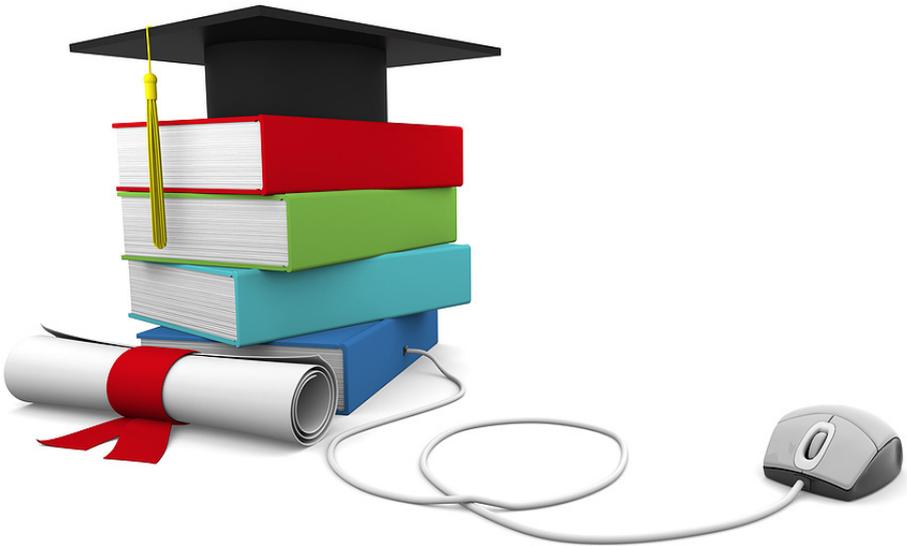


THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



# Learning Online

**Online materials available from the Third Age Trust**

Online courses from the UK and Australia

In Depth Study Groups

Publicly available free material



# Introduction

The rapid growth in the use of the internet and broadband connections offers great opportunities. The Third Age Trust has been offering Online Courses in a number of subjects for over ten years and we continue to do so. To use them you need a broadband connection to the internet, basic skills in sending and reading emails and willingness to use a search engine to find websites when they are referred to.

In the following pages we list courses which are currently available to members at virtually no cost (there is a tiny charge for tutored courses only). We also indicate new courses which we hope to provide within the next few months. These are produced within the UK specifically for U3A members and are especially valuable for group leaders.

Also listed are a large number of courses from U3AOnline, which is our Australian counterpart. Some of these are tutored and all are available untutored as well.

A major development in the past year has been the experimental introduction of In Depth Study Groups online. These groups are explained more fully and first reports are very encouraging.

There has been a dramatic and welcome explosion in the provision of publicly available 'Massive Open Online Courses' which originate mostly from universities and similar educational institutions. These are all free and cover a huge range of material in varying forms. The most common form consists of recorded lectures delivered to university students.

Other resources are planned for the future.

## Who is this for?

The individuals most likely to benefit from the resources that are listed are group leaders in the first place. The online courses provide ready-organised material which they may use in its raw state or they may adapt it for their own uses with their groups. At least one group we know of exists only to work steadily through a range of courses on many different subjects, the group leader merely facilitating the group to work with the material.

A second group of individuals who may find the online courses useful are those who either cannot easily attend their local U3A because they have problems travelling, or are themselves carers. There may be some individuals, too, whose own U3A cannot offer the subject they wish to follow, but the material is available online.

The third and newest group of users will be those who wish to follow a certain course of study more intensively than is possible in their own U3A. Thus, there are some people who wish to pursue an interest in Mathematics beyond A Level standard. These individuals are also prepared to commit to several hours' study each week on a regular basis. They will find our In Depth Study Groups of great appeal.

## **1. Online Courses from the Third Age Trust**

There are two kinds of online courses, tutored and untutored. Untutored courses are available free of charge. You can download the material to your own computer and use it with your group.

Tutored courses run on the dates given on the website and there is a charge of £5 to register. You cannot access this material until you have registered and received a password. Each course runs for a set number of weeks, usually eight, though occasionally they may take longer. The tuition is by way of email and participants are in email contact with each other as well as with the tutor throughout the course. The work takes up to approximately five hours per week. It is an observable fact that participants often form online friendships once they start working together.

To find out exactly what is available at any given time or date look at the national website ([www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)) and find 'Online Courses'.

### **Current tutored courses and their content**

#### ***Short Stories***

This course has been updated and rewritten several times and covers many of the fundamental skills of short story writing. Participants are asked to submit a short story which will be discussed as part of the work

of the group. At the end of the eight week course you may rewrite or edit your story in the light of what you have learned.

Week 1 - Introduction

Week 2 - Ideas – where to get them, how to use them

Week 3 - What is a short story? A look at structure

Week 4 - Who is in the story? Developing characters

Week 5 - How, who why and when – point of view, setting, mood

Week 6 - How do they sound? Realistic dialogue

Week 7 - What happens? Various ways of developing the plot

Week 8 - What the writer says and how well. Theme and style

### ***Three Viking Women***

Based on a study of the Viking settlement of Iceland around the year 1000, this course refers particularly to one Icelandic saga, the Laxdale Saga. It looks at the conditions under which the early settlers lived, their domestic arrangements, cooking, farming, slaves and the role of the women in the household and community. The NINE units are fortnightly.

