A History of Crash Course

About Crash Course
https://youtube.com/watch?v=1Q5cPfbmSD8
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/1Q5cPfbmSD8

===== (00:00) to (02:00) =====

(Complexly intro)

John: Hi, I'm John Green, and this is Crash Course.

Hank: I'm Hank Green and I want to teach you chemistry.

Andre: This is Crash Course Games.

Adrienne: Crash Course Economics.

Phil: Crash Course Astronomy.

Craig: It's a free educational tool for everyone.

Hank: Crash Course's vision was so big.

John: But I do remember thinking, oh man, it is fun. This is fun. It was so fun.

Shini: If I had had this material when I was studying, it would have changed the way I learned.

Nicole: It was being explained in this way that, like, I actually understood it.

Craig: And this is Crash Course Government.

Stan: Crash Course Intellectual Property.

Nicole: Crash Course Sociology.

Stan: It was wild.

Nick: We were just trying to figure out what it was.

Craig: Crash Course Film History.

Mike: Crash Course Mythology.

Carrie Anne: Crash Course Computer Science.

Shini: I remember just having a huge smile on my face while I was watching those videos.

John: We wanna be useful to schools and teachers and students but we also want to be useful to people who are just excited about learning because it's possibly the meaning of life.

(Crash Course intro music plays)

John: Way back in 2006, my brother and I communicated almost exclusively over AOL Instant Messenger.

Hank: John was a fan of weird internet shows.

Ze Frank: Sportsracer, racin' sports. What's your power move? Ahh.

Grace: It's interesting the emotional--god bless you.

Hank: And he thought, hey, we should do that?

Hank from the past: Hey John. I guess you've heard by now, autopower off? Why the--still some glitches to work out.

John from the past: Pffft. I'm not going to be good at this.

Hank: When you're making as many videos as we did, sometimes you just don't have any good ideas.

John from the past: One, two, three. Ohhhhh!

Hank: So we decided at one point to make some educational videos.

John from the past: Good morning, Hank, it's Friday. Today, I share with you a story about guns, indoor tennis courts, guillotines, humorous outfits, and competing historical narratives. That's right, it's time to learn about the French revolution.

===== (02:00) to (04:00) =====

John: Hank and I got really interested in the problem of educational video online, like, it was expensive to make, which made it kind of impossible to make on the YouTube of that era. Our audience would always respond very positively and we would enjoy doing it, it's just that it was way too much work and we had to pay people to do what little graphics there were, and so it just--there was no way to make it work from an economic perspective.

Hank: At some point, I think it may have been 2008, John made a video about the American healthcare system.

Jonathon: We came upon this vlogger who had a really great rant about why, you know, healthcare reform was kind of like this fat pig that he had met at this fair.

John from the past: So what do you do when you have a pig that's so big he can't walk? You either kill him, put him on a diet, or keep feeding him, which is more or less what the healthcare debate boils down to.

Jonathon: Wow, we could really just use this voiceover, make a really awesome motion graphic video and it explains it all right in this, in this narration.

Suzanna: To us, at that moment, he was just a really intelligent guy who was able to describe this issue really, really well.

Jonathon: And on top of that, the audience that they have naturally been curating is a really good fit for the type of audience that we think would appreciate the work we're doing.

Hank: So we found Thought Cafe because they just decided to make an animation of a video that John made that got a lot of views and that was, you know, a really good summary of the American healthcare system and we reached out to them and we were like, can we do more of this? And they were like, yes, here's our budget, and we were like, no, we can't.

John: For years, we held on to this dream that someday we would be able to make, like, high quality educational video with cool production values that, you know, looked like YouTube but at the same time was rigorous and intellectually engaged and nuanced.

John from the past: Ultimately, the reason that we have to know that the square root of four is two is because it helps us to build cathedrals and think about space and make out with people, but more on that in a second.

===== (04:00) to (06:00) =====

Hank: YouTube came to us because they wanted some more professional looking content on the site with some grant money to like, get channels started up.

