The Teaching and Learning Consortium:
Essays on Teaching and Learning from The Georgia Political Science Association's Teaching and Learning Workshop and Panel

Stimulating the On-line Student: Virtual Pedagogies for Engaging Millennials.

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About The Consortium

Welcome to the first volume of GPSA's annual Teaching and Learning Consortium. This association section is a peer-edited online publication of selected essays from GPSA's annual Teaching and Learning Panel and Workshop. Essays are submitted and either selected or rejected by the Association's teaching and learning coordinator. This is an attempt to share teaching innovation throughout the association and hopefully, appeal to a broader audience as well. Each year the publication will feature the best essays on the topic discussed at the panel. To be considered for publication, you must submit an abstract to the GPSA teaching and learning panel, present at the panel, and submit essay after comments and feedback from panel members and audience. The paper and presentation must be on the selected topic for that year's panel. This is the first volume of what we hope will be the start of a new tradition of our burgeoning discipline!

This year's essays:

Fostering Engagement and Academic Excellence Online: The Case of the Human Resources Management for Nonprofit Organizations Course

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INTRODUCTION

Hybrid courses, according to Babb, Stewart, and Johnson (2010), "are a combination of online and traditional, face-to-face courses" and this blended format of course delivery has been on the rise in colleges and universities across the United States for years (735). Similarly, there has been a trend toward fully online, web-based instruction. As Sheridan and Kelly (2010) found, "Research indicates that many higher education institutions view online learning as an integral and necessary mode of delivery…with conveniences including increased access, fast delivery, potentially improved pedagogy, and decreased costs for both students and institutions" (767). These trends have been embraced by public administration programs as noted by Ni (2013) who wrote, "As access to the Internet and World Wide Web has continued to grow, public administration programs have increasingly adopted Web-based instructional mechanisms" (199).

As a faculty member of the Master of Public Administration Program at Savannah State University, I developed and taught a hybrid nonprofit course for the program in 2014. Later, however, in response to program demands and student requests, it was decided that the hybrid course be taught online. Modifying a hybrid course into one that is fully online may, at first blush, appear effortless. However, as in the case of the Human Resources Management for Nonprofit Organizations (HRM for NPOs) course, if the goal of the instructor is to maintain a student-centered approach that fosters community, engagement and academic excellence, then a look behind the scenes is called for. The purpose of this paper is the reveal the steps that were taken in order to successfully achieve the multiple goals just mentioned.

BACKGROUND

As Mirabella (2016) reports, "As of March 2009, there were one-hundred and sixty-eight colleges and universities with graduate degree programs, throughout the United States, that have a concentration in nonprofit management" (1). Savannah State University jumped on the bandwagon in 2013 and the Master of Public Administration Program initiated both a concentration in Nonprofit Organizations and Leadership and a certificate program of the same name. Initially, an elective course, Human Resources Management for Nonprofit Organizations (HRM for NPOs), was offered in a hybrid format during the spring 2014 semester with 60 percent of instruction being face-to-face and 40 percent of instruction taking place online. The following year, however, with more courses being added to the concentration/certificate and due to student requests, HRM for NPOs was offered fully online during the summer session.

As I began preparing the syllabus for the online version of HRM for NPOs, and analogous to what Cuthbertson and Falcone (2014) advocate, I assessed what worked well when the course was offered in a hybrid format and set about to design a course that fostered community, was student-centered, and promoted academic excellence . As Jakala and Berki (2012) note, "The sense of community is one of the important social features that shape both the social qualities of an online community as well as activities and behavior of the community members" (2). Moreover, Cuthbertson and Falcone contend that:

> Community, while inherent in assumptions about online education, rarely materializes as an integral component of the experience. Misconceptions and misguided motivations can derail participation and engagement in the online setting. *Creating a successful online community is dependent on knowing what works in the face-to-face environment and implementing effective parallels online*" (Cuthbertson and Falcone 2014, 216, emphasis added).

The following section outlines the "effective parallels" that were implemented in the online HRM for NPOs course.

USING WHAT WORKED WELL

Introductions and Ice Breaker

The first class session of the hybrid HRM for NPOs course was a face-to-face session. As I do in all of my courses, I devote time at the beginning of the first class session to introductions - to the course and to each other - and to a related and purposeful ice breaker. First, each person is asked to tell the class her/his name, where s/he was born, undergraduate major and then, for courses focused on nonprofit organizations, students are asked to answer this question: If you have volunteered at or worked for a nonprofit organization, please tell us which organization and what you did there? Introductions are followed by an ice-breaker. Students in the hybrid HRM for NPOs course were asked to answer the following questions: (1) Tell us one thing that few people know about you (that you don't mind sharing with the class)…perhaps a goal, a hobby, an item on your bucket list… (2) If you could meet one person who is currently living, who would that be and why? (3) If you could meet one person who has passed away, who would that be and why? There were, essentially, three purposes for the introductions and ice-breaker activities in face-to-face course: a way for students and instructor to get acquainted, a means to put students at ease with public speaking, and an instructional strategy designed to glean information in order to tailor future lectures to students' experiences and interests.

