



# UNCG

Hi, I'm Jeff Sarbaum, and I'm an instructor in the department of Economics at the University of North Carolina. One of the things that's unique about the DCL courses is that because of their technology they allow a much higher degree of interactivity among the students. For example, in my global economy course we play a variety of games that some of which are played against artificial intelligence and some of which are played against other students in the course and it's this kind of technology that brings the students together and makes them feel like their members of a course not just someone out in the middle of nowhere that is really not interacting in any way. In some sense, when I teach my online courses, I actually feel like there's more of a classroom environment taking place than when I'm in the classroom itself. I feel like I get to know the students very well because of the exchange and the interactivity we have through the discussion boards and students share things that they might not otherwise share in a traditional classroom setting. And I think this is very freeing for the students, very liberating giving them the opportunity to express their thoughts and explore their ideas and how they think about the world in ways that they might not if they were in the environment of sitting in a classroom with their peers looking at them directly.

One of the things that amazed me the most in the global economy course was when we were playing this game that was about interdependency and how the outcome of one player's decisions are a function of another player's decisions. In this game the students got so engaged in it that I saw them posting at all hours of the day the discussion boards, and students were even actually setting up outside chat rooms so that they could have live access to one another and instant messaging to others and try to develop a strategy and a solution to win the game for their team against other players in the course. And it was just amazing to me to see how engaged and involved the students got. And one of the things that I came away from after seeing that was that the students really got to know each other. I mean that they felt like they knew each other better through these discussion boards than if they would have been seeing each other just sort of blindly sitting next to one another in a classroom on a daily basis. And it was that kind of interactivity and exchange that really convinced me that online classes work and that they are a classroom.