Teaching and learning philosophy in the open

Christina Hendricks
University of British Columbia-Vancouver

This is a preprint of the following:

Hendricks, C. (2015). Teaching and learning philosophy in the open. *American Association of Philosophy Teachers, Studies in Pedagogy*, *1,* 17-32. DOI: 10.5840/aaptstudies20159162

Abstract

Many teachers appreciate discussing teaching and learning with others, and participating in a community of others who are also excited about pedagogy. Many philosophy teachers find meetings such as the biannual AAPT workshop extremely valuable for this reason. But in between face-to-face meetings such as those, we can still participate in a community of teachers and learners, and even expand its borders quite widely, by engaging in activities under the general rubric of "open education." Open education can mean many things, from sharing one's teaching materials openly with others, to using and revising those created by others, to asking students to create open educational materials, and more. In this article I discuss the benefits and possible drawbacks of such activities, and I argue that the former outweigh the latter.

Bio

Christina Hendricks is a Sr. Instructor (a tenured, teaching-focused position) in Philosophy at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver in Canada. She regularly teaches courses ranging from Introduction to Philosophy, to Moral Theory, to Continental Philosophy. She also teaches in an interdisciplinary, team-taught course for first year students called "Arts One" (http://artsone.arts.ubc.ca), and is serving as Chair of that program from 2015-2017. She has been interested in open education since learning about it in an open online course in 2013. In 2014-2015, she served as a Faculty Fellow with the BC Campus Open Textbooks Program (http://open.bccampus.ca).

As a philosophy teacher, I find it invaluable to discuss teaching strategies with my colleagues. In my first teaching job, though the department members were spread across a wide geographical area, I started asking them questions through email about the works I was teaching, requesting advice on pedagogical practices, etc. We then started a tradition of monthly discussions on various topics in philosophy, usually related to what we were teaching. As more materials on teaching philosophy became available on the internet, I was able to get even more ideas for teaching strategies as well as help with

understanding texts that are not directly in my area of expertise. I expect these types of experiences are common amongst philosophy (and many other!) teachers.

I have always been happy to share teaching ideas and materials with anyone who asks, but it is only in recent years that I have started to share them more widely; in fact, I now make them public on the internet with a license that allows others to revise and reuse them. Partly this is because I have recently gained the technological skills to do so, but it is also because of a shift in mindset I've experienced over the past few years, towards seeing the value of what is known as "open education"—making one's teaching and learning activities more widely accessible for viewing and revision/reuse by others. Doing philosophy in the open has multiple benefits that, I argue, outweigh the possible drawbacks.

The "open" in open education

In what ways can one engage in open education? It might help to start by considering the various meanings the word "open" can have in this context. A common understanding of "open" is "free," as in free of cost. This is the meaning one might immediately think of as associated with Massive, Open, Online Courses. These are courses that are available for anyone with a reliable internet connection to take, free of cost.[1] The "massive" part of the MOOC name comes from the fact that in many such

[1] Many MOOCs currently are offered through central organizations such as EdX (https://www.edx.org/), Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/), Future Learn (https://www.futurelearn.com/), Open2Study (https://www.open2study.com/), Iversity (https://iversity.org/), and UnX (courses offered in Spanish and Portuguese) (http://www.redunx.org/web/aprende/cursos). But there are also institutions of higher education that offer their own MOOCs on their own platforms, without connecting to one of these kinds of organizations.

In addition to these familiar kinds of MOOCs, however, there are also open online courses that are run by volunteers, emphasizing the creation of a connected community (even if temporary) to learn about and discuss a particular issue or a certain kind of task. Sometimes called "connectivist MOOCs," or cMOOCs, these include courses such as Digital Storytelling 106 (focused on telling stories in digital media) (http://ds106.us), Making Learning Connected (a MOOC to learn about, discuss, and practice connected learning) (http://clmooc.educatorinnovator.org/2014/), and Educational Technology and Media MOOC (http://etmooc.org). A nice discussion of some differences between cMOOCs and the kinds of MOOCs discussed in the previous paragraph can be found in Debbie Morrison, "The Ultimate

courses, there can be thousands, or tens of thousands, of registrants. The "open" in MOOCs often means simply that there is no financial cost to participate (beyond what one must pay for internet access and use of a computer or mobile device).

But being free of cost is only part of the picture of openness. A colleague once said that if this is all that openness means, it amounts to being "open like a museum,"[2] because all you can do is see the works; you cannot take them with you or modify them in any way. Some MOOCs, for example, may only allow you to view materials, not download them to revise or share them with others.[3] Similarly, though articles in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy are free to read, one can only distribute print or PDF versions in course reading packages with express permission from the authors.[4]

Further meanings of the word "open" can be found in the "open definition" created by Open Knowledge: "Open means **anyone** can **freely access, use, modify, and share** for **any purpose** (subject, at most, to requirements that preserve provenance and openness)."[6] David Wiley, in a widely-used definition of "open content," lists similar requirements for openness, and labels them the "five R's":

Student Guide to xMOOCs and cMOOCs," *MOOC News and Reviews*, April 22, 2013, Accessed Oct. 25, 2014, http://moocnewsandreviews.com/ultimate-guide-to-xmoocs-and-cmoocso/.

