

# Graduate comprehensive exam

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Final requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in English  
with an emphasis in  
Rhetoric and Technical Communication

Benjamin G. Burbank, B.A.

June 6, 2017

# Panel members



- Benjamin Burbank, candidate
- Teena Carnegie, Ph.D., mentor
- Justin Young, Ed.D., committee member
- Dan Tappan, Ph.D., committee member



# Housekeeping

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- 10 minute presentation
- Panel discussion
- 10 minute presentation
- Panel discussion
- Sequestered discussion



# Got MOOC?: Getting the Most out of MOOCs for Technical Communication

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Research paper for the degree of Master of Arts in English  
with an emphasis in  
Rhetoric and Technical Communication

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# Outline

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1. Why are MOOCs important?
2. What does the research expose?
3. How can MOOCs prove useful in the meantime?
4. Discussion



# Why are MOOCs important?



- Primary question:
  - What is the most effective use of MOOCs for technical communicators?
- Component questions:
  - What are the main differences between MOOCs?
  - What do the different MOOCs *specialize* in?
  - How do MOOCs compare with traditional education in terms of actual and perceived value?



# What does the research expose?



- Arguments against / for MOOCs
  - critic / proponent roles
  - academic / commercial roles
  - traditional pedagogy / connectivism division
  - brick-and-mortar / distributed differences
- MOOC technology requires further development before established core structures emerge



# How can MOOCs prove useful in the meantime?



- Sorting platforms into academic/commercial and for profit/free groupings
  - academic pay MOOCs
  - commercial pay MOOCs
  - academic free MOOCs
  - NPO MOOCs





# Discussion

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# Re-examining “Engagement” in Discussions about Gamification

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Research paper for the degree of Master of Arts in English  
with an emphasis in  
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# Outline

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1. Is gamification an effective technique in education/training?
2. Development of gamification
3. Problematic usage of “engagement”
4. Suggestions for future research
5. Discussion



# Is gamification an effective technique in education/training?

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- At first glance, yes
  - researchers all agree
- But it's complicated
  - researchers' definitions are unclear



# Development of gamification



- Gaming as a growing trend
- Social desire for increased interactions
- Gamification enters education
- Researchers use gamification to increase engagement
- Researchers suggest that engagement is increased
- No shared definition of engagement



# Problematic usage of “engagement”



- “Engagement” with entirely positive connotations acts as a god-term
- “Engagement” containing both measurable and immeasurable aspects acts as a confused notion
- “Engagement” used as a desired outcome or an indicator should be thought of as a performance metric





# Suggestions for future research



- Clarify definitions of engagement
  - god-terms
  - confused notions
- Define clear performance metrics
  - quantitative
  - qualitative



# Discussion

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