Galvanizing Students, Faculty, and Institutions by Making Learning Meaningful:

Reacting-to-the-Past at Different Institutions

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Abstract

• How can students learn deeply and be truly engaged?
• How can students take ownership of their knowledge and skills and become life-long learners?
• How can faculty open their classrooms to new pedagogies, interdisciplinary approaches, and collaboration with colleagues?
• How can institutions support, assess, and propagate such approaches?

A panel of faculty and administrators from different colleges and universities will discuss how their use of the Reacting-to-the-Past (RTTP) pedagogy has achieved these goals. RTTP is based on serious games that are situated at key decision points throughout history. Students assume historical roles and develop carefully argued positions based on original texts and reach decisions on complex and controversial matters. RTTP games are open ended and explore the knowledge and forces that shape society. In an interactive fashion, we will discuss the pedagogy, its successes and challenges at different institutions and disciplinary contexts, and models of implementation and institutional support.
Agenda

• Introduction
• Assessment
• Implementation
• Game Demonstration
• Q&A

Reacting-to-the Past

• Important Complex Historical Dilemmas
• Reading and Referencing of Key (often “Big”) Texts
• Historical Personalities (sometimes Composites)
• Individually Distinct Roles with Own Objectives
• Research on Positions and Circumstances
• Factions of Similar Interests and Indeterminates
• Opportunity and Necessity to Persuade Others
• Variety of Means to Influence Outcomes
• Debate and Voting on Key Decisions
Motivation

- Free speech, hate speech, academic freedom
- Ability, opportunity, courage to take and revise positions
- Relativism
- Tolerate and understand different perspectives
- False equivalence
- Value-based judgement
- Truth and knowledge
- Changing communication modes and patterns

Cognitive Development

Perry (1970), Baxter Magolda (several)

Features

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- Critical Thinking
- Strategical Thinking
- Persistence
- Resilience
- Risk Taking
- Tolerance
- Collaboration/Team Work
- Problem Solving
- Ethical Decision Making
- Independence/Self-Motivation
- Focus and Immersion
- Nuance and Complexity
- Empathy
- Fun
- Engagement
- ...

Cognitive Development

Perry (1970), Baxter Magolda (several)
High-Impact Practices – 9 of 11

• First-Year Seminars and Experiences
• Common Intellectual Experiences
• Learning Communities (big questions, ...)
• Writing-Intensive Courses
• Collaborative Assignments and Projects
• Undergraduate Research
• Diversity/Global Learning
• ePortfolios
• Capstone Courses and Projects

Genesis

• Pioneered by Barnard historian Mark Carnes in the late 1990s
• Used by faculty at ~500 colleges and universities
• Large number of faculty authors and author groups, including students
• Regular RTTP Games: 3-10 class sessions
  • 19 published games, 5+ pipeline, 15-20 complete prototype, many in development
  • In-depth reading of “great texts,” complex issues, extensive writing and speaking
• Flashpoint Games: 2-3 class sessions
  • Several in pipeline for publication 2019
  • Single issues, fewer readings and assignments, some writing, speaking
• Mini/Micro Games: max 1 session
  • History, STEM, Political Sciences, Classics, Rhetoric, Communication Studies, Languages, Art, ... - ancient times until (almost) contemporary
• See https://reacting.barnard.edu/, BLORG, Facebook Faculty Reacting Lounge
Pedagogical Game Integration

- Class Size: 12/15 – 40/50 – 100/150, face-to-face/online
- Introductory/Survey Classes – Elective Classes
- Syllabus:
  - One to several short games
  - Mini-game followed by one or two regular games
  - Three regular games
- Set-Up and Debriefing
- Meta-Discussions and Skills
  - Controversial topics, speaking, etc.

Video Testimony

- Student Perspective:  
  [https://youtu.be/_U6L9ERzw0U](https://youtu.be/_U6L9ERzw0U)

- Faculty Perspective:  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnpE2MQqNXo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnpE2MQqNXo)
Assessment - Overview

Similar studies and reflections have also been authored on the teaching of classics (Anderson and Dix 2008), history (Carnes 2005; Greenbaum 2016; Higbee 2008; Karabin 2015), music history (Burke 2014), chemistry (Henderson and Henderson 2013), evolutionary biology (Grossman and Fleet 2016), methodological secularism (Henderson 2008), religion (Porter 2008), English for non-native speakers (Davison and Goldhaber 2007), theater (Hughes et al. 2006), non-violence and empathy (Lee 2005; Slater 2005), textual translations (McDonough 2015), French (Schaller 2012), and art history (Watson 2015; Watson and Salter 2016). Many studies have been authored, as well, on the gaming dynamics of RTTP (Carnes 2014b, c, d; Lang 2014a, b), on classroom community (Webb and Engar 2016), on course design (Ed Policy Group 2014), and on the impact of RTTP on revitalizing the classroom for instructors (Bowen 2016; Flaherty 2016; Houle 2006; Lang 2014c; Weston 2015).