Few modifications were needed in order to utilize these "student-centered methods" in the online HRM for NPOs course (Sciutto 1995). The same questions were asked on the Desire2Learn instructional platform, but, unlike the face-to-face session, students were given points for answering the questions and were encouraged to, and did, ask each other questions about themselves and "virtually" got to know each other better. Two out of the three purposes for the introductions and ice-breaker activities for the hybrid course were achieved in the online course: students and instructor got to know each other and information was gleaned that allowed the instructor to tailor future PowerPoint presentations, as opposed to in-person lectures, to the students' interests and experiences. And, while students in the online HRM for NPOs course did not get experience with public speaking, they did have the opportunity to improve their writing skills.

"Talking" to Students Online

I have found that getting students to read assigned chapters from textbooks is, to use an American expression, like pulling teeth. However, in online classes in the hybrid HRM for NPOs course, I uploaded PowerPoint presentations covering the reading assignments for those sessions and found that (through quizzes) students would read them and retain the information. Rather than using bullet points in the PowerPoint presentations, I would "talk" to my students. What I would say during a face-to-face lecture, I write out on the PowerPoint slides – "talking" to students, asking questions, connecting the dots between what we are studying and their interests and experiences.

For example, during the introductions and ice-breaker activities, I learned that a number of students had worked for nonprofits in Georgia and that the person they would have liked to have had the opportunity to meet was Martin Luther King, Jr. As such, I modified a lecture on "The Growth of Nonprofits in Georgia Since 2009" and produced a PowerPoint presentation discussing the Center for Civil and Human Rights, which opened in Atlanta, GA in June of 2014, and what the exhibits there reveal about the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Similarly, after learning that students had overlapping interests/experiences with sports and working/volunteering for nonprofit organizations in Georgia, I crafted a presentation that focused on the College Football Hall of Fame, which opened in Atlanta, GA in August of 2014.

RESULTS

The emphasis on introductions and ice breaker and getting to know each other enabled excellent collaboration in team exercise assignment. Much like the hybrid course, students in the online

HRM for NPOs course were divided into teams and asked to develop, write a paper about, and submit a recruitment ad and a volunteer recognition program for their assigned nonprofit organization. Because students felt like they were online colleagues instead of strangers, the products they produced (paper, recruitment ad, and volunteer recognition program) were outstanding. Additionally, the online discussion threads were active with friendly comments and statements that spoke to the students' grasp of the subject matter.

As with the hybrid course, using the introductions and ice-breaker activities to glean information from students allowed for incorporation of their experiences and interests into online class examples and presentations as well as the ability for me to "talk" to them on a more personal level. These "student-centered methods" did what they are intended to do – "minimize anxiety and increase students' interest in the subject matter" - as described by Sciutto (1995, 277).

CONCLUSION

In sum, using what worked well in the hybrid Human Resources Management for Nonprofit Organizations course in the online course allowed for "a successful online community" (Cuthbertson and Falcone 2014) to be created in which engagement was fostered and academic excellence was achieved. The process, though, was predicated on the instructor's student-centered focus. It was important for the instructor to "virtually" get to know the students in the online course and adapt instruction accordingly. Transforming face-to-face lectures into PowerPoint presentations that incorporated student experiences and interests was key. Students realized they were being heard, and paid attention to, by the instructor and they, in turn, paid attention to those presentations. As such, instructors may consider using these lessons learned and take similar steps when moving a class online.

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Simulating the Classroom Experience Online: Providing Quality Lectures Online to Encourage Student Satisfaction and Learning

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Abstract

Use of online courses in traditional colleges and universities has increased substantially, as have the number of traditional and non-traditional students seeking to take courses online. The course materials students are expected to utilize vary greatly. Some instructors go to great lengths to create custom content, such as detailed power points or lecture videos, while others rely on master course templates shared among faculty in the discipline and often supplied by textbook publishers. Without becoming synchronous, the online classroom may more closely resemble the traditional in-class experience, with the added benefit of allowing students to fit their studies into their schedules and juggle additional responsibilities provided by an online course. This paper discusses several methods available in providing lecture videos with the goal of simulating the lecture and visual aids provided in a traditional face to face. In both face-to-face and online sections of Introduction to American Government, typically a freshman course, I have used what are commonly referred to as "lecture capture" and "screen casting" methods to create and provide video lectures for students. I rely primarily on two types of free software known as iSpring Power Point to Flash Convertor and Screencast-O-Matic which allows an instructor to record audio over what is displayed on the computer screen. Students can access the videos anytime and repeatedly inside the college's learning management system (LMS).

Overview of Method Used to Providing Course Content Online Using Lecture Capture

There have been significant advances in lecture capture technology in the last fifteen years. These advances have allowed instructors to offer both online and traditional face-to-face students multi-media resources to utilize in learning course content. Lecture capture technology is typically considered technology that can capture most of what is provided in the traditional classroom, primarily the instructor's voice during lecture, and text or images displayed on a computer screen. Echo360, Tegrity, and Accordant are some examples of the technology provided in the classroom (Sloan). While an increasing percentage of colleges and universities are using lecture capture technology, there are still many that do not provide this technology in the classrooms for instructors, or only provide it in a limited number of classrooms; therefore, many instructors do not have access to it (Sloan). There are now additional technologies that may be used to capture a lecture outside of the traditional classroom. This new software uses the "screencasting" method and allows the instructor to create a lecture at home or in the office on their personal or work computer. The definition of lecture capture has evolved to include "screencasting", the recording of what is displayed on the monitor along with audio generated by the computer or the person narrating the screencast (Newton, pp. 32-33). Some software primarily allows the capturing of still slides on a screen, such as power point slides, along with the instructor's voice explaining the text and images seen on the screen. Screencasting software such as Camtasia may be provided by the college for a lower cost than technology installed in the classroom for recording live lectures. However, for many colleges and universities, instructors do not have direct access to high quality screen capture software such as Camtasia in their offices or at home due to the expense of the program. Recent years have seen an increase in user-friendly and free or low-cost software that instructors may have direct access to on their individual computers for screencasting if they wish to use this method to record a lecture video. Due to the availability of this technology in terms of access, ease of use, and cost, instructors can easily create lecture videos on their laptops and upload them into their college's learning management system (LMS).