[2] Pat Lockley, message on Twitter, accessed October 25, 2014, https://twitter.com/patlockley/status/309459576900689920

[3] For example, the Coursera terms of use say: "You may download material from the Sites only for your own personal, non-commercial use. You may not otherwise copy, reproduce, retransmit, distribute, publish, commercially exploit or otherwise transfer any material, nor may you modify or create derivatives works of the material." Coursera, "Terms of Use," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.coursera.org/about/terms.

[4] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Policy on Course Readers," accessed October 25, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/course-readers.html. In contrast, the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy allows for printing and redistributing its articles in course readers without asking for express permission: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Copyright Information," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.iep.utm.edu/home/copyright/.

[6] "The Open Definition," accessed October 25, 2014, http://opendefinition.org/od/. Emphasis in original.

1. Retain - the right to make, own, and control copies of the content (e.g., download, duplicate, store, and manage)
2. Reuse - the right to use the content in a wide range of ways (e.g., in a class, in a study group, on a website, in a video)
3. Revise - the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself (e.g., translate the content into another language)
4. Remix - the right to combine the original or revised content with other open content to create something new (e.g., incorporate the content into a mashup)
5. Redistribute - the right to share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others (e.g., give a copy of the content to a friend)[7]

Wiley argues that the more of these five activities that are allowed, the more "open" a work or set of materials is. How one alerts others to the possibility that they can use one's work in such ways is through an open license, such as a Creative Commons license.[8] Giving one's work an open license means that one retains copyright, but allows others to use, share, and sometimes also revise the work without asking permission each time. Finally, both Wiley and the "open definition" also emphasize how technical barriers may make content more or less open. If the work can only be edited using tools that are very expensive, or that only run on certain platforms, or that require a high level of expertise, the work is less open.[9]

---

[7] David Wiley, "The Open Content Definition," accessed October 25, 2014, http://opencontent.org/definition/.

[8] Creative Commons, "About the licenses," accessed January 17, 2015, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/. Creative Commons licenses provide a range of choices depending on how one wants to share one's work (e.g., one can restrict the work to non-commercial uses, one can insist that any new works made from the original be shared also with an open license, or one can allow others to reuse the work but not allow any revisions). Finally, Creative Commons has a public domain license by which one can signal that they are releasing their work into the public domain, free to use, revise, redistribute without restriction on how and for what purpose, and without the requirement that the original creator be attributed. Open educational materials with CC licenses include those in MIT's Open Course Ware (http://ocw.mit.edu/terms/), the Open Learning Initiative at Carnegie Mellon (http://oli.cmu.edu/), and in podcasts and videos put out by the University of Oxford (http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/).

[9] "The Open Definition" (http://opendefinition.org/od/) puts the technological requirement this way: "The work *must* be provided in a convenient and modifiable form such that there are no unnecessary technological obstacles to the performance of the licensed rights. Specifically, data should be machine-readable, available in bulk, and provided in an open format (i.e., a format with a freely available published specification which places no restrictions, monetary or otherwise, upon its use) or, at the very least, can be processed with at least one free/libre/open-source software tool."

Openness can also refer to transparency, as in making publicly available information about organizational or governmental processes and finances—this is part of the meaning of "open government," for example.[10] Transparency can facilitate wider participation and collaboration, since the more people can see what is going on in a government or organization, the more possibilities there are for useful input or cooperation. In open source software, to give another example, making code available for others to use and revise means facilitating the possibility of people working together on creating new software. Transparency, wider participation and collaboration are also relevant to what "openness" means in open education.

Open Education and OER

Open education can refer to anything from posting lecture notes online and allowing others to revise and redistribute them, to assigning open texts for students to read, to asking students to blog publicly, to facilitating an entire open online course (whether "massive" or not). Often discussions of open education center on using and creating "open educational resources," or OER. According to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation,

> OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.[11]

---

[10] See, e.g., "Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2.0," accessed October 25, 2014, http://data.gc.ca/eng/canadas-action-plan-open-government, and the United States' "Open Government Initiative," accessed Oct. 25, 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/open.

