Rome Wasn't Built In A Day;
14 Weeks About Does It: Gamification in the Classics Classroom

One thing the ghouls who profit from the demise of education without understanding its purpose get right is that gameful pedagogy is an effective technique to increase student engagement (Bell 2017, Christensen 2011, Kapp 2012). Part of the challenge for educators, though, is trying to harness the grind and adventure of a game to genuine, class-enhancing purposes. This presentation will present my experience from a Roman Civ course in Spring 2023 that combined a tried-and-true intersubjective creative-analytic assignment with an experimental city-building game.

In the first section we will discuss the research on gamified classes. Though there is disagreement on how to define class as a 'game', nonetheless there are some common principles. You may already use goal-oriented assignments, student choice, and chunking of material to give students a sense of accomplishment and freedom, by reframing these techniques as parts of a game can give your classes a boost and help students feel greater agency. On a baser level, by giving students a menu of assignments to draw from you can reject the question that recurs as frequently as Jupiter's eagle to Prometheus' liver "what about extra credit?" with "just get credit, you choose how."

In the second section we will detail the successes and failures of my recent Roman Civ class. The core assignment for this class has always centered on students drawing a character from a hat and having to write a journal and commentary from that persona (see Chrol 2012). This iteration students could opt-in to drawing from a set of characters all living in the real border town of Tawern at the end of the first millennium. Students would cooperate and compete for money and glory, solve emergent events, build their homestead and the village. Though some

students barely participated, the half of the class that got into the game produced better Persona Projects, and the game design allowed students to research and produce work that accorded with their particular interests, augmenting the in-class work that we could do in our meager 14 weeks. It was not all dormice and peacock tongues, though. Some failures were foreseeable, i.e. my pedagogical eyes were bigger than my pedagogical stomach, the problem with giving students free will is they will exercise that will in how they see fit. Some failures were not, and during discussion hopefully other participants in the session can help me troubleshoot. Ideally we could find some play-testers for the future.

Bibliography

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