



Department of Classical Studies

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DATE: Sept. 6, 2015
TO: Center for the Liberal Arts
FROM: Barbette Spaeth, Associate Professor, Department of Classical Studies
RE: Report on CLA Faculty Innovation Grant

With the assistance of a CLA Faculty Innovation Grant, I attended the Barnard Workshop on the “Reacting to the Past” curriculum, held in New York City from June 10-14 this summer. Unfortunately, John Donahue, also of my department, was unable to attend. I participated in two games at the Barnard Workshop on the Reacting to the Past Curriculum: “The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.” and “Constantine and the Council of Nicaea,” as well as various lectures and workshops that were held in concurrent sessions.

I was extremely impressed by the curriculum. I found it incredibly engaging, and I am excited about the possibility of trying it out in my classes. The curriculum truly lived up to the claim on their website that “[RTTP] seeks to draw students into the past, promote engagement with big ideas, and improve intellectual and academic skills.” What I found so exciting about the curriculum was the amount of student engagement and excitement that it promoted in the “big ideas” by focusing on a critical event in which those ideas were at the center of controversy. In the Athens game, I played Crito, part of a group of followers of Socrates. We were able to save Socrates at his trial on the charge of impiety, an experience which we found truly amazing. In the Council of Nicaea, I played Bishop Ossius, the presiding bishop of the Council, and I learned how difficult it was to keep the competing groups from imposing their own theologies on the nascent creed of the early church. The games truly encouraged both teamwork and competition, and I am sure that students would love them as much as I did.

The lectures and workshops I attended were meant to help instructors to learn to develop and implement the games in their classrooms. I feel that I just scratched the surface by attending this conference. I would like more training in how to develop a game, and in how to do grading for it. I am thinking of developing a COLL 100 course employing the RTTP methodology on religion in ancient Corinth, focusing on the trial of St. Paul, and looking at Christian, “pagan” and Jewish groups in the city. I have approached Michael Daise in the Department of Religious Studies with the idea of working together to develop an interdisciplinary course on this topic. There are many other games that RTTP has already produced which other departments might be interested in exploring. I would be happy to present a brown-bag talk on RTTP, if CLA would like me to do so. A full list of published games is available at:

<https://reacting.barnard.edu/curriculum/published-games>

If there is interest from other faculty, I would also encourage the CLA to join the Reacting Consortium, a coalition of colleges, institutions and individuals which promotes RTTP. Institutional membership would give up to 10 W&M faculty members full access to the RTTP game library, online resources, restricted social media sites, and other listserves, as well as a member rate on registration for workshops and conferences, access to a mentor the first semester teaching a game, support in game and course development, and additional benefits. The cost for an institution is \$750 per year from January to December. More information about the Consortium may be found at:

<https://reacting.barnard.edu/about/consortium>