How to gamify your course and make your teaching a game-changer

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PLAYER NAME: __________________ CHARACTER NAME: ________________

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:

CHARACTER GEAR:

CHARACTER SPECIAL ABILITY:

REASON FOR TRAVELING TO ANCIENT ATHENS:
Latin Prose Composition taught as a semester-long mythological adventure roleplaying game

- student-driven pedagogy
- teacher as facilitator
- learning as play (cf. Huizinga; Turner; Habinck)
- extrinsic value tied to intrinsic value

Why gamify? (cf. Sheldon, McGonigal)

- customization
- risk-taking
- enjoyable challenges and inducement towards mastery
- interaction and immediate feedback
- agency, identity, and a stake in the outcome
- just-in-time, on-demand knowledge/learning
- systems thinking (focus on application of skills/knowledge)
- creativity

“Angry Birds” / smartphone games / modern “casual gamers”

Little things (easy first steps for gamification)

- replace grades given with Experience Points (XP) earned, letter grades with Levels
- have students create characters that get more skilled/powerful as students gain Levels
- award “badges” for specific accomplishments on coursework (e.g., completing an assignment early, or doing an extra assignment, or earning full/perfect points on an an assignment; perhaps only one student can get each badge)
- assign students roles (historical, partisan, ideological, social) and have them discuss a course reading “in character”
- offer rewards for achievement (gold stars, stickers, food, bragging rights, badges, extra-credit opportunities, a firm handshake, their name on a Wall of Fame in the classroom)
- Jeopardy review
- tie assignment performance to storyline (e.g, “a group total of 2,000+ XP means Pompeii is saved from the eruption of Vesuvius”)
- gentle competition (e.g., teams of 3 or 4, and team with highest aggregate points earned for one or more assignments gets a reward/recognition/choice of something in next unit)
- class-wide progress chart or “leaderboard” of who has how many points/badges
- do a one-class or one-unit adventure, puzzle, scenario, monster fight, skill challenge, or debate
- incentivize excellence, creativity, collaboration with story/character or tangible rewards
“Risk” / board games / traditional casual game-players

Medium things (more-involved or unit-length undertakings)
- scavenger hunt (web-based or physical)
- semester-long reading roles with assignments written in character (cf. Richlin)
- Reacting to the Past STEM mini-games and historical mini-games (http://reacting.barnard.edu)
- mock trial / debate / case study / theatrical presentation
- classwork, discussion, homework done in teams or factions
- “lab challenges”
- assignments that simulate disciplinary expertise

“Dungeons & Dragons” / roleplaying games / gamers with a capital G

Big things (for when you’re ready to go all-in on gamifying your course)
- “alternate reality games” (cf. McGonigal book and check out her website too)
- roleplaying games
- Second Life or Minecraft learning/simulation environments
- self-pacing (like Mario: game levels punctuated by “end bosses”)
- Reacting to the Past full-length games
Additional resources / bibliography

• email THM at thmgg@wfu.edu
• pages 5–8 of this handout include sample materials from THM’s Latin course

• Cook, Monte. *Numenera Corebook* (Monte Cook Games, 2015) — chh. 21–22 provide useful advice on being a Gamemaster
• Gellar-Goad, T. H. M. “Appendix to World of Wordcraft.” www.academia.edu/8456394/Appendix_to_World_of_Wordcraft_in_Arts_and_Humanities_in_Higher_Education_vol._14_2015_
• Sheldon, Lee. *The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game* (Cengage, 2011)
  • Gaming-style preferences: cardboardrepublic.com/gamer-archetypes
  • Pericles Group (www.practomime.com): internet-based gamification of language & civilization instruction
  • Serious Play Conference: www.seriousplayconference.com
Student feedback

“This class has expanded my thoughts on what a classroom can be.”

“I will definitely remember this class as one of my favorites from college.”

“I feel like I have gained a deeper connection to the language than I would have if this course had been presented in a more traditional way. The development of the story and my character over the semester allowed me to really build Latin into the story in my head; it did not become some abstract skill.”

Motivating students to learn

Motivated students see value in the course, see a supportive environment, and have high self-efficacy. A roleplay format ties extrinsic value (taking your hero through the adventure) to intrinsic value (fulfilling course learning goals); provides a supportive, collaborative environment that encourages risk-taking, and helps connect their efforts with successful learning. It also gets them really creative!

Course format entry [from THM’s Latin Prose Composition syllabus]

This class is designed as a multiplayer mythological fantasy adventure game. You are the players. You will each create a “player character” (PC) that will represent you in the game. As the “gamemaster” (GM), I will moderate class, provide the setting, and help guide both the storytelling and your adventures in Latin grammar and prose composition.

The setting is the mythic-era ancient Mediterranean, a vague Age of Bronze. You each will play a hero from Graeco-Roman myth, of your choosing, with the PC’s backstory, personality, and actions determined largely by you, though not entirely unmoored from the character’s actual traditional mythical characteristics. Over the semester-long journey, you will independently and together face a variety of obstacles, challenges, and opportunities for advancement, character development, and fun. Creativity is encouraged, and will get you and your PC far in your adventure! Teamwork and respect for your fellow players (and respect among PCs, within the “party”), is a must.
Grading schema [from syllabus]

You begin this course at 1st level, with 0 xp. You gain xp by showing up to and participating in class, completing assignments successfully, and (at my discretion) advancing our storyline. You’ll note that slightly more xp can be awarded than needed to reach 20th level, the highest level attainable.