John: And we said, well, that's awesome, because we really wanna make these two educational YouTube shows, SciShow and Crash Course.

Hank: John pitched me Crash Course and I knew that it was an amazing idea but it, to me, sounded too hard and I pitched him SciShow.

John: Well, hopefully YouTube will pick one of these, but I guess our ideas were significantly cheaper than some of the Hollywood production studios' ideas so they felt like it wasn't that much of an extra risk to fund both of them.

Blake: Like all truly meaningful relationships, my relationship with Crash Course began with a Craigslist ad.

Stan: I was constantly looking for work, reading the want ads. I was on Japanese television once in a roller coaster show. I found this job listing that said "looking for an assistant/video assistant for New York Times bestselling author and videoblogger" and I called my mom, who's a high school English teacher and said, "have you heard of this John Green guy?" and she's like, "Oh, yes, he's the real deal."

Michael: Hank mentioned that he was starting a production company in Missoula and he asked me if I wanted to work there, and I was like, okay. So two months later, I packed my bags into my Mustang, in the winter, and drove through some very snowy conditions to get myself to Missoula, Montana.

Zulaiha: Well, I heard about Crash Course, I think just through vlogbrothers, just being a longtime nerdfighter, and then I heard about the job when John Tweeted about in one time in 2014 and just applied on a whim and happened to get it.

===== (06:00) to (08:00) =====

Nick: So I had been working as a teacher and as a freelance videographer and then I got an email from Hank's assistant at the time. I had had a bad day or something and decided, okay, I'll respond because this sounds interesting to me.

Meredith: I was a fan of John and Hank in high school and so in college, I saw that John was gonna be speaking locally and I went to that. I was very excited, and I actually met him beforehand and we kind of got along and luckily he offered me the internship and I've been here since.

Brandon: Stan was looking for help for new, you know, for other producers and editors, and we set up an interview and it ended up being with John, even though I didn't realize it was gonna be with John and I panicked a little but I guess it went well enough that they hired me, so.

Nicole: I saw this job listing on Tumblr and I made a greenscreen in my brother's bedroom and made a very silly video explaining why they should hire me and then I sent it off and thought nothing would come of it, but they hired me, so now I'm here.

Blake: The first thing I worked on for Crash Course was Crash Course Biology, which I loved. It also was incredibly hard because we were building the car as we were driving it.

Nick: We had the script and we had a general idea of how we wanted it to be used, but not necessarily what it was gonna look like specifically. We were testing a lot of things and it was scary.

Stan: Terrifying, really. John had lots of ideas about how it should be shot.

John: I kept saying to Stan that I wanted it to look like I was in heaven, and I wanted everything to be super crazy white and my face to be way overexposed and my shirt to be overexposed and I was like, trust me, this is what YouTube looks like right now, Stan, you don't understand and he was like, I think this is gonna look very blue and weird, and I was like, Stan. We're gonna do it this way. And it looked very blue and weird.

===== (08:00) to (10:00) =====

Blake: The way Hank described it to me once is that I asked him, who are we trying to reach, because I was used to working for these online operations where the answer was always 'everybody, just as many clicks as possible' and he said, 'First, I wanna make sure that people who need to know this stuff are going to need it and watch it and also people who are just interested are going to watch it' and that was very clarifying for me, you know? We didn't have to be clickbait-y about it.

John: It was so fun to be working with Stan, working with someone I liked so much, who I respected so much, and also working on something that felt bigger than me.

John from the past: And in September of 1774, a group of delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies--Georgia!

Hank from the past: This is actually a morula, or morula, at least according to this guy. Morula or morula.

John from the past: I wonder what's in today's secret compartment. Oh, shocking, it's a golf club.

Stan: The writing, I find, is often the hardest part. Once we've got scripts and have shaped them up to something that sounds right to us, we'll schedule our out-of-town talent to come in, shoot the thing.

Shini: There's a very small community of science communicators and I've been presenting science and technology for quite a number of years now in television.

Shini from the past: I'm in the National Wind Institute at Texas Tech University.