Week 1 - Introduction to the Laxdale Saga

Week 2 - Daily life

Week 3 - Farming settlements and slavery

Week 4 - Viking burials, poetry and games

Week 5 - Gudrun Osvifsdottir; marriage

Week 6 - More on marriage and divorce, trading and textiles

Week 7 - Ships, trading and relationships with Norway

Week 8 - Feuds, fights, horses and Viking law

Week 9 - The end of Gudrun; Christianity; the Althing

## ***Digital Imaging***

This has proved the most popular of our courses in the past and is continually brought up to date using the latest version of Adobe Photoshop Elements.

Week 1 - Getting pictures into your computer

Week 2 - Controlling the image

Week 3 - Correcting tone and colour

Week 4 - More on colour correction

Week 5 - Selections; the how and the why

Week 6 - Filters, effects and painting

Week 7 - Layers, blending modes and adding words

Week 8 - Photos, borders, montages, greetings cards, calendars

## ***First World War on the Home Front***

First launched in January 2013, this is an unusual look at the effects and conditions of the Great War. There is little mention of battles but the involvement of civilians, the treatment of the soldiers and the social changes which were influenced are all included. The viewpoint is not confined to Britain but encompasses the Commonwealth countries and even the effects of the War on the Germans.

Week 1 - Women and the War

Week 2 - Shellshock

Week 3 - Communications

Week 4 - Poetry and prose writings

Week 5 - Medical care

Week 6 - Propaganda

Week 7 - Conscientious objection

Week 8 - The aftermath

### ***Just Before Victoria***

This course is packed with references to and quotations from contemporary documents. It is in effect a study of the social history of Britain in the decade before Victoria came to the throne, a time of great change and challenge.

Week 1 - Five major ideas in circulation during the 1830s

Week 2 - Parliamentary Reform and the Right to Vote

Week 3 - The Industrial Revolution and Trade

Week 4 - Factory conditions and the 1833 Factory Act

Week 5 - The Industrial Towns and Working Class movements

Week 6 - Rural life in Britain the in the 1830s

Week 7 - The new Poor Law

Week 8 - Law and Order

### ***Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Poetry***

This is a new course by the author of *Three Viking Women*. It looks at a series of short poems but deliberately excludes *Beowulf*, which has been extensively discussed elsewhere. The course also introduces the participants to elements of Anglo-Saxon life.

Week 1 - Introduction

Week 2 - The Ruin and Durham

Week 3 - The Wife's Lament and Caedmon's Hymn

Week 4 - The Dream of the Rood and The Husband's Message

Week 5 - The Battle of Maldon

Week 6 - The Wanderer

Week 7 - Wulf and Eadwacer

## In the pipeline

For 2014 other tutored courses are being prepared. They include:

**Fairy Tales** – a study of well-known fairy stories and their history.

**Italian Renaissance Gardens** – a look at the classical design and history of this period of garden design.

**All In the Mind** – an ambitious and unusual course which is still being discussed. Designed by a former Associate Professor of Psychology, this looks at the mind in a variety of aspects. While it involves neuroscience and the brain, it also relates to other areas of human experience such as beliefs and emotions, and brings in the topic of consciousness and the self. We are running a special trial during the autumn of 2013 on the subject of Music and the Mind; that one unit will deal with how the brain processes music from the point of view of both listeners and performers, suggests that music is ‘hardwired into the brain’ and introduces the topic of brain music therapy. Other units next year will deal with such topics as memory, decision making, intelligence and language. Much of the illustrative material for discussion will be drawn from videos and audio recordings.

## 2. Untutored courses from the Third Age Trust

Available on the website now are:

