

# Public engagement and virtual learning: top 5 Open Course Ware sites

by admin

November 4, 2011

*Open Course Ware initiatives are being adopted by a growing number of universities as part of their public engagement and impact strategies, making academic courses and modules available to all for free. LSE Impact Blog editor [Avery Hancock](#) brings together some of the most popular courses from universities already recognised as being leaders in the open course ware arena for this week's Top 5.*



## 1. The Open University: [What is poetry?](#)

Have you always wanted to try to write poetry but never quite managed to start? The Open University's *What is Poetry?* unit attempts to illustrate the techniques behind both the traditional forms of poetry and free verse, and has been one of their most popular open course units. This introductory module makes use of audio as well as text, and encourages students to use their experiences to develop ideas.

## 2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology: [Introduction to Computer Science and Programming](#)

This course tops the list of MIT's most popular courses for August 2011, and is aimed at students with little or no programming experience. Providing students with an understanding of the role computation can play in solving problems, resources include video lectures, assignments, and exam papers.

## 3. Tufts University: [Biology of Water and Health](#)

Tufts' wide course offerings are available as part of its "underlying ethic of service to its local, national and international communities." As a university specialising in environmental sciences, it's not surprising that the *Biology of Water and Health unit* is one of its most popular. The course provides an ecological framework for understanding the place of water in health, giving a voice to the ways in which water is involved in social interactions, belief systems, and the economics of an interconnected and interdependent world.

## 4. University of California, Berkeley: [Peace and Conflict Studies](#)

So far there have been over 100,000 views of this Berkeley webcast introducing the science of nonviolence, mainly as seen through the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi. Professor Michael Nagler guides students through an historical overview of nonviolence up to the American Civil Rights movement and Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 5. University of Nottingham: [Nineteenth and early twentieth century American entertainment culture](#)

This resource includes full lecture handouts and reading lists, and presents material from four different courses taught across the School of American and Canadian Studies and Film and Television Studies. It addresses various aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth century American entertainment culture.

*Do you have a Top 5 list that you would like to recommend to readers? Get in touch with the team via [impactofsocialsciences@lse.ac.uk](mailto:impactofsocialsciences@lse.ac.uk) or [@LSEImpactBlog](#)*

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5. Public arguments between academics must not discourage early career researchers from valuing impact.