In online sections of Introduction to American Government, I have used free and low-cost software to provide lectures to freshman and sophomore students in my online courses, as well as to students in face-to-face courses to cover material I am not able to cover due to unexpected time constraints. Typically, online students do not have access to an actual lecture over course content. In many online classes, students must rely on the textbook, instructor or publisher created power point slides, lecture notes, and instructor or publisher created assessments to engage with and learn course content. In my online courses, I provide lecture videos in addition to these tools so that students may hear and experience the lecture similar to how students in a traditional class room hear it. Students choose whether or not they watch the videos, since the power points are also provided in the LMS; however, I have received positive feedback from multiple students indicating their appreciation, enhanced understanding, and enjoyment of the video lectures.

I began creating lecture videos using a free and upgradable software known as iSpring. This software is installed as a plug-in for Microsoft Power Point. Using iSpring, I have recorded my voice lecturing over previous custom created power point slides. iSpring allows the instructor to utilize the animation features provided in Power Point, as well as additional "pointer" tools in the slideshow that is being recorded by the software. The video is then opened and viewed within the LMS or opens in a separate tab in the internet browser. For capturing content that cannot be provided in a power point slide, I use another free software known as Screencast-O-Matic. This software is more typical of "screencasting" in that it can be used to capture anything on the user's screen from word processing documents to internet pages. In my class, I use this software to browse web sites or documents that apply course content to real world discussions or scenarios. For example, using screencasting allows the students to browse along with me websites that offer polling, election, or campaign finance data. Any screencasting software can be used to capture audio over a power point slideshow if one wants to avoid jumping from one service to the next. Instructors can experiment with different screencasting software and decide which they prefer based on the attributes offered. In both iSpring and "Screencast-O-Matic" there are ways to edit portions of a lecture video to update course content, rather than record an entire lecture over again from start to finish.

Advantages of Lecture Capture

There are numerous advantages to the use of lecture capture. First, there is strong evidence to suggest that at a minimum, students enrolled in online classes and face-to-face classes feel greater satisfaction with the course when lecture videos are provided online. Greater student satisfaction has been found in face-to-face courses in which instructors provided lecture capture videos in the LMS as a supplement to the traditional lecture already given (Belcheir; Bollmeier; Bryans; Choi; Cramer; Evans; Maag; Rogers; Rose; Vajoczki; Whatley; Zhang). In my own use of lecture videos I have received numerous comments from students that have viewed the videos indicating their enjoyment and appreciation of them.

Lecture videos allow for individualized learning. As stated earlier, students in face-to-face classes that are provided with lecture videos can "make up" a missed lecture in their own time. Both face-to-face and online students when viewing a lecture video whether for first time lecture viewing or for review, can pause, rewind, or repeat the lecture. Among other benefits, this allows the student to review for an exam and to revisit topics they are struggling with for deeper understanding and increased retention (Copley; Gorissen; Gosper; Traphagan; Zhang).

Additionally, the availability of lecture videos enables students in both types of classroom settings to generate more comprehensive notes. Students of the face-to-face class that either missed a class or feel that there are gaps in their notes may watch a lecture video in their own time and create more comprehensive and detailed notes for study. Online students are able to generate notes from the explanations and examples of concepts given by the instructor in the video (Brotherton; Luna). Moreover, it has been found that the act of note taking itself increases retention of information. For this reason, I provide a power point file to my students in addition to the lecture video and advise them to print the power point slides in advance of watching the video so that they may take notes from the video on the slide and highlight key phrases or terms.

Lecture videos make a course and its content more accessible to students with disabilities or students with English as a second language. Whether offered in a traditional face-to-face class or in an online section, the availability of lecture videos better enable students with disabilities or students for whom English was not a second language to overcome their individual challenges (Scutter). Additionally, lecture videos reduce requests to instructors for content clarification. Traditional classroom students can access lectures outside of class and revisit a topic they are struggling to comprehend. This "second look" at the concept may generate a better understanding and thus negate the need to contact the instructor via phone or email (Holbrook; Rogers; Vajoczki). For online students, the lecture video may offer greater clarification than the textbook or power point slides of difficult concepts, thus reducing the need to contact the instructor for clarification in the online class as well.

After utilizing lecture videos, research has shown that students tend to feel that they have an enhanced understanding of content, and some studies have indicated better learning outcomes as evidenced by improved grades. Multiple studies have indicated that students believe that lecture videos to increase their overall understanding of the course to recall more of the info presented to them (Bryans; Hartsell; Holbrook; Luna; Vajoczki) . While there have been more recent studies to suggest an improvement in learning outcomes, such as increases in course grade or test grade averages, there has not been enough research in this area on the question of whether or not students are indeed performing at higher levels as a result of viewing lecture videos.