Watson/Chase Hagood (2018)

Assessment – Self-Efficacy/Confidence

Table 4.2 Pre-test/post-test comparisons for RTTP questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>t (ED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male scores</td>
<td>M 6.39</td>
<td>SD 2.83</td>
<td>M 7.46</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue position</td>
<td>M 7.31</td>
<td>SD 2.43</td>
<td>M 8.15</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand different perspectives</td>
<td>M 7.60</td>
<td>SD 1.99</td>
<td>M 8.16</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify important points in reading</td>
<td>M 7.60</td>
<td>SD 2.70</td>
<td>M 8.10</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in debates</td>
<td>M 7.26</td>
<td>SD 2.42</td>
<td>M 8.00</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use evidence to support a position</td>
<td>M 7.91</td>
<td>SD 1.14</td>
<td>M 8.50</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schult/Lidinsky/Fetheringill Zwicker/Dunn (2018) – IU South Bend

Table 4.3 Pre-test/post-test comparisons for the academic questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>t (ED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research a paper</td>
<td>M 7.22</td>
<td>SD 2.10</td>
<td>M 9.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions in class</td>
<td>M 7.22</td>
<td>SD 2.10</td>
<td>M 9.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write papers</td>
<td>M 7.22</td>
<td>SD 2.10</td>
<td>M 9.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand scale</td>
<td>M 7.22</td>
<td>SD 2.10</td>
<td>M 9.07</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do well on exams</td>
<td>M 6.97</td>
<td>SD 2.51</td>
<td>M 7.96</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep up with work</td>
<td>M 7.09</td>
<td>SD 2.11</td>
<td>M 7.56</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Watson/Chase Hagood (2018)
Assessment RTTP – Success Story

I absolutely loved this! It made me step out of my comfort zone and talk in front of the class every day. I actually enjoyed learning about history which is not usual. Making students get into the history really helped me better understand what was going on and the importance of the issues that these people went through.

While the issues and people change, the real-world application of identifying groups and objectives is priceless. It is the difference between misguided frustration and people finding a solution.

Implementing RTTP – Avenues

• Individuals
• Departments
• Student Clubs
• Centers: Teaching Excellence, Learning, Active Learning, (Civic) Engagement ...
• Faculty Learning Communities
• Internal and External Grants
• Course Types (FYS, etc.) or Course Sequences
Implementing RTTP – Support

• Teaching Evals, Tenure/Promotion, Contingent Faculty
• Student (Workers) – Preceptors, Pay, Credits, Game Writing
• Conference Funding (addition to travel funds)
• Faculty Community and Support
• Local Workshops/Conferences
• Sabbaticals
• Faculty Development
• Institutional Longer-Term Structure
• Interdisciplinary/Interinstitutional Cooperation
• Institutional or Individual Consortium Membership

Implementing RTTP – Success Story

• RTTP Summer Institute
• Faculty Champion
• Campus Workshop
• Faculty Learning Community
• The Spread of Weird Costumes and Class and Public Outbursts
• Authoring of Games and RTTP Side Effects in Faculty and Students
• RTTP Endeavor Foundation Grant
Faculty Support – FB Faculty Lounge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support during RTTP game play.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support when planning to use a RTTP game.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of colleagues with similar interests.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting reading suggestions/discussions.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community (beyond) my Department/Program or School.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support when developing/writing RTTP games.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching ideas and material, also beyond RTTP.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety net in case something goes wrong.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging moral support.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about conferences and other events.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support when trying to figure out what RTTP game(s) to use, if any.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement to use RTTP games.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demonstration Game**

- **Hanlin Academy in Ming dynasty China, 16th c**
- **Members Grand Secretariat of the Hanlin Academy** (top-ranking civil service graduates, advisers Wanli emperor)
  - Confucian “purists”
  - Supporters of the First Grand Secretary
  - Indeterminates – multiples issues
- **Secrecy of the Forbidden City**
- **Scholars struggling to apply Confucian precepts to a dynasty in peril.**
- **Base conflict: Successor selection – other issues**
Demonstration Game - Wanli

- Differences and similarities demonstration and classroom game
- Sharing and analysis of game assumptions, information, and decisions, as well as possible secret roles
- Historical authenticity of decisions and outcomes
- Historical summary and context
- Student reflection about game experience
- Student reflection about game issues: Confucian governance & social crisis
Q&A

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