Shini: And then I came to Missoula and met the team and I just completely fell in love with the whole concept and everyone working on it.

Nick: For me, Brandon, Nicole, and Stan, we each are sort of masterminding the production process of a Crash Course series.

Nicole: It takes us around an hour per episode to film the episode.

?: Crash Course Computer Science Episode 19, take three.

?: History of Science Episode 21, take four.

Nicole: The editor, whoever it is for that series, takes the footage, cuts it.

===== (10:00) to (12:00) =====

The consultant then looks at that and makes sure that we didn't say anything that was egregiously wrong or problematic. Once we get the okay from the consultant, we send that off to Thought Cafe and they do their magic.

John: When we got the deal from Google to make--start making Crash Course, the first people I thought of were Thought Cafe, because they're passionate, because they love learning, because

they love to make funny little jokes in their animation, you know, that attention to detail I think is what makes Thought Cafe so special.

Suzanna: When we were brainstorming, you know, early on about Crash Course, we wanted to come to a style that would be easy to reproduce and that would still be able to be expressive. So you know, Crash Course had this thing where it was really educational and really serious but at the same time, didn't take itself seriously and has this witty humorous side to it.

Nick: They're not just doing graphics. They're not just realizing the script. They're also inserting their own personalities into the script and adding jokes and adding teachable moments.

James: You have the script with a description of what should happen, and then that gets passed on to an illustrator, and then that--all that stuff gets thrown on to the animator, and so while there's the instructions, you still have this element of, not so much broken telephone, but you've got the possibility of each person sort of inserting their own ideas.

Michael: I think working on Crash Course has helped show me how difficult it is to teach people things.

Blake: Most teachers will tell you that the most effective teaching is done when students have a really close personal bond with people who are teaching them and you wouldn't think that that's possible in an online medium but Hank and John have proven that it is possible.

===== (12:00) to (14:00) =====

Hank: Crash Course is used by students and teachers at every level of who those people are and where they are. It's like, I am consistently surprised to find that there are like, ten year olds watching Crash Course, 'cause it's pretty complicated stuff, but like, kids are smart, and then we have, you know, a ton of people who watch the courses just because they want to learn, not because they're trying to do well on a test or because they're trying to get a job, they just wanna learn about stuff.

Zulaiha: I really don't think there's another resource out there for high school and college students that's free and as easily accessible, 'cause most people, at least in the US, can access YouTube.

Shini: I think Crash Course does something very serious and very important, which is to provie education for everybody.

John: We knew coming out of our period of Google funding that Crash Course was going to become kind of unsustainable overnight.

Caitlin: Equipment is expensive, people are expensive, talent is expensive, there's just a lot that goes into making a quality product and on educational content, you want it to have a long life.

Hank: Not just making it correct, but also making it accessible and fun and enjoyable, all those things have a lot of work that go into them.

Craig: To effectively make good educational content, I think requires people to edit, people to write, people to research, people to be very engaging on camera.

Hank: You know, when you look at the budget, there aren't that many things that are like, this is the big line share of the budget, it's a bunch of things that are all very valuable and that we need to be putting resources toward.

Caitlin: In funding, you want to not lose the integrity of the videos that you're making, so making really smart funding choices takes a lot of energy and a lot of research and trusted partners.

Kelsey: Crash Course and PBS is, to me, the most natural partnership that I could imagine. PBS calls itself "America's largest classroom" and I think Crash Course has the potential to be the world's largest classroom.

Lauren: So Digital Studios has been around for about four years and we started because PBS on television really had an audience problem. They had kids locked up of course and then it really dropped off until about 65+ so we saw a real opportunity to build an audience of kind of loyal, engaged fans of PBS that probably never watch it on TV.

===== (14:00) to (16:00) =====

Nick: It's a natural partnership. It feels like of course we and they should be working on the same thing.

Lauren: And really, we were inspired by a lot of the work that John and Hank were already doing in the education space and we saw that people were really looking for content that was both smart and entertaining so we jumped in.