Lecture videos are useful in face-to-face classes as well. This software has allowed me to somewhat easily provide my students a lecture despite class cancellations due to illness or campus closures. Some instructors of face-to-face courses at colleges with lecture capture software provided in the classroom have recorded their live lectures and provided them to students in the college LMS for their face-to-face students. Some students access these videos on an as-needed basis, such as for review of difficult subject matter or in place of a missed live lecture due to absence (Copley; Gorissen; Scutter; Traphagan; Zhang, et al). To date there has been no evidence to suggest that the availability of lecture videos for face-to-face classes has a negative impact on student attendance (Bollmeier; Brotherton; Bryans; Copley; Davis; Toppin; Weiss). Students overall tend to be more satisfied with courses that give them the option to view a lecture video for whatever reason.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I offer a few suggestions for those seeking to make lecture videos as an effective and enjoyable method of learning course content. First, lecture videos are more dynamic when instructors do not simply read a list of bullet points off of a slide. Second, to engage students with the content, instructors can use the “animation” features in power point to restrict what the viewer sees within an individual slide until the narrator moves on to the next point. Images (pictures, tables, etc.) and animations such as arrows and smart art charts can also be included in the slideshow and recorded onto the video. Arrows or other animations can focus the viewer on a specific aspect of the slide or content and smart art, typically lists, flow or process charts can be using to explain cause and effect, progress, relationships, or other complex events or concepts.

Another recommended, but perhaps time consuming step, is to create a “transcript” of the lecture video; however, the need for a transcript may depend on the level of detail given on the power point slide and the talent of the instructor in giving a free-flow lecture. Once the transcript is created, the actual video recording process is fairly quick and smooth, and may result in a more professional recording with fewer mistakes, distracting comments, and silent pauses. The organized transcript allows the instructor to make a clear and professional recording and provide course content that is accessible in the LMS by students with disabilities. Again, the need for a transcript may vary depending on the institution, the level of detail in power points, and the lecture abilities of the instructor.

The emergence of free or inexpensive software for creating video lectures on an office or personal computer allows instructors to enhance delivery of course content. While it remains to be seen whether or not students who have access to lecture videos tend to do better in the course as measured by grades, it has been shown that students tend to be happier with courses that provide these videos. Student satisfaction has been shown in both face to face courses using lecture videos and asynchronous online courses. Additional research needs to be done to determine if the use of lecture videos to convey content is superior to reliance on the textbook, lecture notes or power points when a traditional classroom lecture is not available, such as in an online course. Future research should seek to determine if there is a significant correlation between the uses of lecture videos and improved learning outcomes or higher grades. Additionally, while many studies have demonstrated advantages to using lecture capture, more research should be done to discuss positive or negative outcomes in the use of lecture videos in asynchronous online courses.

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Online Simulations Make International Relations Come Alive

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Abstract

Students learn when they are actively engaged and when material is presented in a manner that encourages them to make connections between theory, readings, and real life experiences. For international relations classes, from introductory to upper division courses, one of the best formats for that is ICONS (International Communication and Negotiations Simulation), an online role-playing simulation offered by the University of Maryland. Student teams play a variety of international actors, including states, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations, negotiating online to further each actor's interests in some crisis situation. Prior to the talks, they conduct research, largely online through sources suggested by ICONS, to develop written strategies based on their team's interests and goals, along with the other teams' relative strengths and likely positions. Following the interaction online they further the learning experience with reflection essays and in-class discussions. Students love the experience and subsequently exhibit a deeper understanding of international relations.

Online Simulations

There is a strong consensus in the scholarship of teaching and learning that students learn better when they actively engage with course material, actually *doing* something that allows them to apply the concepts, theories, and information offered in a course (Fink 2003, Nilson 2010). Most instructors have experienced the challenges of stimulating student interest and involvement with lectures and classroom discussion, and research has demonstrated those formats' limitations in fostering learning. One study argues that "students retain 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what they say, and 90% of what they do and say together" (Asal 2005). In response, the profession has developed a variety of engaged learning activities, such as internships and service-learning, but these techniques may not be appropriate for all courses. This paper investigates the use of another active-learning strategy that may be more suitable for many political science courses, role-playing simulations.

Simulations allow students, either individually or in teams, to take on the role of political actors and replicate the processes involved in various scenarios. Model United Nations may be the best known (Ginn et al. 2014), but political scientists have developed a variety of simulations to meet specific learning objectives of different courses. For my international relations (IR) courses over the last dozen years I have used online simulations developed by the University of Maryland's ICONS (International Communications and Negotiation Simulation) Project(ICONS). After some experimentation I settled on one ICONS simulation, "Globalization and the Nigerian Oil Crisis," as the capstone for my introductory IR course. Students almost universally love the game, and it reinforces the course's learning objectives by having them work through IR theories, international actor types, global issues, and concepts like power and cooperation. In this paper I use the Nigerian exercise as a case study to explore the use of online political science simulations. Although the literature is mixed on the extent to which role playing improves student learning over other classroom strategies (Raymond and Underwood 2013, Shellman and Turan 2006, Walcott and Walcott 1976), in my experience the ICONS simulations have been successful in stimulating student engagement and promoting student learning.

Below I review the literature on simulations in international relations courses, with a view to outlining the best practices in the field. I then describe the ICONS program and features that it offers to engage students as actors in an international negotiation. I subsequently discuss the ways that I adapted it to the needs of my introductory course, and finally I use student output to assess the simulation's effectiveness in achieving learning goals.

