

Mental Health for the Masses

April 16, 2015

The Huffington Post:

Ricardo Muñoz thinks that MOOCs get a bad rap. MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Courses, Internet-based higher education available to anyone in the world, regardless of age or qualifications, and usually for free. MOOCs have become very popular in recent years, and now attract millions of students who want to learn art history or calculus or abnormal psychology with some of the world's best professors.

Critics focus on MOOCs' dismal attrition rates. While millions of eager students may sign up, they say, most of these drop out. They point to examples, including one MIT MOOC, in which 155,000 enrolled but only 7,157 passed the course. That's a paltry 4.6 percent completion rate.

This is true, says Muñoz, professor and founding director of the Institute for International Internet Interventions for Health (i4Health) at Palo Alto University, and professor emeritus at the University of California, San Francisco. But this argument misses the more important point, he insists. It's a major achievement for 7,157 students to complete a college course — reading, lectures, papers, everything — in a single semester. Indeed, it would take 40 years for that many students to complete the same MIT course if it were offered in the traditional way.

...

Participants were given a menu of nine intervention elements to choose from, including guidance in removing smoking-related cues; a mood management course; individually timed email messages; a virtual forum; and more. The scientists studied participation and successes over an 18-month period, during which 27,163 people were screened for eligibility. Of these 8,881 signed consent forms, and 7,407 completed the baseline survey. The scientists report their results in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Clinical Psychological Science*.

Read the whole story: [The Huffington Post](#)

Wray Herbert is an author and award-winning journalist who writes two popular blogs for APS, [We're Only Human](#) and [Full Frontal Psychology](#). Follow Wray on Twitter [@wrayherbert](#).