[11] William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, "Open Educational Resources," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources. See also the JISC OER InfoKit, "What are Open Educational Resources?" accessed October 25, 2014,

Thus, syllabi, lecture notes, video recordings of lectures, slides, animations, assignments, podcasts, and more can be OER, so long as they are given an open license. As with the definitions of openness given above, we can say that OER are more open to the degree that they allow more of the kinds of activities given in Wiley's list of "5 R's." OER can be found in several ways, such as through searching OER repositories[12] or using a web search tool that locates works licensed to allow for revision and reuse (e.g., http://search.creativecommons.org/, http://www.solvonauts.org/). There are also sets of materials for entire courses available, such as through MIT's Open Courseware site (http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm), Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative (http://oli.cmu.edu/), or Washington State's Open Course Library (http://opencourselibrary.org/).

Engaging in open education through the use of OER can be as simple as assigning one or more open educational resources for students to read, listen to, or view in a course. Most of the OER I have assigned in my courses so far have been only partially open, such as articles from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, or blog posts, videos, or podcasts that are free to access, but are not openly licensed. I have assigned podcasts from Peter Adamson's *The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* series, as well David Edmonds and Nigel Warburton's *Philosophy Bites* and *Ethics Bites* podcasts,[15] for example, none of which have open licenses. I have suggested that students take a look at some of John

---

https://openeducationalresources.pbworks.com/w/page/24836860/What%20are%20Open%20Educational%20Resources.

[12] There are numerous OER repositories as of the writing of this article. One useful list of these can be found at Wiki Educator's "Exemplary Collection of Open eLearning Content Repositories," accessed October 25, 2014, http://wikieducator.org/Exemplary_Collection_of_Open_eLearning_Content_Repositories. A list of both repositories and sites devoted to searching them can be found in the Open Education Handbook 2014, "Finding and Using OER," accessed October 25, 2014, http://booktype.okfn.org/open-education-handbook-2014/_draft/_v/1.0/finding-and-using-oer/.

[15] Peter Adamson, *The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* podcast, accessed Nov. 10, 2014, http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/. Edmonds and Warburton, *Philosophy Bites Podcast*, accessed October 26, 2014, http://philosophybites.com/; Edmonds and Warburton, *Ethics Bites Podcast*, accessed October 26, 2014, http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/philosophy/ethics-bites-podcast-the-full-series.

Protevi's course materials from Louisiana State University, which don't have a specific open license but are available for download and copying for personal and classroom use, according to a notice on the site (http://www.protevi.com/john/courses.html).

Another way to use OER in the classroom is to assign an open textbook, a textbook that has an open license and that is easily adapted by instructors for their own particular purposes in their courses. As of the time of writing this article, good places to search for open textbooks include: Open Stax College (http://openstaxcollege.org/), the Open Library at the University of Minnesota (http://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/), College Open Textbooks (http://collegeopentextbooks.org/), and the BCcampus open textbook library (http://open.bccampus.ca/). There are, so far, few philosophy textbooks in these collections, and some of those that exist are fairly old and not easily revised due to their format (e.g., they may be in html rather than something easily revisable by anyone with a standard word processor). However, there is reason to believe that momentum towards open textbooks is growing, as witnessed by the U.S. Student PIRGs (Public Interest Research Groups) making a push for open textbooks a part of their campaign to make higher education more affordable.[18] There are also a number of programs in North America supporting the creation and revision of open textbooks. BC Campus in the province of British Columbia in Canada is providing incentives for faculty to create, revise and review open textbooks (http://open.bccampus,ca). The State University of New York recently had a call for authors of open textbooks, and currently has a list of over twenty titles (http://opensuny.org/omp/index.php/SUNYOpenTextbooks/index). The North Carolina State University Libraries and Oregon State University also have programs to fund creation of open textbooks.[20] A recent

[18] See, e.g., U.S. Student PIRGs, *Make Textbooks Affordable,* accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://studentpirgs.org/campaigns/sp/make-textbooks-affordable; U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Student PIRGs, *Affordable Textbooks: A Policy Guide*, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/affordable-textbooks-policy-guide.

[20] North Carolina State Libraries, "NCSU Libraries offering grants to help faculty develop free or low-cost open textbook alternatives, accessed Nov. 10, 2014, http://news.lib.ncsu.edu/blog/2014/08/21/ncsu-libraries-offering-grants-to-help-faculty-develop-free-or-low-cost-open-textbook-alternatives/ ; Oregon

report by the U.S. Student PIRGs discusses several other programs at higher education institutions designed to increase the use of open textbooks.[21] Especially given the benefits of open textbooks discussed below, I encourage readers to look into programs in their own areas or institutions that could support them in writing their own open textbooks. Perhaps, then, we will see more open textbooks in philosophy in the coming years.