Simulations and Education in the Literature

Scholarship on simulations has grown substantially as the number and variety of role-playing exercises has grown, along with their use in political science classrooms and more recently with increasing use of the internet in teaching. Most studies are by practitioners, teachers who have used simulations in their classrooms. Most, although not all, report significant benefits in terms of student motivation, learning, and student-teacher relations. The most commonly reported advantage is that simulations increase student motivation and learning by replacing passive reading and lecture with engaging, relevant activities (Damron,and Mott 2005, Ginn et al. 2013, Raymond and Underwood 2013). They help students retain substantive information, which they often discover through individual and collective research in preparation for the simulation (Lantis 1998, Raymond 2010), but more importantly they assist students' understanding of abstract concepts and theories (Levy and Orr 2014, Rivera and Simons 2008). Simulations immerse students in complex institutional processes and give them insights into the decision-making of political actors (Asal and Blake 2006, Kaarbo and Lantis 1997). Asal (2005) likens simulations to case studies with students on the inside, observing the relevant actors' behavior (their own and their classmates') in reality-based scenarios. Shellman and Turan (2006) describe them as laboratories that allow students to recreate complex processes, applying and testing what they learned in class, linking theory and the real world.

While the literature cites a variety of benefits from role-playing, some scholars question its effectiveness in producing student learning, pointing out a frequent lack of rigorous assessment. Simulations are usually fun and most students enjoy them, reflecting their enthusiasm anecdotally and in post-game surveys that yield inflated views of the games' utility over other teaching methods (Frederking 2005, Giovanello, Kirk, and Kromer 2013). Another problem with assessment has been the difficulty in isolating which teaching activity promoted how much learning (Shellman and Turan 2006). A few studies have compared students from otherwise mostly identical courses, in which one group participated in a simulation and another did not. In some cases there was no significant difference in student performance in subsequent exams, indicating that the simulation had not increased learning more than other methods (Raymond 2010). While the assessment question remains valid, the broad consensus on simulations' pedagogical effectiveness nevertheless remains quite positive.

Besides a general enthusiasm for simulations, consensus has also developed around methodologies underlying effective games. Instructors identify at least three crucial stages in successful simulations, including preparation, game-playing, and post-game reflection (Asal 2005, Asal and Blake 2006, Frederking 2005). The preparation phase has at least two components: students must learn the rules, or how the game will be played (which may be more or less complicated), and they should conduct research to learn the scenario, the issues in play, and the relevant actors. Several articles suggest offering the simulation after the students have covered substantial course material, such as IR theories and relevant concepts. Students then use this background in developing team goals and a strategy for winning (Enterline and Jepsen 2009, Kaufman 1998). In the interaction, or game-playing stage, students negotiate or take other actions to promote their actor's interests, usually under the supervision of the instructor, who may inject actions or messages to influence the game's direction. Instructors may pause the action to make a point and focus on some pertinent learning objective (Asal 2005). The final phase may be the most crucial to learning as, prompted by the instructor, students reflect on what just happened in the game, linking their experiences to the appropriate theories and concepts. Most writers recommend a combination of oral debriefing after the action, followed by a written reflection paper in which students analyze their experience and consciously relate it to the course readings and discussions (Lantis 1998, Nilson 2010, Walcott and Walcott 1976).

Role-playing methodologies have adapted to increased use of the internet and the accompanying development of online games like the ICONS simulations. Instructors who have used them report several significant benefits. The internet provides ready access to important sources such as global actors' websites and news outlets, with both video and audio to pique student interest and provide valuable information. These can engage and sensitize students to cultures, issues, and actors in ways that traditional sources may not (Asal and Blake 2006). Contemporary students are comfortable on the web, and online gaming is a common activity for many, so learning simulation rules is often easier than with traditional formats. Online messaging allows selectivity in communications as students can issue public statements or channel their messages to selected actors, while instructors are able to monitor all communications and inject themselves where appropriate. Unfortunately online games preclude personal contact and nonverbal signals that may be decisive, nor do they give opportunities for informal contacts like dining or drinks that sometimes assist diplomacy (Kaufman 1998). Despite these potential limitations, the internet offers an additional, potentially valuable tool in the political science instructor's arsenal (Brown and King 2000).

ICONS Simulations

ICONS offers a variety of online simulations tailored for multiple course learning objectives. These range from multi-campus UN or regional negotiations to single-class games based on dozens of scenarios that span the globe. One of the best features of ICONS websites is the background information provided to instructor and students, including detailed discussion of political, economic, or other factors in the situation. Student teams represent states and non-state actors, both domestic and international, competing to promote interests that they learn from individual team role sheets. Teams access only their own role sheets, but there are also common sites with information on all the other actors involved in a scenario. Teams can thus estimate others' interests and likely positions, and identify potential allies and rivals. ICONS also provides an online bibliography to assist student research of the issues and actors, and there is an instruction sheet giving the simulation rules and informing students how the website works.

Most interactions between student teams are through the ICONS message feature, which allows teams to send either public messages that all receive, or backchannel communications directed at one or more specific teams. The instructor, designated Simcon (Simulation Control), is able to monitor all communications and send either public messages to kick off and help guide the talks, or private messages to specific teams. There is a message queue and a search feature, so that anyone can review previous entries. Associated with the message tool is a feature that allows Simcon or student teams to inject actions that may influence the talks. A number of actions, ranging from news releases to protests to violence, are preprogrammed and available with photographs and a realistic appearance to enhance their credibility. Alternatively players may devise and insert their own carrots and sticks.