Experience points will be awarded as follows, with additional rewards possible for remarkable instances of creativity, camaraderie, or Latinity, at my discretion:

A. Scribe spell-scrolls (homework) 37 @ 10 xp each 370 xp
B. Map the dungeon (grammar-graphics) 4 @ 30 xp each 120 xp
C. Craft magic items (advocacy documents) 3 @ 50 xp each 150 xp
D. Side quest (paired author presentation) 100 xp
E. Forge eldritch tome (stylistic passage translation) 100 xp
F. Solo quest (prosopopoieia of your PC) 180 xp

TOTAL POSSIBLE XP 1,020 xp

Final grades will be determined by what level you reach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Experience Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20th level</td>
<td>1,000 xp</td>
<td>A, and laudatio sempiterna [eternal praise]</td>
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<tr>
<td>19th level</td>
<td>930 xp</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th level</td>
<td>900 xp</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th level</td>
<td>870 xp</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>16th level</td>
<td>830 xp</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>15th level</td>
<td>800 xp</td>
<td>B–</td>
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<tr>
<td>14th level</td>
<td>770 xp</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th level</td>
<td>730 xp</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>12th level</td>
<td>700 xp</td>
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<td>20 xp</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st level</td>
<td>0 xp</td>
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</tbody>
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Sample “level-up” notification & reward for revision of homework
Scribing 3 [sample homework assignment]

MAKE SURE that your Latin is done right, and in accordance with the Assignment Standards—including writing out an English version of the sentence first. You should READ CAREFULLY THROUGH the assigned section in Bradley’s Arnold before completing this assignment.

You’re welcome to use the 3rd person or the 1st person to refer to your PC, so long as you do so correctly. “I hit the monster with my axe” and “Bellerophon hits the monster with his axe” are both acceptable, so long as you aren’t hitting me or your classmates with anything.

Tell me a little bit about your PC’s past. You don’t have to stay “on-script” for this—in other words, your PC’s past doesn’t have to match the mythology. If you wanted your Hercules to have done ten labors instead of twelve, for instance, that would be fine. What’s more important than fidelity is creativity—and more important than either is correct Latin!

1) Look at Exercise V § 31 a. Then, write three sentences. In the first, tell me something that caused your PC regret. In the second, tell me something that will please your PC. In the third, tell me something that is your PC’s duty.
2) Look at Exercise V § 31 b. Then, write two sentences. In the first, tell me something that your PC has seen. In the second, tell me something that your PC had believed, but also what your PC now believes.
3) Transform the following sentences into indirect statement, and use the introductory phrases indicated in brackets:
   a. Via in Arcadiam longa est. [Explorator dixit]
   b. Numquam prius cogitaui tam strenue de ciuitate Thebarum. [Venator ait]
   c. Expecto uos qui mea regna oppugnabis. [Sphinx inquit]
4) Translate the following sentences into Latin:
   a. The Sphinx says that the soldiers will never see Arcadia. (NB: look at § 33)
   b. Both students felt that they were able to read the hard books.
   c. We were hoping that there would not be a battle. (NB: look at § 37)
   d. You will promise that dinner will be supplied. (NB: look at § 38)
   e. Is Camilla ordering her horses to run into the city?
You join the long line of Initiates, and travel into a subterranean grotto-shrine of Demeter, which has an altar with fire burning bright, statues of Demeter and her daughter Kore, and various agricultural implements. Complete the following Latin sentences (uttered by priestesses and priests) with the word indicated in brackets, in the context-appropriate case, number, and gender:

- **Soleamus discere _____ Magnae Matris et _______ fieri. [doctrina]; [initiatus, a, um]**
- **Malim in exsilium _________ quam _________ religioni Matris esse. [eo, ire, iui, itus]; [falsus, a, um]**
- **Mater esse ________ dicitur quod nobis uidetur aeque _______ ut orbis terrarum. [magnus, a, um]; [spatiosus, a, um]**

As the priestesses read these words, each Initiate in turn is struck with a flail, nicked with a scythe, given a mouthful of fresh wheat and pure, unmixed wine, and marked with burnt grass.

Do you swear yourself to maintaining the secrecy of the rites and rituals you just witnessed?

O yes  
O no

If yes, unstaple and read what follows, then hand this back to THM. If no, hand back to THM unstapled.

[**stapled following portion**]:

After the rites are concluded, while you are exiting the shrine, a priestess (*quaedam sacerdos*) places a hand on your shoulder and on the Altar of Demeter, and gravely intones the following:

**Dirā in necessitudine debebis fortis fieri ac hoc uerbum potens loqui: ABLANATHANALBA.**

Do you wish to tell your fellow PCs who did not participate in the rites?

O I say  
O I do not say  
O I deny (nego: see p. 38 § 33)

Put the priestess’ words into nested indirect statement: e.g., “I do not say that a certain priestess said that…” (you can leave out the ABLANATHANALBA part):