Instructors can also share their own teaching materials as OER, by making them freely accessible on the web with an open license. There are numerous ways to do so, beginning from posting them on one's own course websites (so long as they are not in "closed" environments such as learning management systems that allow access only to students registered in the course) to contributing to OER repositories such as MERLOT (Multimedia Online Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching: http://www.merlot.org) or OER Commons (https://www.oercommons.org/). Even if one does not want to contribute materials to such repositories, one could serve as a reviewer for materials that others provide. MERLOT has a robust system of peer review for teaching materials, for example, and instructors just need to go through free training to become a peer reviewer (http://info.merlot.org/merlothelp/peer_review_process.htm). One could instead just post teaching materials on a website open to the public, but it makes sense to also contribute materials to OER repositories for ease of discovery by others.

There are numerous benefits to using and creating OER and open textbooks which can, I believe, provide good reasons for doing so that outweigh possible drawbacks. One clear reason to use OER and open textbooks in courses is the reduction of the financial burden of higher education for students. The more free readings, videos, podcasts, etc. we can assign, the less we may be asking them to pay for course materials. The College Board in the United States reports that in 2013-2014, students in

---

State University, "Open Textbook Request for Proposal," accessed Nov. 10, 2014, http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/oregon-state-university-open-textbook-request-proposal.

[21] U.S. Student PIRGS, *Open Textbooks: The Billion Dollar Solution*, by Ethan Senack, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/open-textbooks-billion-dollar-solution.

institutions of higher education in the U.S. spent an average of over $1200 per year on books for their courses.[24] In a recent survey of U.S. college students by the U.S. Student PIRGs, 65% of respondents said they had decided not to buy a textbook for a course because the cost was too high, and nearly half said that book cost affected which courses, and how many courses, they chose to take.[25] Thus, the issue of cost is not simply about saving money, it affects students' educational choices and their ability to do well in the courses they take.

There is some published evidence that students do just as well in courses with open textbooks as in courses that do not, and sometimes better. A recent study investigated the use of open versus closed textbooks in several courses of the core curriculum of the School of Business at Virginia State University. An earlier, internal survey had shown that only 47% of students were purchasing textbooks, but when open textbooks were introduced in nine courses in the Spring of 2011, 67% of students in those courses had registered to use an online open textbook, and of those, 85% downloaded at least one file.[26] The authors also found modest but statistically significant gains in student learning, measured by grades achieved in the school's core curriculum courses that used open textbooks versus those core courses that did not. These were, however, different courses, so the results are not as significant as if they had been found in the same courses using open textbooks versus using traditional textbooks. In another study, two instructors used a traditional textbook in several sections of an Introduction to Psychology course, and then used an open textbook in other sections of the same course the following

---

[24] College Board, "Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2013-2014," accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2013-14.

[25] U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Student PIRGs, *Fixing the Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond to High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives*, by Ethan Senack, January 2014, 11-12, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market.

[26] Andrew Feldstein, Mirta Martin, Amy Hudson, Kiara Warren, John Hilton III, and David Wiley, "Open Textbooks and Increased Student Access and Outcomes," *European Journal of Open, Distance, and E-Learning* (2012), accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://www.eurodl.org/index.php?p=archives&year=2012&halfyear=2&article=533.

semester. Both saw significant reductions in withdrawals in their courses for the semester in which they used the open textbook as opposed to the one in which they used the traditional textbook, and one instructor saw significant gains in the average score on the departmental final exam: 65.4% for the semester in which a traditional textbook was assigned, and 73.2% for the semester in which an open textbook was assigned.[27] The other instructor did not see any significant gains in final exam marks between the two semesters. Two other recent studies have not shown any significant differences in learning outcomes between courses that use open textbooks and those that do not. [28] On the evidence so far, we can conclude at least that students do not tend to do worse in courses with open textbooks than with standard textbooks, and there is some evidence that they may at times do better.

There are also benefits to instructors in using OER and open textbooks. The fact that these materials are openly licensed means that instructors can adapt them to fit their own courses. How many of us have wished that we could find a textbook that had exactly what we want and nothing that we don't? Custom text options from private publishers, or photocopied course readers that one creates oneself help with this problem, but often still cost students a significant amount of money. Instructors can achieve the same customization benefits with open textbooks, taking out what is not needed, adding new sections, including one's own lecture notes, and more. In addition, the more OER that are available, the more instructors may be able to save time in their teaching. If someone else has already created a useful diagram to explain a particularly complex philosophical idea or argument, for example, one can

---

[27] John Hilton III and Carol Laman, "One College's Use of an Open Psychology Textbook," *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning* 27, no. 3 (September 14, 2012): 268-269, doi: 10.1080/02680513.2012.716657.