While most of the action takes place through online messaging, the object of games is to reach an agreement to resolve a common problem. For this ICONS has a feature through which teams may offer and potentially amend proposals. The feature gives each team potential elements of a proposal to help them get started, suggesting collective and individual actor commitments with possible funding levels and actions. Teams may select any of the ICONS elements for proposals, adapting and editing as they choose, or they may design their own. Once proposals are posted on the website, and possibly amended, teams may show their support by co-sponsoring one or more. Finally, teams vote online for proposals that best meet their interests.

Another useful ICONS feature is an instructor resource page that provides helpful suggestions on using the simulation to meet course learning objectives. These include ideas for pre-simulation student research to analyze their own team's interests and potential positions along with the other teams', thus identifying potential allies and rivals and developing to a negotiation strategy. The site also offers suggestions for post-game debriefings and reflection activities.

Globalization and the Nigerian Oil Crisis

My use of ICONS simulations, closely paralleling the direction of the literature, has evolved over the years through experimentation with different courses, course learning objectives, and my teaching. For several years I have used the "Globalization and the Nigerian Oil Crisis" simulation as a capstone exercise in my introductory IR courses because it addresses so many of the course objectives. These include 1) analyzing the behavior of both state and nonstate actors, 2) applying systemic, state, and individual levels of analysis, 3) understanding major global issues including security, economy and development, environment, human rights, and international law, and 4) using prominent IR theories to explain international events. The game leads students to hands-on work with each of these objectives. I continue to experiment, but the results have been excellent.

The Nigerian simulation deals with the damage caused by sixty-plus years of oil-industry pollution in the Niger River Delta. The livelihood of local tribal inhabitants has been devastated, leading many to join guerilla groups attacking security forces, along with petroleum industry facilities and employees. This has curtailed production with economic consequences for oil companies and the government. The scenario proposes UN-sponsored talks between eight stakeholders: the Nigerian government, the Nigerian military, the Ogoni (the most affected tribal group), the Coalition of Women's Groups (a local women's organization), Shell Oil Company, the International Monetary Fund, Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace.

Preparation for the game begins weeks before the negotiations. Throughout the course I insert videos and news from Nigeria into regular classwork to start preparing students mentally and familiarizing them with the issues. There are a number of disturbing videos from the Delta region that I use, and in end-of-course critiques students have described how these engaged them. About two weeks prior to the talks I organize the teams, which begin sitting together and bonding from that point forward. I introduce the ICONS website and the simulation. The teams have the subsequent two weeks to research the situation and the real-world actors, including their own, to develop a written negotiation strategy that they submit just before the talks begin. Prior to this point they would have covered all of the material for the introductory course, and the strategy paper requires team members, working together, to synthesize many of the key concepts, following my prompts (Asal 2005, Kaufman 1998, Shellman and Turan 2006). At this point, however, besides their research they have only the course readings and discussions, a few previous class exercises, and their imaginations to inform the papers. The action to tie it all together begins next.

The talks take place over three consecutive class periods. During online negotiations the students physically can be anywhere, but I strongly advise each group to collocate as a team since the volume of messages and speed of decision-making can be overwhelming. Most organize with one member monitoring and responding to messages, one or more researching information to support their positions, and all conferring on decisions. In most semesters at least two teams will choose the same site, either in the regular classroom or a campus computer lab. These teams' close contact clearly impacts the negotiations, but it also presents a great teaching point emphasizing the real-world importance of personal relations and potential confidence building (Kaufman 1998). The students do take on their actor's character to a surprising extent, and they frequently get emotional defending their positions or attacking others'.

In my use of ICONS, the first and last of three periods are online, with the middle session face-to-face. For that one we move to a larger meeting or conference room where I have tables arranged in a horseshoe, lead negotiators seated at the table and staff behind. This is always the most active session, and it is almost always the one that students most enjoy, according to their critiques. They stay in character surprisingly well, and again the talks can become quite emotional. Clearly, anything said at the table will be public, but they also bring laptops that allow continued backchannel conversations. For example, one team might advise an ally that they are about to make such-and-such a claim, and the recipient should respond in a particular way. Or one may ask "how would you react to this proposal?" The personal interactions at this session make a wonderful teaching point…and simcon can pause the action at any time to make a point (Asal and Blake 2006). To highlight the personal side of diplomacy, I always provide a break with refreshments midway through the session so that the teams relax and mingle for a moment. After eating the talks sometimes take on a different tenor, offering another teaching point.

I open the ICONS site for voting at some point in the final session. Often a team will win enough support for its proposal to be adopted, sometimes not. At this point the different forms of power and influence become more apparent. In this game only the four major stakeholders – the government, Ogoni, Women's Groups, and Shell – have a vote, and a unanimous vote is required for passage. A vote equals power, but so do resources like funding from Shell and the IMF. The military does not have an independent vote or access to funding, but military teams almost always have significant voice through their (imaginary) potential for force. Information and expertise become a valuable assets, as the teams with relevant research findings win greater credibility and persuasion. It becomes apparent as the negotiations progress that expertise and soft power are virtually the only levers of influence available to Human Rights Watch and Greenpeace.

