

Tribute to MIT Physics Prof Lewin: Free-On-Line MIT Courses

December 20 2007, by Mary Anne Simpson



Image of dye introduced into water in motion. Credit: Prof. Marshall MIT

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is offering 1800 full courses on-line to the public at no charge. In part the work of Professor Walter H.G. Lewin of MIT is the reason for the popularization of higher learning in science.

The International Herald Tribune reporter, Sara Rimer has written a great [story on Physicist Walter H. G. Lewin](#) of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Cambridge.

The gist of the story is the availability of open source on-line physics courses offered by prestigious institutions of higher learning and their

effect on the general public. Dr. Lewin has become a quartz star with a following that Mic Jagger would appreciate.

The effect is spectacular, and has provided a real second-life to golden years professors by introducing them to the general public. Individuals who for one reason or another were unable to attend a prestigious school, but nonetheless possess an exuberance for higher learning. This article surveys various on-line opportunities for learning more about science.

MIT Open Course Ware:

The MIT Open Course Ware project is funded by donations and is free to the public. In addition to Dr. Lewin's courses, there are about 1800 on-line complete courses offered by MIT. Courses are available in the undergraduate and graduate division list of courses. Many are survey courses and introductory type classes easily accessible to any one with a quest for knowledge.

Examples:

Do you have an interest in wireless communications or a job in communication and would like to add depth to your knowledge base? Check out a complete introduction course on the subject. This is not a teaser version. This is the entire course that MIT allows you to take for no university credits, but at no charge. All that is necessary is to download the course on your computer and point and click your way to achieve a solid foundation in wireless communications. 6.452 Principles of Wireless Communications at ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb .

Are you interested in the Physics of Atmospheres and Oceans? This course was offered to students of MIT in the Fall of 2007. It is free of charge to the public and offered by MIT's Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences with the eminent Professor John Marshall. The

course lays out the laws of classical mechanics and thermodynamics. This vehicle allows you to explore how the dynamics of fluids combined with the rotating earth effect atmospheric winds, currents and climate of the earth. See: 12.003 Physics of Atmospheres and Oceans at ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Earth .

Have you ever pondered the basis of how we hear and see? If you are a programmer, game developer or amateur inventor, knowing the fundamentals of the neural system is essential. MIT's Brain and Cognitive Sciences offers a free course called, 9.04 Neural Basis of Vision and Audition. The course will give you the science behind the perception. The course may not have been in the average software engineers core curriculum, but it should have been. See: ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Brain .

In conclusion, the old adage, Knowledge is Power, subsumes the most important aspect. A solid education prevents you from "knowing a whole lot of junk, that simply isn't true."

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