[28] John Levi Hilton III et al., "The Adoption of Open Educational Resources by One Community College Math Department," *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 14, no. 4 (August 28, 2013), http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1523; David Wiley et al., "A Preliminary Examination of the Cost Savings and Learning Impacts of Using Open Textbooks in Middle and High School Science Classes," *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 262–76, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1153.

point students to that (or, if the license allows, put it into one's own teaching materials) rather than creating a new one. And if the diagram is openly licensed to allow revisions, one can alter it if needed. If someone else has recorded a helpful introduction to a text or the life of a philosopher on a podcast or a video, one can point students to that rather than spending time on it in class. Even better, instead of telling students to watch from minute 6:30 to minute 13:00 in a video, for example, if it's openly licensed to allow revision one can just cut out the portions of the video that one doesn't want to include. One could even edit it together with other video elements, either made by others or by oneself. Chae and Jenkins did in-depth interviews with faculty members in the Washington State Community and Technical College system, and in addition to saving students money many report that the value of using OER includes "enhanced instructional responsiveness"—meaning that the content can be easily adapted for a particular context.[29] Many faculty members in the Chae and Jenkins study also reported that they invited students to edit the open course materials and even create new OER themselves.

Creating OER and open textbooks oneself is also of great value. In a small, informal survey I did in the Summer of 2014, a number of people stated that the reason they engage in open educational activities is because they believe in the importance of making education and educational materials widely accessible.[30] Some argued that when education is publicly funded, it ought to be made available to the public; one can go further and argue that knowledge is a public good that should be shared even with those who have not paid for it through their tax dollars. In the session on open education in philosophy that I facilitated during the American Association of Philosophy Teachers' meeting in July 2014, one participant wrote on a collaborative document, "if you think education is expensive, think

---

[29] Boyoung Chae and Mark Jenkins, *A Qualitative Investigation of Faculty Open Educational Resource Usage in the Washing Community and Technical College System: Models for Support and Implementation*, accessed March 7, 2015, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4eZdZMtpULyZC1NRHMzOEhRRzg/view.

[30] Christina Hendricks, "Results of a survey on open education," UBC Wiki, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://wiki.ubc.ca/Sandbox:Teaching_and_Learning_in_the_Open/SurveyResponses.

about ignorance," suggesting that it is beneficial to all that more people are able to access knowledge.[31] Another noted that it makes sense for philosophers to share their knowledge with the general public, following in Socrates' footsteps. If we believe that philosophy and philosophical practice are valuable for many people, beyond those who can afford to take a philosophy course at a college or university, then we can see the benefit of increasing access to these among the general public.[32] For example, an open philosophy textbook could be used not just in courses in philosophy, but also as a means for informal learning by members of the public.

Some respondents to the 2014 survey I did on open education also said that they felt a kind of duty of reciprocity, of giving back to the community of educators from whom they themselves had benefited. Having experienced the value of what others had shared with them, they felt they ought to also share. In addition, some said that because they knew that their teaching materials would be open to anyone to see, this led them to work even harder to make sure they are as good as possible. Public exposure and scrutiny can provide even greater pressure to provide high quality materials than one might experience if they were not made public. Finally, increased exposure of one's teaching work may have career benefits: two respondents to the open education survey I did said that this had led to opportunities to give presentations on their teaching work.[33]

---

[31] Two of the four small groups who attended were able to write their thoughts down about open education on a shared document, and this comment is found on that document. The document is linked to my blog post about this session: Christina Hendricks, "Presentation on Open Education at AAPT," *You're the Teacher*, August 8, 2014, http://blogs.ubc.ca/chendricks/2014/08/08/open-ed-aapt/.

[32] Of course, just sharing teaching materials may not be enough to really help people have a deep and effective experience of philosophical practice, but it is at least a start. If we took this argument further, it could move us towards opening up our courses towards more participants (including, perhaps, through MOOCs).

[33] Christina Hendricks, "Results of a survey on open education." I, too, have had numerous invitations to give presentations and workshops on teaching work, mostly at my own institution but also for other open online courses. See my presentations on my blog: http://blogs.ubc.ca/chendricks/category/my-presentations/.

There are some potential drawbacks to using and creating OERs and open textbooks, but I do not think these are strong enough reasons to not do so. One serious concern is raised by the following question: if many OER are widely available, do we really need so many instructors teaching the same courses in different places, or could we just have videos, texts, etc. being created by a few and used by many? This issue becomes most salient when the question is one of adopting entire courses created elsewhere: it might be thought that universities could just require students to access those course materials and then have, for example, teaching assistants or contract faculty running discussions and in-class activities. Besides the important issue of possibly reducing the number of stable faculty jobs in a field (such as philosophy) in which they are already very hard to come by, there is also another potential problem: use of such resources may mean that what one teaches is not tailored specifically to one's students, their circumstances, or the particular place and time in which one is teaching. This was one of the concerns raised by the San Jose State University Philosophy department when it was asked to consider using an online course created by someone else as part of its curriculum.[34] The problem of materials not being relevant to a particular place, time, or audience can be solved by only using those with an open license that allows for revisions and revising those to fit a particular context. One could still argue, though, that if we continue to move down the road towards more and more OER, and more and more entire courses available for free, there will be financial pressures on colleges and universities to move towards reducing faculty by using these materials along with less expensive labor power.