The class meeting following the negotiations is both fun and possibly the most important session for student learning (Asal 2005, Ash and Clayton 2009, Cooper 2003, Lantis 1998). Fresh after the game, students are still excited and eager to share their experiences. It is probably the one class period during a semester when it is easiest to lead a guided discussion of international relations, as they relate what just happened and under instructor prompts try to explain it through IR theories and concepts. Students may find support for theories in the course of negotiations or, possibly more usefully, they may challenge theories based on their experience (Walcott and Walcott 1976). I also require each student to bring a reflection paper that reviews everything from their pre-negotiation strategy paper through the three sessions, explaining the events through the lens of the course material. This paper is much like a case study in which students describe, analyze, and explain the course of events through the game (Enterline and Jepsen 2009, Lantis 1998).

Other instructors have noted both advantages and disadvantages from group work (Ginn et al. 2013, Rivera and Simons 2008). Student interaction can facilitate learning, but there is frequently a free-rider problem. The grading scheme for this simulation attempts to address both points. The simulation has a total of 240 points from the course total of 1000, the same value as the mid-term and final exams. The simulation total comprises four evaluations – two team activities graded collectively and two individual activities. The collective grades are for the teams' pre-simulation strategy reports and for their participation during the negotiations. The participation grade is based on a rubric that evaluates the utility of a team's messages and actions toward fulfilling its strategy (which may shift during play) and interests (which remain constant). Students receive individual grades for their reflection essays, based on their discussion and analysis of the negotiations. They also receive peer evaluations based on their contributions to the team.

Assessment

Lacking a control group, my assessment of student learning shares many of the limitations reported by other instructors (Giovanello, Kirk, and Kromer 2013, Shellman and Turan 2006). The level of enthusiasm and engagement were tangible throughout the most recent game in the fall of 2015, especially in the oral debriefing. Some instructors argue, however, that enthusiasm does not necessarily equal learning. Accordingly I employed several measures of student learning, including the post-game oral debriefing and the individual reflection papers. Both were positive indicators of learning, as the students used the language and methods of international relations scholarship to analyze their experiences. The final assessment was a post-game survey in which thirty students self-reported on their performance and perceived learning. On a 1-5 Likert scale they strongly reported understanding the simulation actors' strategies and behavior based on the actors' interests and sources of power (4.14 and 4.07 respectively). The two most emphatic responses (4.73 each) reported that "Conducting the ICONS simulation at the end of the semester helped me understand international politics and the behavior of international actors" and "The ICONS simulation was fun." Through these and other questions, the survey clearly indicates that students believed they had learned much from the simulation, although enjoyment of the game may certainly influence such self-reports. My own qualitative assessment agrees with the survey.

In conclusion, simulations can bring classrooms to life, engaging students and promoting learning in a way that other methods cannot. Online simulations especially can provide a uniquely accessible platform to help students get into character, conduct pre-simulation research, interact with each other during negotiations, and direct post-simulation reflection and discussion. Inclusion of one face-to-face negotiating session is also helpful. It adds excitement to the game, and the personal interaction provides a great opportunity for teaching points on the personal level of diplomacy and international relations. Problems like free-riding and a lack of direct control by the instructor remain, but these can be managed by regular feedback and a grading scheme mixing individual and group evaluations (Rivera and Simons 2008). The significant advantage of online simulations is that by actively involving students with course material they foster engagement and promote learning.

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Introducing an Online Cultural Competency Component into an MPA Curriculum

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Over the past 20 years, America has gone through tremendous changes. Those changes include increases in the population of minorities, the emergence of the Hispanic population as the second largest minority group, the increasing acceptance of the LGTBQ community, and the aging of the population overall. These changes demand that we focus deliberate attention on helping students become "culturally competent" (Rubaii & Calarusse, 2014). This piece discusses cultural competency and its importance, how it relates to Master of Public Administration program, and how we addressed an identified shortfall in that curriculum.

Cultural competency is defined by the National Center for Cultural Competence as "having the knowledge, skills, and values to work effectively with diverse populations and to adapt institutional policies and professional practices to meet the unique needs of client populations (n.d., paragraph 1)." For students pursuing a career in the public service, cultural competency is a critical skill that can help improve relationships between citizens and government, and heal long-standing rifts between racial and ethnic groups (Carrizales, 2010; Schachter & Liu, 2005). In the wake of racial unrest over the past couple of years beginning with Ferguson and most recently in Baltimore, we are clearly a nation that needs public administrators who are culturally competent.

Moreover, cultural competency is a necessity for Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs seeking accreditation from the Network of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and a necessity in today's workplace. NASPAA's universal competency 5 requires MPA programs ensure students have the ability to "communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry" (2009, p. 7). This is buttressed by evidence from the workplace. The ability to work with teams in a multicultural environment is an increasingly valued and sought-after skill (Saldivar, 2015).

