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UCT, FutureLearn to share African perspectives on knowledge with launch of two free global online social learning platform courses

The University of Cape Town (UCT) and FutureLearn will help share African perspectives in two different fields of learning through the launch of the first two courses on their online social learning platform. "Medicine and the Arts: Humanising Healthcare" and "What is a Mind?" will launch in March and May 2015, respectively. Both will be convened by renowned academics in their fields.

FutureLearn's social learning platform provides courses, also known as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), are free, with no entry requirements. They are designed for mass participation and assume that learners will drive their own education, studying alongside diverse fellow students who may come from anywhere in the world. While access to a course is free, learners are able to purchase a certificate of completion if they so wish.

Professor Sandra Klopper, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning at UCT, is driving the MOOCs initiatives at the university. She says: "MOOCs are one way of us putting ourselves on the map internationally. In the long term, it will be a way of advertising and branding UCT, but also a way of us learning from the process."

Associate Professor Laura Czerniewicz, Director of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at UCT, believes MOOCs are a means of addressing the imbalance in how knowledge is produced and disseminated around the world. "The vast majority of MOOCs being produced in the world are offered by universities in the global north; while their students are from every corner of the world. This has the effect of rendering local knowledge and curricula invisible. It is really important for universities in Africa and other countries in the global south to produce MOOCs based on local knowledge, experiences and curricula," says Professor Czerniewicz.

Simon Nelson, CEO of FutureLearn, says: "I am delighted to welcome the University of Cape Town to the FutureLearn partnership, not only as a positive step towards bringing African perspectives to international students, but also for the innovations in teaching healthcare and culture that UCT will bring to our global community of learners. I am pleased that FutureLearn can act as a conduit to take UCT's brand and expertise to a worldwide audience."

UCT's first MOOC, "Medicine and the Arts: Humanising Healthcare", starts on 16 March

2015. This free online course will explore the intersection of medicine, medical anthropology and the creative arts. Through each of its six weeks, participants will visit a new aspect of human life and consider it from the perspectives of people working in health sciences, social sciences and the arts. The course conveners are Associate Professor Susan Levine and Professor Steve Reid.

The second course, "What is a mind", starts on 11 May 2015. The course will bring together learners and practitioners from around the world interested in how the mind works and will aim to build bridges between traditionally antagonistic approaches to understanding the mind. Professor Mark Solms, Chair of Neuropsychology at UCT, will bring in perspectives from a range of disciplines to explore four specific aspects of the mind – subjectivity, intentionality, consciousness and agency – helping participants to come to a fuller understanding of what a mind is.

Both courses are open for enrolment on the FutureLearn platform:

- Medicine and the Arts: Humanising Healthcare
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/medicine-and-the-arts>
- What is a Mind? <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/what-is-a-mind>

About the University of Cape Town

The oldest teaching university in South Africa, UCT was founded in 1829 as the South African College, a high school for boys. Today UCT is the highest ranking university in Africa, with more than 100,000 alumni living around the world. Research initiatives focus on developing African-based solutions to problems and issues that are also faced by other nations, such as climate change, poverty and inequality, urbanisation and sustainability, health issues, safety and violence, gender issues and education.

UCT offers undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes across its six faculties: Commerce, Engineering & the Built Environment, Law, Health Sciences, Humanities and Science. The student population numbers more than 26,000, including about 5,000 international students from more than 100 different countries. For more information, visit www.uct.ac.za.

About FutureLearn

FutureLearn is a social learning platform based in the United Kingdom and provides free, online courses from world-class universities. FutureLearn has over 1 million registered learners from 190 countries and offers free, high quality courses to anyone with an internet connection, anywhere in the world. For more information, visit www.futurelearn.com.

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