One way to address this problem is to resist such moves by arguing for why it is important to have stable faculty members teaching courses from year to year. Even if faculty use numerous OER in their courses, we must still have people who are familiar with the institution, its students, and the local context to adapt those OER, to organize courses around them, and to facilitate assignments and in-class

[34] "An Open Letter to Professor Michael Sandel from the Philosophy Department at San Jose State U," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* May 2, 2013, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, https://chronicle.com/article/The-Document-Open-Letter-From/138937/.

activities relevant to the local situation. That making and using OER could provide educational institutions with a means to reduce faculty is not, in my view, a good enough reason to avoid doing so, given the significant benefits to students and others already mentioned. The pressures to save on faculty costs are not new, and will continue with or without OER. We must therefore focus on advocacy regardless, to show the pedagogical benefits of teaching smaller courses with stable faculty attuned to local contexts.

Another possible problem with creating OER and open textbooks was mentioned in my 2014 survey on open education. Some people may be concerned about losing control of what they have created, and about others taking advantage of what they are providing for free by selling them.[35] Once one has released teaching materials into the open, as it were, one loses control of what happens to them. Others may use them for various purposes, and in ways that one has not intended. One way to address this concern is to choose a particular open license that restricts how the work can be used (for example, one can stipulate that it may only be used for non-commercial purposes). However, the onus is on the original author to (a) become aware of an infringement of the license, (b) ask the offender to stop such infringement, and (c) engage in legal action if the offender does not. There is no easy way to keep track of how one's materials are being used by others so as to know whether or not the license is being respected.

Again, I do not think this concern is strong enough to *not* create OER or open textbooks. One also does not have full control in many other cases when one posts materials on the internet, such as on social media, or even when sending email. Creative Commons and other open licenses at least signal to those who want to respect your copyright and your license what they may do with the materials; those who do not care to respect your copyright will not do so whether you have given your work an open license or not. The other alternative, of course, is to not post very much online, in social media, on email,

[35] Christina Hendricks, "Results of a survey on open education."

or anywhere else that one can't control what happens to the work; even posting teaching materials in a closed learning management system means students might do things with them that one would not wish (such as sell them to others, post them to lecture-note-sharing sites, or the like). In short, I think the worry about control is something that can be applied to many of our online (and even offline) activities, and unless we wish to restrict those significantly, we will have to accept the possibility that some people will not use our work as we wish. One can only realize the value of openness for oneself and others by making the decision to trust that, more often than not, one's copyright and license terms will be respected. In addition, if part of the worry is that others are making money from one's own work, one way to disincentivize this activity is to make one's course materials freely and openly available—it is harder to make money off of something that is already available for free.

Open Educational Practices

Open education need not be limited to using or creating OER or open textbooks. The Cape Town Open Education Declaration from 2007 points out that "open education … also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues."[36] In addition to OER, then, we can speak of "open educational practices" (OEP), referring to types of activities more than types of educational content or materials. Ulf-Daniel Ehlers defines OEP as "practices which support the (re)use and production of OER through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path."[37] This definition refers to collaborative and student-directed learning, along with the use or production of OERs (or both).

---

[36] Cape Town Open Education Declaration, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.capetowndeclaration.org.

[37] Ulf-Daniel Ehlers, "Extending the Territory: From Open Educational Resources to Open Educational Practices," *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning* 15, no. 2 (2011): 4, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://journals.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/index.php/JOFDL/article/view/64.

According to Ehlers, the more a course focuses on the model of an expert providing content that learners passively take in, the less open it is; the more it focuses on students collaborating in creating (at least part of) the curriculum and content, learning from each other, and developing their own learning goals and seeking what they need on the basis of these, the more open (when conjoined with the use and/or creation of OERs) it is.[38] Thus, according to Ehlers, "[t]he pure usage of … open educational resources in a traditional closed and top-down, instructive, exam-focused learning environment is not open educational practice,"[39] but using or creating OERs in the context of a course in which learners are collaborators and co-creators would count as OEP.

An example of a course using open educational practices is one in which students contribute to the curriculum by engaging in research and sharing their findings with others, not just with students and instructors in the class, but more widely and with an open license. Some instructors have asked their students to write articles for Wikipedia,[40] but one can also use other publicly available sites to post student work. The University of British Columbia has its own wiki site, for example, and there is at least one UBC instructor who requires that students post their course projects to it with an open license.[41] Another UBC instructor asks his students to revise an older version of his textbook, thereby directly involving students in creating course content.[42] In one of my courses, students create their own public

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ehlers, "Extending the Territory," 5.

