

# *Th: Jefferson* MONTICELLO

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## Peter Onuf on Monticello's Online Course "Age of Jefferson"

This Presidents' Day, Monticello and the University of Virginia launched a new, free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) "The Age of Jefferson." Peter Onuf, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation professor emeritus at UVA and senior fellow at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, taught the six-week course. Over 17,000 people from around the world signed up on Coursera and iTunes U.



**Peter Onuf, Thomas Jefferson Foundation professor emeritus at the University of Virginia and senior fellow at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies.**

Photo by Dan Addison, UVA photographer

"Thinking about Jefferson offers us an opportunity to think about where we are right now," said Onuf, who is also one of three hosts on the public radio show *BackStory with the American History Guys*. To him, the "Age of Jefferson" and the American Revolution are where the concept of "a self-governing people" emerged and began to shape modern history. "Studying Jefferson, his hopes and fears, his achievements and his failures, enables us to understand our world better," Onuf explained.

The digital platform has helped move the dialogue on Jefferson beyond the classroom and around the globe. In Onuf's mind, the real Jefferson legacy would be to let "a thousand MOOCs bloom" and have a continued conversation about Jefferson each generation. "Jefferson told us, 'The earth belongs to the living,' and there are many things we can learn from Jefferson not just about him, but about ourselves."

