

**Waterloo ExL Community of Practice
Games and Simulations in the Classroom**

Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Location: DC1301

Host: Jolanta N. Komornicka, Assistant Professor, History at St. Jerome's University

Jolanta specializes in late medieval France. Her research focus is on crime and society.

Description: Jolanta will present her gamification of an upper-division History course, The Black Death. She'll share the basic template for the gamified course, along with the game materials (including a Monster Manual, card deck, and badges). The majority of the talk will be a live demonstration of the in-class RPG she has students play, followed by discussion and questions.

HIST 391 – 001 The Black Death

The entire course is turned into a game – “How to survive the black death”

From the [syllabus](#):

This course will be run as a game. You will be part of a team throughout the term. In game parlance, the team is your Plague Hospital, and you are on its staff. Assignments are Monsters, research work is a Quest, in-class activities are Adventures, and there will be badges to earn and experience points (XP) to gain. There are also Side-Quests you can undertake for bonus points. The in-game XP you earn is related to your course grade. You will be assessed primarily on your individual work, not on your team's dynamics. That said, having an effective team will ultimately make your life easier when you do your (solo) final project. All of this is explained in the game manual and will be explained in class.

About the course

- The purpose of the game is geared to engagement – are students more engaged learning this way? Students are doing extra work, coming to office hours, and doing fantastic work with the more creative assignments
 - o Not a required course
- Uses Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
- Students are faced with problems related to the black death coming to Western Europe.
 - o Key part of the course is only using the available knowledge of the time when thinking about these problems
 - o Use texts and readings to think about they know, what they don't know – try to figure some times out in groups
- There is a comic book to supplement the course material

Game Elements

- Students are provided with a “Monster Manual” for the course, there is also a version with all the game language removed called “translation please”
- Students are put into groups - each group has a banner where they earn badges - blue are merits, red are demerits
 - o Demerits – skull is typos in their written work – four sentences each with an error

- Individual badges – spirit badges – at the end of each unit, report to their group and class as a whole, award each other the badges = all positive
- Students also get a card deck when they begin the course – list of poisons, potions, and spirits - to tell students in short form what the game is about
 - Students choose the assignment out of a list of possible assignments – students earn experience points based on these assignments
 - Level up as you gain experience points – students can track their experience points
- Participation: Students are given a card at the beginning of each class to indicate if they would like to participate in that day’s lecture. They have the option to “opt-out” of participating but have a max number of times they can do this and have to talk to the professor 1:1 about why they weren’t prepared.
- One assignment called “Debating death” – 15 students – the winners get a stuffed animal of the black death molecule
- Have some option of redoing assignments
 - The assignment is worth 100% and you get 70, redo it’s worth 20% and you get 20 so you have 90, third try is 6%

Additional information

- There was a required lead time to develop materials – the course runs in fall so have the summer to prep. Now that the work is done, there isn’t much additional to get the course ready for each term.
- Received [a LITE Grant](#) to develop the structure for the game-based learning approach
- Jolanta has taught the course once before so there is a small sample on the engagement, but she also sees higher engagement in other courses. Has integrated mini games into other courses, such as the heresy course.

Mini-game – the black death comes to Norwich

- In this session, each participant was provided with a character to portray, such as wool merchant, tradesman, medical professional or church. Each character had a robust description, with a back story, relationships with the other characters, and objectives for the game. There were also additional readings to provide context to the character, which students would read in the course.
- Each character has a number of “Personal Influence Points” – throughout the game the game master hands out cards to indicate if you remain healthy, start to get sick and loose one point, have the plague, loose two points, and cannot participate in the voting, or a death card to indicate that you have died.
- One player is nominated as the mayor and calls for a vote midway and at the end of the game. The players debate to have their objective put forward as a motion for people to vote on.
- In the first round, you meet with your own faction. In the second round, you can mingle with the other factions to discuss the issues.
- Remember to only incorporate knowledge from the 14th century into arguments – e.g. no knowledge about bacteria.