Nick: So before we went into crowdfunding, we had kinda two ways to get a Crash Course series off the ground. The first was obviously ad revenue, but then there's also partnering, and we partnered with PBS. As we know, ad revenue can be very volatile, so it's up and down and you can't really depend on it, but what we can depend on is, turns out, crowdfunding.

John: The biggest surprise for me when we launched our Patreon was that it worked. I was just astonished and relieved that people valued Crash Course and that they were willing to support it on a monthly basis.

Hank: Anybody who has elected to give us money to produce Crash Course, like, I'm so glad that we proved to you that we're worth that.

Michael: I don't think there is a way to adequately communicate to the people who have given money to this how meaningful and important that is.

Nicole: We have brainstorming meetings where we're trying to figure out how best to give back to the Patrons and mostly what we keep coming up with is that people just like Crash Course and they just like supporting us.

Nick: Obviously we want Crash Course to continue, we want to keep making educational content, but we also wanna know what's working and what's not working. Patreon allows us to do that, it allows us to have a much more immediate contact with people who really care about us and care about what we're gonna be doing.

John: It's not an exaggeration to say that Crash Course would not exist without the people who support us on Patreon.

===== (16:00) to (18:00) =====

We never would have made it to this moment, and I also hope that you feel, as we do, that this is something that we're in together. We're working to solve this big, complex, multifaceted problem of getting high quality information to the kids and adults who need it and will benefit from it.

Brandon: This model opens it up to people who can afford to help out for the people that can't, which is great, and that's exactly what we've been trying to do for the sheer fact that it keeps it free.

John: Most people who watch Crash Course cannot afford to support us on Patreon, and that's okay. In fact, that's the way we want it. It's supposed to be free. That's why we're doing it this way. My hope is just that those who can support it and those who care about will choose to do so.

Hank: Five years from now, we're going to be covering more detailed, more in-depth topics. We're gonna get deeper into stuff.

Shini: More and more subjects being communicated.

Lauren: There's so many courses that could be done that aren't ever taught in schools that are so important to being a grown-up.

Nicole: Crash Course translated into as many languages as possible, not just the subtitles, but actually with hosts who speak those languages and corresponding graphics in those languages.

Zulaiha: I'm most excited about the curriculum project we're working on, where we're creating classroom materials for teachers to use with their students and I think having a textbook alternative like that is gonna be so valuable and if we can manage to do that in five years, I'll be super happy.

John: I also really want Crash Course to support lots of different kinds of learners, which I feel like it doesn't do a great job of right now.

Jonathon: Maybe some sort of, you know, game development or that kind of thing. I think there's a lot of potential for where Crash Course can go.

Craig: I'd like to see 300 more subjects, at least.

Blake: My hope and my ambition is that Crash Course is seen as the definitive online educational resource.

Hank: I want it to have the most impact that it can have. I know that we're already having a ton of impact, but I'm ready for it to grow as much as it can.

===== (18:00) to (19:52) =====

Michael: I'm excited in 5 years, 10 years, in 50 years if Crash Course is still a thing, to just be able to look back and see this huge amount of knowledge that has been encapsulated inside of Crash Course, ready for anyone to choose where they wanna start, what they want to learn.

John: My biggest hope is that in five years, Crash Course will still be around and that it will still be teaching lots of people, and not just teaching people about various topics, but helping people to get excited about learning and to feel that unironic enthusiasm that you can have in those moments where you realize that this is not just something that you have to do so that you can get a diploma. This is not some random hurdle that the system put in your way that you have to jump over in order to achieve adulthood or whatever. This is instead like, the work of adulthood and that's what I think Crash Course can be best at, not just sharing information but also getting people excited about learning and so my hope is that five years from now, we'll still be doing that, we'll be doing it for many more people in different languages and not just video.

Hank: Right now, just under 8,000 people support Crash Course on Patreon and that support has allowed us to create content that helps over half a million students, teachers, and learners every day, but we really want to get our total number of Patrons up over 10,000, so whether you want to give $1, $5, or $10, you can be a part of that and a part of our work to make education easier and better for students and teachers all over the world at Patreon.com/CrashCourse