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To: Steven Kolowich, The Chronicle of Higher Education

I strongly believe that online courses are no substitute for the personal engagement of teachers with students, especially in the humanities. A few years ago, with Harvard's support, I made my course "Justice" freely available [online](#), as an experiment in open global access to the classroom. The goal was to enable anyone, anywhere, to have free access to the lecture videos, a discussion blog, and other educational materials.

This year, we made a version of the course available on the edX platform. I know very little about the arrangements edX made with San Jose State University, and nothing about the internal discussions at SJSU. My goal is simply to make an educational resource freely available--a resource that faculty colleagues should be free to use in whole or in part, or not at all, as they see fit.

The worry that the widespread use of online courses will damage departments in public universities facing budgetary pressures is a legitimate concern that deserves serious debate, at edX and throughout higher education. The last thing I want is for my online lectures to be used to undermine faculty colleagues at other institutions.