

November 2012 Newsletter

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**OCW's New Look and New Features**

In the upcoming weeks, we will launch a redesigned OCW site, with a new home page, a topic-based course finder, and new look-and-feel for the course pages. But don't worry, we'll still have all the same great content!

> [Learn more about our site redesign](#)

**Current Events in Context: Making Math Cool**



Image by [jdlasica](#).

Barack Obama may have taken the presidency, but Nate Silver won the election. His talent for political prediction, or psephology, as it's called, has not merely allowed him to emerge as the most prescient analyst of the 2012 election season—he called the presidential results in all 50 states—but catapulted him into geek guru status. (Just Google [#drunknatesilver](#) for proof.)

**DONATE NOW**

We hope you learned something new or refreshed your memory on a topic you've previously studied.

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Although Silver's popularity may be founded on his predictions, his rise might best be viewed as the welcome triumph of science over spin. Silver's predictive models proceed from a very modest (though ambitious) formula: he averages the sum of every single poll in America, weights them according to their historical accuracy, then runs simulations to test outcomes. This purely data-driven approach to political analysis stands in sharp contrast to most pundits' tendency to "cherry-pick" polls or rely on intuition.

Silver's seemingly effortless rise to fame, propelled by analytics, certainly makes math feel cool. He quit his day job in an accounting firm after selling a predictive baseball performance model, called PECOTA, to Baseball Prospectus, then made a bundle playing online poker for a year. After less than a year covering the 2008 elections, his blog FiveThirtyEight was picked up by the *New York Times*, and he was even granted unprecedented access to the Obama re-election team's private polling data, in order to validate their numbers within his own model.

While we wait for Silver's next career move—there's speculation that he might try his hand at Hollywood box-office predictions—there are plenty of OCW courses to help us catch up with him.

- 15.075J Statistical Thinking and Data Analysis presents an introduction to statistical topics such as applied probability, sampling, estimation, hypothesis testing, linear regression, analysis of variance, categorical data analysis, and nonparametric statistics.
- 18.05 Introduction to Probability and Statistics explains many of the basic concepts in basic probability models, combinatorics, random variables, discrete and continuous probability distributions, statistical estimation and testing, confidence intervals, and linear regression.
- 18.443 Statistics for Applications offers a broad treatment of statistics, while concentrating on specific statistical techniques used in science and industry, such as hypothesis testing and estimation, confidence intervals, chi-square tests, nonparametric statistics, analysis of variance, regression, correlation, decision theory, and Bayesian statistics.
- 17.872 Quantitative Research in Political Science and Public Policy provides students with a rigorous introduction to Statistics for Political Science. Topics include basic mathematical tools used in social science modeling and statistics, probability theory, theory of estimation and inference, and statistical methods, especially differences of means and regression.



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OCW is grateful for the support of:



## New Courses

- [17.561 European Politics](#)
  - [21M.710 Script Analysis](#)
  - [21M.785 Playwrights' Workshop](#)
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## Updated Courses

- [6.231 Dynamic Programming and Stochastic Control](#)

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## Your Feedback about Our New Video Features

We're testing out some new video features, including interactive transcripts and new video search capabilities, and we'd like YOUR feedback.

Click on the link below to try out these new features and then **be sure to let us know what you think by filling out the survey.**

> [See and test MIT OpenCourseWare Interactive Videos](#)

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## Highlights for High School



ChemLab Boot Camp follows 14 MIT freshmen as they face the challenges of learning chemistry the MIT way.

Every January, the MIT Chemistry Department runs a four-week laboratory "boot camp" for freshmen (also known as [5.301 Chemistry Laboratory Techniques](#)), and those who pass are guaranteed a job in an MIT research lab.

Now you can follow along as 14 students learn everything from column chromatography to protein assays.

Episodes one through ten are now online. See teams compete to grow the biggest crystal, recover from mishaps, and rise to other challenges.

> [See the newest ChemLab Boot Camp episodes](#)

> [Sign up for e-mail notifications of episode releases and special content.](#)

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## Shop OCW and Show Your Support

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Royalties from online store sales help support our mission to publish the core teaching materials from virtually all of MIT's courses and share them with the world openly and freely.



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## Views from Supporters



Image of Manilla at night. Photo by NekaPearl.

"During my junior high, I enrolled in International Corresponding School of University of Pennsylvania. I completed the Electronic Technician Course in three years. My monthly tuition fee then was 20 Philippine pesos.

Today such kind of school are gone. However, there is MIT OCW and it is free. I encourage my students and co-faculty to have MIT OCW as tutor.

In my country where poverty is high, the MIT OCW will alleviate poverty because of the very high quality engineering education. I am encourage to donate more because of the launching of MITx that I am currently enrolled. The certification is indeed a big deal. More power to your generous institution MIT OCW and MITx."

- Celso, Educator, Philippines

[> Read more](#)

Tell us what you think of OCW at [ocw-feedback@mit.edu](mailto:ocw-feedback@mit.edu).



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