Garden History

Writing to good effect

Writing for publication

Great Northern European Artists

Creative writing – fiction

Venice and her artists

Creative writing – poetry

Italian Art 1400 – 1600

Artists of Spain

Russia – an introduction

Visiting Artists in Rome

China – an introduction

### **3. Australian courses**

*(for full details, go to [www.u3aonline.org.au](http://www.u3aonline.org.au))*

Australian History 1: Prior to Federation

Genealogy Online

Australian History 2: Post Federation

Henry Lawson - A study of his Work, Life and Times

China in Transition: From Mao to Now

My Life Story

Kings and Queens of England

Shakespeare: Rediscovering the Bard

Left, Right or Centre: A very brief Introduction to Political Ideologies

Storytelling with Pictures

Religions of the World

The History and Spread of the English Language

Renaissance Italy

Unleashing your Creative Spirit

The Romans

Writing Family History

Antarctica

Writing for Pleasure

Australian Flora

Ageing and Retirement

Botany: the Study of Plants for Enjoyment

Design in Your Life

Continents on the Move

Food for Thought

Saving the Soil

Introduction to Western Philosophy

Autobiography and Journaling

Maintaining Independence

Basic English Grammar

Myths and Legends

Practical Psychology for Relationships

The Shaping of the Modern Mind

Thoreau Emerson and the Conduct of Life

The Evolution of Life on Planet Earth

Astronomy

Human Biology

Resources for the Future - Renewable and Non-Polluting

The Night Sky

The Northern Sky

The Story of Science 1 - The Emergence of Natural Philosophy

The Story of Science 2 - The Science Disciplines

The Story of Science 3 - The Physical Sciences since 1800

The Story of Science 4 - Astronomy and the Behavioural Sciences since 1800

## 4. In Depth Study Groups

### Introduction

With more than 300,000 individual U3A members in the UK, it is inevitable that there will be a significant number who find that their particular interest is not being met by the group programme offered by the local U3A. This may be because there is insufficient demand for the subject to justify forming a group or because the individual is looking for a more intensive level of study and is also prepared to devote the additional time, ie several hours per week, that would be required for study in depth. It is to meet the latter need that the NEC has agreed to run a pilot scheme in which programmes of 'Study In Depth' will be offered to U3A members and delivered online thus enabling individuals from any part of the UK to participate.

The concept was first described in U3A News (No 97 – New Year 2012) and the steady trickle of response with offers of help as well as registering interest, has led to the development of on line programmes in four subject areas. All 'In Depth Study Group' participants will need to have ready access to a computer with a broadband connection and possess a modest degree of skill in its use together with microphone and headphones. A webcam will not be required.

The study programmes will be delivered via a 'virtual classroom' called Instant Presenter which is licensed to the Third Age Trust. The use of this system means that participants do not have to install special software on their own computer. In practice, enrolled group-participants will be given details of the protocols for using the system and details of a website on which to log on at prearranged, mutually agreed times to participate in a session. Sessions are automatically recorded so that if a participant misses one it will be possible to catch up.

## **Pilot Programmes**

In the initial trial, the following subjects will be set at a level beyond that of a beginner and will commence in September 2013:

- Mathematics
- Philosophy
- Japanese
- Early Christianity

The places available on these trial programmes are strictly limited and offered on a 'first come' basis. It is, therefore, essential that participants show commitment, because a casual or dilettante approach will not be sustainable for a group that necessarily requires an above average organisational input.

## **Future Programmes**

Once the trial programmes are well under way, consideration will be given to extending the range of subjects on offer, as well as widening the mix of course durations. However, what the Trust is able to provide will depend entirely on the offers of help that are received. The National Office would like to hear from any U3A member interested in sharing their enthusiasm and specialist knowledge with others, by leading an In Depth Study group, be it for one or two terms, a year or longer. Training in the use of Instant Presenter will be provided. Furthermore, U3A members wishing to be kept informed of developments in this field should send their contact details to the National Office at [national.office@u3a.org.uk](mailto:national.office@u3a.org.uk) and ask to be placed on the IDS mailing list.

## 5. Additional online resources

We plan to develop our online resources even further in the next twelve months. There is a vast quantity of material now available. The fastest expanding area is probably to be found in 'Massive Open Online Courses'. These were initiated by American universities in the first place; two lecturers agreed that as well as giving one-off lectures to 300 undergraduates at a time, by putting the same lecture on a website it could be made available to 10,000 potential students. If you now look at a website ([www.mooc-links.com](http://www.mooc-links.com)) you will find a list of 21 of these 'MOOCs':

10genEducation (4)	Other Initiatives (19)
Canvas.net (63)	Saylor.org (189)
Class2Go (4)	Udacity (25)
CourseSites (3)	Udemy (2)
Coursera (225)	UniMOOC - Tec (2)
MOOC-Ed (1)	WEU (4)
MRUniversity (6)	edX (54)
NovoEd (7)	iversity (10)
Open2Study (23)	openHPI (6)
OpenLearning (5)	openSAP (1)
OpenSecurityTraining (9)	

Each one offers a range of free material. Another such MOOC is about to be launched by a sub-contractor to the Open University; it will be known as Future Learn. To give you the flavour of such material, try looking at **coursera** or **udacity** by searching for them online.

Yorkshire and The Humber Region is planning to experiment, by canvassing U3As in their region to get individuals to agree to register for one course offered by Coursera and then to follow it. The individual members will correspond with one another by email with their comments

as they follow the course. This is an idea worth thinking about for the future. There is not room in this booklet to list all the courses on offer.

Other than MOOCs, there are plenty of websites which offer very useful resources for study groups. One such is *www.topdocumentaryfilms.com*, where you can find, among other offerings, excellent Horizon films. There are many such sites. YouTube often has useful material, and *www.ted.com* is another good source of short, inspirational lectures and talks.

In brief, lack of material is no longer any kind of excuse for not organising a study group these days. The future will doubtless involve more and more use of such information, especially with the inevitable increase in the use of hand-held devices like tablets and mobile phones.

For a co-operative learning organisation, such as the U3A, all this is wonderful, free and liberating. Go to it!

**Ian Searle, August 2013**

# Notes