[40] J.B. Murray, "Was introducing Wikipedia to the classroom an act of madness leading only to mayhem if not murder?", *Wikipedia*, User Page for J.B. Murray, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jbmurray/Madness.

[41] Judy Chan, FNH 200, student projects, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://wiki.ubc.ca/Course:FNH200/2013w2/TeamProjects

[42] Jon Festinger, Video Game Law website, accessed Jan. 17, 2015, http://videogame.law.ubc.ca/video-game-law-textbook/about-the-author-forward-preface-2/.

blogs and reflect on the course readings on a regular basis.[43] I then bring some of the comments and questions from these blog posts into our class discussions on the texts.

There are several benefits to including students as co-creators of course content that is shared beyond the course itself. Besides the pedagogical value of students being able to benefit from what their peers have created in addition to what the instructor provides as course material, knowing that their coursework is being made public can provide pressure for students to ensure that it is as good as possible (just as argued above for instructors). In addition, blog sites that allow comments can invite people outside the course to discuss students' projects, arguments, interpretations of texts, etc., which can be valuable by bringing in other perspectives or connecting students with experts or others interested in the field.[44]

There can also, however, be potential downsides to such activities. One has to be careful in monitoring any comments on student work for trolling or other inappropriate behavior. Monitoring of students' own posts is also necessary, to check for material that could be taken as denigrating others, or possibly as harassment, or as violating the privacy of people in the class. In addition, students may not wish to make their work public even to the rest of the class, much less to the world, perhaps because they are concerned about others' reactions to what they are creating or to the views they are expressing. One should, I believe, respect student choice in this matter by giving them the option of submitting their work only to the instructor, or only to other students in the class rather than publicly. The same goes for asking them to give their work an open license; it's important to let them choose *not* to do so.

---

[43] Christina Hendricks, Arts One seminar site, accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://a1hendricks.arts.ubc.ca. This site is for one seminar section of a larger course. All student blog posts for that course can be seen here: http://artsone-open.arts.ubc.ca.

[44] A high school philosophy class in British Columbia, Canada, for example, invites anyone who is interested to participate by commenting on blog posts by students and the instructor, or making blog posts oneself. Bryan Jackson, "Talons Philosophy: An Open Online Philosophy Course," accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://philosophy.talons43.ca/.

Finally, sharing one's own thoughts on teaching and learning through blogs or other social media can also be considered an open educational practice. Sharing one's teaching materials is useful, but so is talking about what has worked well, what hasn't, why one has created a certain sort of assignment for what purposes, etc. An easy way to do this is to create a blog (there are numerous free blogging sites, such as through Wordpress or Blogger) and share one's thoughts there (I have a blog, for example, at http://blogs.ubc.ca/chendricks). Of course, then the difficulty is in publicizing one's blog and connecting with others so that one's ideas are truly *shared* and conversations can ensue. I have found that using social media such as Twitter can be an excellent way to publicize my blog posts and to connect with other educators. In this way one can join a larger community of educators with which one can discuss teaching strategies, ask questions, solicit suggestions for problems one is facing, and more. Some respondents to the survey I did on open education in Summer 2014 also pointed to this value of open educational practices.[46]

Conclusion

The AAPT workshop on teaching and learning in philosophy that takes place every two years is a fantastic opportunity for meeting other philosophy teachers and sharing ideas, strategies, and advice. Many of us who participate in it recognize its great value to our own teaching practice. Engaging in open educational activities can expand our community of practitioners even further, while providing financial and pedagogical benefits to our students as well. We can also contribute to the education of those who either cannot afford to take official courses in philosophy, or who simply want to engage in informal learning. Perhaps doing philosophy in the open could even help publicize how valuable doing philosophy can be, for many people and many kinds of activities, while at the same time promoting the realization of that value.

[46] Christina Hendricks, "Results of a survey on open education."

Works Cited

Adamson, Peter. *The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* (podcast). Accessed Nov. 10, 2014. http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/.

Cape Town Open Education Declaration. Accessed Oct. 25, 2014. http://www.capetowndeclaration.org.

Chae, Boyoung, and Mark Jenkins. *A Qualitative Investigation of Faculty Open Educational Resource Usage in the Washing Community and Technical College System: Models for Support and Implementation*. Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, January 2015. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4eZdZMtpULyZC1NRHMzOEhRRzg/view.

Chan, Judy. "FNH 200 student projects." UBC Wiki. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://wiki.ubc.ca/Course:FNH200/2013w2/TeamProjects.

College Board. "Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2013-2014." Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2013-14.

Coursera. "Terms of Use." Accessed October 25, 2014. https://www.coursera.org/about/terms.

Creative Commons. "About the Licenses." Accessed October 25, 2014. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/.

