.



Online Learning Parties

Way back at the very start of the 'Astronomy for Beginners' course a group of doctors from Edinburgh all signed up together. However, only one of these students seemed to be accessing the course and the tutor was starting to worry that technical difficulties had struck.

It wasn't until the first live tutorial that the group revealed that they were sharing a computer, all gathering at one house for a few beers and an enjoyable evening learning astronomy. Everyone else, including the tutor, was jealous.

In the spirit of this sociable approach to learning, the New Curiosity Shop offers a group discount: If you sign up as a group of four or more, you'll get 10% off.

Visit 'Learning with Friends' at <http://www.newcurioshop.com/communications/lwf.htm> to register.

Our Courses

All our courses are supported by a tutor. Each course is written specially for the New Curiosity Shop by the tutor.

A course includes:

illustrated reading materials containing interactive multimedia, audio, videos and references as appropriate

a course forum (the 'Howf') for group work and discussion

a 'chat' facility for live seminars and question sessions

support from the tutor, through the course forum and by one-to-one e-mail

activities designed to help you learn, and to demonstrate to yourself, your tutor and the rest of the world what you have learned.

A typical course will require your attention for 2-4 hours a week for the duration of the course, either working at your computer or on a given task in the 'real' world: at the New Curiosity Shop we don't want you to be glued to your computer screen all the time.

Become a tutor with the New Curiosity Shop

If you would like to join our crack team of online tutors, you can find out more on our website at:

<http://www.newcurioshop.com/teachOnline.htm>

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Comments, suggestions and ideas for inclusion in Cloisters are always welcome. Contact the editor at:

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web: www.newcurioshop.com e-mail: contact@newcurioshop.com, phone: 0131 208 1900