Carrizales (2010) recommends that a cultural competency curriculum include 1) knowledge of local and national demographics, societal disparities, and policy and legal issues surrounding diversity; 2) a self-reflection component that includes societal biases; 3) a skills-based component that focuses on communication skills; and 4) a community-based component that includes internships and other experiential learning offerings. Our MPA program used this work to conduct an evaluation of our current curriculum. We discovered that we covered some, but not all, of these components as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Coverage of Cultural Competency in the MPA Curriculum

Cultural Competency Curriculum Component	Current Coverage in MPA Curriculum
Knowledge-based	PADM 6000, 6050, 6200, 6300, 6650
Self-reflection	Not covered
Skills-based	PADM 6100, 6750
Community-based	PADM 6302, 6750, 6900

<u>Knowledge-based</u> curriculum components include an understanding of the importance of cultural competence, local and national demographics, discussion of definitions, societal disparities and social equity, and an understanding of the legal and policy implications that come with cultural competency (Carrizales, 2010). These components are covered in a range of courses in the current MPA curriculum. Social equity is introduced in PADM 6000. The personnel issues associated with cultural competence, including legal issues, are covered in PADM 6200, Human Resource Management. Social disparities, particularly in connection with economic development and taxation policies are covered in PADM 6300, Public Budgeting. They are re-introduced in PADM 6650, Public Policy Analysis in class discussions on major policy areas such as education, health, welfare, and taxation. A highlight of this class is the exercise to retrieve census data that requires students to compare a low-income tract, primarily African-American census tract with a

high-income, primarily White census tract. Assessment of these components is done in the various classes, in the form of case study analyses or exams.

Skills-based curriculum components focus primarily on communication skills (Carrizales, 2010). Our curriculum places a strong emphasis on communication skills, written and verbal, throughout. However, for purposes of this discussion, there are two courses where this is particularly stressed. In PADM 6100, Organizational Theory and Behavior, students learn formal models of communication and conflict resolution that are reinforced through in-class exercises. In PADM 6750, Program Evaluation, students work in a team, with a real client on a project. This requires students to practice effective communication skills as they work with teammates and clients. Communication skills are assessed throughout coursework in the program, but one of the ways we assess student's mastery of universal competency 5 is through the peer evaluation process in PADM 6750.

Community-based curriculum components emphasize actual interactions with members of the community to build cross-cultural communication skills (Carrizales, 2010). For our purposes, this includes service-learning projects and internships. In these situations, students must actually demonstrate they can communicate effectively with a diverse constituency. This is assessed through the peer evaluations in PADM 6750 and the site supervisor evaluation for the internship.

What we discovered was missing was the self-reflection component. This component is needed to help students identify existing biases that can negatively impact their interactions with dissimilar others (Carrizales, 2010). To address this shortfall, we turned for help to our institution's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Lorraine Evans (co-author of this piece) developed the online module, "An Introduction to Cultural Competency" in partnership with the MPA Director (co-author of this piece). The draft was then reviewed by all MPA faculty before doing a pilot with MPA students in the Spring 2015 term. The overall goal of the online module was to improve self-efficacy when working in cross-cultural situations with clients and colleagues. There were four learning objectives:

1. Recognize the main characteristics of culture and understand how we learn cultural preferences to provide optimal service to clients with a variety of perspectives both among and within demographic groups.
2. Explain the stages of cultural competency to foster inclusive practices and processes to promote a welcoming and client centered workplace.
3. Assess conscious and unconscious preferences to manage biases that disrupt communication and limit the development of positive relationships with clients and colleagues.
4. Appreciate the differences that exist *within* and *across* cultural groups to interrupt the unintended stereotyping that can impact the decision making processes.

There were two tiers of assessment, a self-reflective essay and a pre/posttest. Students completed an essay that focused on cultural learning, unconscious bias and promoting an inclusive workplace. The goal was to encourage critical reflection on the topic and required students to connect the material to real world problems. It was a pass/fail assignment and all students successfully completed the essay.

The pre/posttest was adapted from the Clinical Cultural Competency Questionnaire (CCCQ) developed by Robert C. Like, MD, MS, Professor and Director of the Center for Healthy Families and Cultural Diversity, Department of Family Medicine, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. The 14-question survey addressed perceived overall self-efficacy as well as knowledge, confidence, skills and self-awareness, all key constructs in cultural competency, as well as overall perspectives on the topic and general demographics.

Fifteen students completed the pre-test, ten women and five men, and twelve completed the post-test, nine women, two men and one student who preferred not to answer. The majority of respondents identified as European-American/white, nine in the pre-test and six in the post-test, while six respondents identified as African-American, Hispanic or Multi-racial/other at both times. The results are shown in Table 2 on the next page.

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Change
I consider myself to be culturally competent	2.89	3.56	0.67*
I feel confident in my ability to utilize communication skills to improve service encounters with people of diverse backgrounds (e.g. different ages, genders, ethnicities, language skills, and socioeconomic statuses).	3.11	3.89	0.78**
It is important for public administration professionals to receive training in cultural competency.	3.56	3.78	0.22
*=p<.05, **= p<.01 N = 9			

Three single questions assessed students overall perceptions and we found increases in all measures: Their perceived cultural competency increased from 3.07 to 3.50; confidence in their ability to communicate with people of diverse backgrounds increased from 3.27 to 3.83, and, their belief that it is important for public administrators to be trained in cultural competency increased from 3.40 to 3.67. Utilizing a paired t-test, we found two of three questions addressing the overall perceptions of students were significant (table 2).

Overall students were successful in completing the module, made strides to attaining the learning objectives and made gains in cultural competency. The module will become a regular part of our introductory survey course. By placing it in the introductory course, we hope to elevate students' awareness of cultural competency and thereby create a strong platform for students to complete later curriculum elements where cultural competency is reintroduced and reinforced.

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