Edmonds, David and Warburton, Nigel. *Ethics Bites Podcast*. Accessed October 26, 2014. http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/philosophy/ethics-bites-podcast-the-full-series.

Edmonds, David and Warburton, Nigel. *Philosophy Bites Podcast*. Accessed October 26, 2014. http://philosophybites.com/.

Ehlers, Ulf-Daniel. "Extending the Territory: From Open Educational Resources to Open Educational Practices." *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning* 15, no. 2 (2011): 1-10. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014, http://journals.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/index.php/JOFDL/article/view/64.

Feldstein, Andrew, Mirta Martin, Amy Hudson, Kiara Warren, John Hilton III, and David Wiley. "Open Textbooks and Increased Student Access and Outcomes" *European Journal of Open, Distance, and E-Learning* (2012). Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://www.eurodl.org/index.php?p=archives&year=2012&halfyear=2&article=533

Festinger, Jon. Video Game Law website. Accessed Jan. 17, 2015. http://videogame.law.ubc.ca/video-game-law-textbook/about-the-author-forward-preface-2/.

Government of Canada. "Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2.0." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://data.gc.ca/eng/canadas-action-plan-open-government.

Hendricks, Christina. Arts One seminar site. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://a1hendricks.arts.ubc.ca.

Hendricks, Christina. "Results of a survey on open education." UBC Wiki. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://wiki.ubc.ca/Sandbox:Teaching_and_Learning_in_the_Open/SurveyResponses.

Hilton III, John and Carol Laman. "One College's Use of an Open Psychology Textbook." *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning* 27, no. 3 (September 14, 2012): 265-272. doi: 10.1080/02680513.2012.716657.

Hilton III, John Levi, Donna Gaudet, Phil Clark, Jared Robinson and David Wiley. "The Adoption of Open Educational Resources by One Community College Math Department." *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 14, no. 4 (August 28, 2013): 37-5-. http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1523.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Copyright Information." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.iep.utm.edu/home/copyright/.

Jackson, Bryan. "Talons Philosophy: An Open Online Philosophy Course." Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://philosophy.talons43.ca/.

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). "What are Open Educational Resources?" Accessed October 25, 2014. https://openeducationalresources.pbworks.com/w/page/24836860/What%20are%20Open%20Educational%20Resources.

Morrison, Debbie. "The Ultimate Student Guide to xMOOCs and cMOOCs." *MOOC News and Reviews*, April 22, 2013. Accessed Oct. 25, 2014. http://moocnewsandreviews.com/ultimate-guide-to-xmoocs-and-cmoocso/.

Murray, J.B. "Was introducing Wikipedia to the classroom an act of madness leading only to mayhem if not murder?" *Wikipedia*. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jbmurray/Madness.

Open Education Handbook 2014. "Finding and Using OER." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://booktype.okfn.org/open-education-handbook-2014/_draft/_v/1.0/finding-and-using-oer/.

Open Knowledge Foundation Network. "The Open Definition." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://opendefinition.org/od/.

Philosophy Department, San Jose State University. "An Open Letter to Professor Michael Sandel from the Philosophy Department at San Jose State U." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* May 2, 2013. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. https://chronicle.com/article/The-Document-Open-Letter-From/138937/.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Policy on Course Readers." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://plato.stanford.edu/course-readers.html.

SUNY Open Textbooks. Accessed Nov. 10, 2014. http://opensuny.org/omp/index.php/SUNYOpenTextbooks/index.

United States White House. "Open Government Initiative." Accessed Oct. 25, 2014. http://www.whitehouse.gov/open.

UNESCO. "What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?" Accessed October 26, 2014. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/open-educational-resources/what-are-open-educational-resources-oers/.

U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Student PIRGs. *Affordable Textbooks: A Policy Guide*. March 2014. http://studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/affordable-textbooks-policy-guide.

U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Student PIRGs. *Fixing the Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond to High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives*. By Ethan Senack. January 2014. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market.

U.S. Student PIRGs. *Make Textbooks Affordable*. Accessed Nov. 1, 2014. http://studentpirgs.org/campaigns/sp/make-textbooks-affordable.

U.S. Student PIRGs. *Open Textbooks: The Billion Dollar Solution*. By Ethan Senack. February 2015. Accessed March 7, 2015. http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/open-textbooks-billion-dollar-solution.

Wiki Educator. "Exemplary Collection of Open eLearning Content Repositories." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://wikieducator.org/Exemplary_Collection_of_Open_eLearning_Content_Repositories.

Wiley, David. "The Open Content Definition." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://opencontent.org/definition/.

Wiley, David, John Levi Hilton III, Shelley Ellington, and Tiffany Hall. "A Preliminary Examination of the Cost Savings and Learning Impacts of Using Open Textbooks in Middle and High School Science Classes." *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 262–76. http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1153.

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. "Open Educational Resources." Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources.