



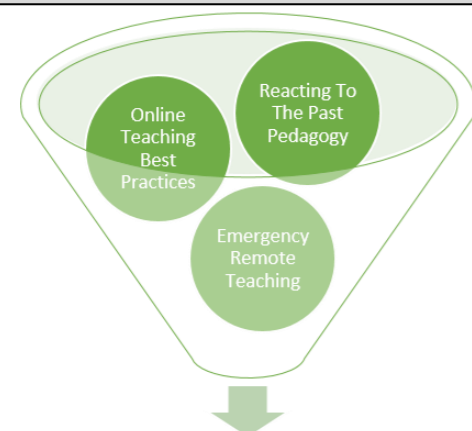
Emergency Remote Teaching with Reacting To The Past: A Case Study

Grant Kolean, Nickolas Dupras, and Kathryn R. Johnson

Department of History, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI, USA

Abstract

Reacting to the Past (RTTP) is an immersive historical role-playing and active learning pedagogy typically employed on-campus. This case study analyzed Northern Michigan University's History Department courses that utilized RTTP during the COVID-19 emergency remote teaching (ERT) shutdown. Maintaining RTTP and online learning pedagogical best practices was especially difficult. With little time to restructure their courses, the games were innovatively adapted to a variety of web-based platforms resulting in positive learning outcomes that varied by degree depending on technology and synchronous requirements. Inspiring unintended outcomes also occurred and were analyzed. This case study provides a unique and theoretically-grounded contribution to the fields of online and history pedagogies while also supporting additional research calls for the role of emotional presence in the Community of Inquiry. The poster will visually engage the audience with the case's key findings and suggest open software other educators might employ. The presenters will stimulate discussion to assist educators interested in conducting RTTP and similar active learning strategies online.



Literature Review

Research Questions:

1. Did the RTTP games achieve anticipated learning outcomes when implemented in the context of ERT?
2. Did faculty perceptions of the RTTP game as an immersive and emotionally-charged learning experience suffer when implemented in the context of ERT?
3. Were faculty able to achieve online teaching best practices according to Chickering and Gamson (1987), Quality Matters Standard 5.2, and the Community of Inquiry framework even when faculty did not intentionally design for those expectations?
4. How did the experience of conducting RTTP during ERT impact faculty decisions about teaching during the Fall 2020 semester?

Data Sources:

Oral history interviews with faculty from the four courses, learning objects, anonymized student-created digital artifacts, and written documentation

Course Details

Course Title	Embedded Units of Analysis			
	HS 110	HS 130	HS 222	HS 308
Virtual Attendance after Shutdown	30 (86%)	38 (78%)	35 (81%)	16 (100%)
Teaching Assistant	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Game #1, Timing, A/synchronous, Technology	<i>Second Crusade</i> ; two sessions to go post-shutdown; Synchronous on Zoom	<i>Climate Change in Copenhagen</i> ; Halfway into game at shutdown; Asynchronous; Slack & LMS	<i>Paterson Silk Strike 1913</i> ; Prior to shutdown, in person on campus	<i>Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791</i> ; Prior to shutdown, in person on campus
Game #2, Timing, A/synchronous, Technology	<i>The Black Death Comes to Norwich</i> ; end of semester; Asynchronous; LMS	<i>The Needs of Others, Rwanda, 1994</i> ; end of semester; Synchronous; Discord & LMS	<i>Women's Liberation</i> , a few weeks into the shutdown; Synchronous; Zoom	<i>Mexico in Revolution, 1911-1920</i> ; end of the semester; Synchronous; Discord

Data Analysis

Course Title	HS 110	HS 130	HS 222	HS 308
Game #1 Learning Objectives Achieved as Reported from Instructor Interviews	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Game #1 Typical Level of Student Engagement Achieved as Reported from Instructor Interviews	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Game #2 Learning Objectives Achieved as Reported from Instructor Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Game #2 Typical Level of Student Engagement Achieved as Reported from Instructor Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Interview Coding

Axial Coding: Themes	Technology Factors		Concerns for Student well-being	
Open Coding: Descriptions	Students lack or have inconsistent off-campus internet	University has a broadband network that extends past city limits	Student employment schedules changed and many lost jobs entirely	Students became more insecure about food and housing
	Software must allow students to message as well as initiate video calls	The chosen software must be easy to use and incorporate	Students became more worried about at-risk loved ones	Many students needed time to move to their off-campus homes
Open Coding: Descriptions	Students were not trained to learn online	Professors were not trained to teach online	Daycare services shut down, forcing students with young children to find other arrangements	Professors and TAs had to quickly identify potential solutions on campus and in the community to assist students
	Some professors were comfortable with teaching online but not synchronously	Teaching Assistants noted varying degrees of comfort with online learning	RTTP pedagogical factors	
Open Coding: Descriptions			Liminality, emotional, and physical components of RTTP might diminish online	Less opportunity for students to encounter each other and spark conversations that facilitate the game and learning
			Less opportunity for students to ask the professor or TA questions	

Results

The in-class experiences were overall positive despite the stress and uncertainty of the shutdown. Differences in presentation, format, technology, class size, and level were present. The learning outcomes were on par with the same games in previous semesters or showed slight improvement. Students achieved higher learning outcomes utilizing synchronous compared to asynchronous software.

The professors were able to meet their original objectives. The students did not indicate any negative impact on their own learning experience. As a result of the experience gained from the shutdown, the four professors had different approaches to RTTP the following Fall semester, including in-person RTTP, online with RTTP, and online without RTTP.

Conclusion & Recommendations

RTTP promotes quality undergraduate education, requiring interaction between students and faculty, cooperation among students, and active learning. RTTP aligns with Quality Matters Standard 5.2, which requires opportunities for learners to interact with each other, the material, and the instructor. Similarly, each game includes role sheets, a student gamebook with historic primary sources, an instructor manual, and mechanisms to move the game toward deep and rich learning. Thus, RTTP promotes the social, cognitive, and teaching presences of the Community of Inquiry framework while also adding to the growing body of evidence suggesting that the emotional presence should also be considered to maximize meaningful learning.

Learning outcomes were achieved, professors adhered to online teaching best practices perhaps without realizing it, but the RTTP learning experience was notably diminished due to the lack of physical interaction (heckling, etc). Heightened emotions emerged as an important theme. In the context of uncertainty, students and teachers relied on their connections with each other to create a sense of normalcy. Connections between RTTP and the Community of Inquiry should be further explored

Recommended and tested software with required affordances and free login: Slack and Discord

Other open software suggestions: Apache OpenMeetings, Big Blue Button, Jitsi, MConf, VMukti, WebHuddle