

Connections Matter: How Interactive Peers Affect Students in Online College Courses

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- Peer interactions are an integral part of higher education.
- The explosion of college online courses have dramatically changed how peers interact.
- In place of traditional face-to-face interactions, online discussion boards are now primary arenas for peer interaction.

Contemp Issues	
Professor:	
Topics	
> Civic Virtue (graded)	45 response(s) unread
Global Competition (graded)	43 response(s) unread
Q & A Forum (not graded)	13 response(s) unread

Civic Virtue (graded)

Contemporary trends in education include character education and requiring students to engage in community service projects. Should schools be involved in fostering the qualities of civic virtue? Why or why not?

Responses		
Response	Author	Date/Time*
Response		
Civic Virtue	Professor Nagel	2/22/2015 2:46:26 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Kylee Francis	3/16/2015 6:32:09 AM
RE: Civic Virtue	Tiffany Franks	3/16/2015 11:37:44 AM
Kylee	Professor Nagel	3/16/2015 2:06:01 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Stephanie Otte	3/18/2015 11:01:40 AM
RE: Civic Virtue	Suada Selmanovic	3/18/2015 2:10:09 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Sheree Hairston	3/18/2015 8:12:59 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Suada Selmanovic	3/19/2015 9:08:44 AM
Responsibility	Professor Nagel	3/19/2015 3:27:15 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Ronetra Smoot	3/16/2015 10:49:35 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Suada Selmanovic	3/17/2015 1:56:18 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Suada Selmanovic	3/17/2015 2:05:56 PM
RE: Civic Virtue	Latasha Parchman	3/18/2015 11:22:16 PM
Building Character	Professor Nagel	3/19/2015 3:25:44 PM
Research Challenge	Professor Nagel	3/15/2015 4:59:29 AM

Data: Full transcripts from two online courses delivered in 2010 by DeVry University. (> 2 million posts)

Measurement of peer interaction: Peer's outreach to classmates.

—Without information on the hierarchy of posts, we identify whether a post has a peer's name embedded.

Method:

- (1) Leveraging the timing of course registration to solve students' non-random sorting into classrooms.
- (2) instrumental variable approach to overcome the simultaneous nature of peer interactions, which is the so-called “reflection” issue.

RQ 1: How do interpersonal interactions in college online courses differ across students with different background characteristics and different levels of engagement in the course.

RQ 2: How do peer's interpersonal interactions affect student course performance, especially for those who are less likely to be engaged in classroom interactions?

