with learning objectives. Nina Kasniunas ("The Case is Submitted: Reenactment Theater and U.S. Supreme Court Oral Arguments") organized a reenactment of Supreme Court oral arguments that began with a visit to hear actual arguments in person. Combined with careful case selection and the administration of a learning style inventory, that visit helped infuse the culminating performance with elements of civic participation and experiential learning. Margaret Tseng ("Teaching Electoral Politics through Role Playing Simulations") created a presidential election simulation that also sought to stress political engagement and concluded that an enhanced focus on civic engagement was likely to strengthen a simulation that already featured a high level of student creativity.

The area of strongest agreement among participants was the need for a strong debriefing component. All agreed, however, that different debriefing exercises are appropriate to different simulations. Debriefing can be oral or written and either a one-shot effort or a series of reflections. Indeed, a more continuous debriefing process appeared promising in several contexts. Henrik Schatzinger and Christopher Schaefer ("A Presidential Simulation: A Student's Guide to Understanding the American Presidency") ran a presidential simulation requiring students to serve as president in a series of clearly defined scenarios and then implemented group discussion after each exercise. Multiple iterations of group evaluation helped focus the participants' attention and encouraged reflection. Similarly, in his Supreme Court decision-making simulation, John Gates ("An Online Simulation of the Decision Making of the U.S. Supreme Court") integrated a strong online component that required students not participating directly in a given iteration to post evaluative comments to an online forum. This element required students to think reflectively about the roles being played and, so long as tech support was reliable, improved the effectiveness of the simulation in a larger class setting.

Participants concluded that a well-structured debriefing component strengthens the connections that students make between the simulation and overall course learning goals and provides an opportunity for students to take ownership of their education. This component also allows students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating content. By providing an opportunity for students to close the loop, debriefing becomes a crucial element of a successful simulation. The stronger the debriefing component, the better one can assess how well the learning outcomes have been met.

In the years ahead, the participants of the Simulations and Role Play I track hope that the APSA will place a more profound emphasis on interactive learning by facilitating learning communities. In particular, this emphasis could be made by creating a clearinghouse for research on best practices, hosting a series of traveling workshops dedicated to interactive learning techniques, fostering hands-on learning, and integrating civic engagement into the simulation experience.

TRACK: SIMULATIONS AND ROLE PLAY II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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In a weekend of pedagogical fury, members of the Simulations and Role Play II track queried their peers to refine their ideas, presented data on the effectiveness of simulations as pedagogical tools, and shared methods of using simulations in the classroom. Paper presentations and discussions examined simulations from a variety of paradigmatic perspectives, including the use of simulations as summative assessment instruments, the role of competition in generating targeted learning outcomes, and the difficulty in balancing pedagogical objectives with design constraints.

These presentations spurred a series of debates about how the creation of fictional realms can be used to better understand empirically factual ones. The first debate explored whether simulations must incorporate some degree of competition in order to induce student engagement, and, if so, whether simulations can effectively showcase cooperative endeavors. The second debate focused on how instructors who use simulations must be careful of how students use and perceive them. Students can have a tendency to focus on the underlying processes upon which simulations are constructed rather than the concepts that the instructor wants the simulation to demonstrate. Students may regard simulations as exercises with little educational value or, conversely, as highly educational enterprises—though an instructor might lack the evidence that his or her simulation actually contributes to student learning in ways that match the instructor's rationale for using the simulation in the first place.

Participants also discussed the relationship between simulation design and assessment. At present, self-reported and empirical data on whether and how simulations generate learning is mixed; nevertheless, participants argued that the need for assessable outcomes should not overshadow the important role that simulations play in allowing students to develop professional skills such as team problem-solving, public speaking, and productive operation in environments with limited time and information. Track members agreed that simulations function as more than just replacements for lectures.

Finally, the broad range of simulations available for use generated discussion of the tensions that are inherent in simulation design. Simulations need to strike a balance between fun and function, complexity and simplicity, and instructor control and the degrees of freedom that students engaged in a simulation enjoy. Despite the difficulty that instructors can encounter in achieving proper balance in these areas, track members agreed that variations in class size, course content, semester length, student demographics, and other factors make the multiplicity of simulation designs welcome.

Participants identified potential areas for further scholarship. Political science faculty need to better understand assessment techniques and ensure academic rigor, since these two conditions are likely to affect whether faculty choose to implement simulations in the classroom. A more extensive literature on the subject of simulations would help fulfill these aims. Second, simulation designers and potential users would benefit from a framework that clearly delineates the different types of simulations and the qualities of each type. Finally, faculty should be encouraged to gather and publish pre- and postsimulation data—whether quantitative or qualitative—to allow those who use simulations to continue to refine their designs and improve the learning outcomes of students. Many faculty are already using markedly sophisticated measurement and assessment devices, but these efforts remain largely unknown to fellow political scientists engaged in teaching. Track participants noted that they lacked a collaborative database of resources that would help them achieve this goal.

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