Classroom Simulations: Strategies for Maximizing Learning Outcomes," emphasized the use of online and preexisting simulations with little or no modification. He emphasized the need to carefully match the simulation to the needs of the course as well as the instructor and suggested that faculty make use of the presentation method that best works for their situation.

William J. Stover from Santa Clara University designs large-scale international simulations that he runs fully online with open source software. His simulations include students from across the world at a variety of academic levels. Stover's goals include increasing student empathy and competency. His simulations often include mentors from the country students represent. In his paper "Information Technology and International Relations: Using On Line, Interactive Simulations to Transcend Time, Space and Attitudes," Stover emphasized the benefits of students representing cultures other than their own. Tests of student attitudes before and after his simulations indicated that his programs increase both understanding of other cultures and knowledge of the simulated events.

Brian Cook and Kristen Willis from Clark University also create transnational crisis simulations. Their simulation, described in "National Security Crisis Simulation: Stage II," unites students in the United States and the United Kingdom. Their paper emphasized a three-phase simulation that focuses on the decision-making process and utilizes loose instructor controls. Willis emphasized the role of debriefing to allow students to understand their own and other students roles in the simulation and their individual decision-making process.

Several of the presenters work with extraordinary populations. Thomas L. Kolasa from Troy University, in his paper "Simulations, Iraq, and Teaching Political Science," described the challenge of working with an extremely small number of students in evening courses, which limits the number of possible actors. His simulations also address major international events including crises in the Middle East. Frank Franz uses simulations in high school Advanced Placement courses. In "Running against the Odds," he uses a problem-based learning approach in which students create campaign advertisements for candidates. The group work and oral and written reports allow his students to approach politics in a novel and effective way. Anne Marie Baylouny from the Naval Postgraduate School in "Keeping It Real: Teaching Middle East Conflict with Simulations" discussed teaching motivated mid-career military officers. She stressed the value of simulations in allowing students to take roles they are not inherently familiar with. Simulations allow her students to develop an intimate knowledge of events, often through the representation of organizations and interests that are usually neglected.

Lynda K. Barrow of Coe College also uses Middle East simulations. In her presentation, "Simulation on the Conflict over Palestine," she underlines the importance of a strong framework for the simulation. Her courses often lead up to a simulation and stress student motivation. Her goals included encouraging students to view conflicts from a variety of perspectives and increasing students' cultural understanding.

Ann M. Cullen from Bond University in her paper "Virtual Total Immersion," encouraged simulations that are decidedly low tech. She avoids technology to give students the real world experience many diplomats face in practice. She encourages students to fully represent the culture they are assigned and has found that students exceed her expectations in their self-generated learning. They conduct high levels of research and exercise clear thinking and, by the end of the process, demonstrate empathy.

In contrast, Katy Crossley-Frolick from Denison University creates multilevel, multiplayer games covering topics like international HIV/AIDS policy. These, she argues in "Beyond Model UN: Simulating Multilevel, Multiactor Diplomacy with the Millennium Development Goals," allow students to understand the difficulty of cooperation. Her focus is on the process that groups take, rather than the agreement the group reaches or fails to reach.

Chad Raymond from Salve Regina University and Patrick Van Inwegen from Whitworth College finished up the track with papers on assessing student learning outcomes from simulations. Raymond compared student performance on exams and evaluation of teaching in courses that experienced a simulation with those that did not. He found that neither evaluations nor exam scores were higher in courses with a simulation, contrary to conventional wisdom. Van Inwegen also found that a simulation did not significantly increase student test scores and that scores may even be slightly lower on essay tests after a simulation. Van Inwegen focused on low-preparation simulations and emphasized that, regardless whether simulation increased test scores or not, the simulations seem to increase student enjoyment of the course and engagement with the material.

The group ended with a discussion of the commonalities that the group felt transcended individual approaches. The group agreed that a focus on clear objectives upon entering the simulation greatly enhanced the simulation's effectiveness. The group also highlighted the need for debriefing after simulations. The track members also agreed that simulations engage students and instructors alike. Problem-based learning allows students and faculty to be creative in the use of alternative technologies and, while simulations can be time consuming, they are worth the costs. Simulations develop empathy, decision making skills, and teamwork skills, as well as an understanding of the course material. The track members agreed that the necessary commitment of time and resources, class size, student skill sets, and technology can function as impediments to the successful use of simulations. Outcomes assessment indicates that simulations are useful but not to the degree that many instructors would have predicted. The questions used to assess simulation do not get at many of the skills that simulations highlight such as critical thinking, empathy, group work, and active citizenship.

Track Six: Simulations and Role Play II

—Mark Gadson,
South Texas College
—Deanne Repetto,
Folsom Lake College
—Sherri L. Wallace,
University of Louisville

The 2008 Simulations and Role Play (S&RP) II track focused on issues in American politics and theory. Building on conversations in previous tracks (see S&RP track summaries from 2006 and 2007 in *PS*), the 25 discussants focused the dialogue mainly on best practices with some discussion on faculty research.

Papers Presented: Contributions and Considerations

The 11 presentations represented a myriad of best practices for S&RP in classroom teaching, from psychological decision-making tools to exercises for American politics, Congress, and the courts. There were a variety of S&RP designs and models to consider for achieving learning goals and facilitating students' understanding of complex political concepts and ideals. Thus the question is no longer whether professors can

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or should use S&RP, but which S&RP can best suit their teaching needs?

Emerging from the presentations and subsequent conversations were the following themes highlighting the benefits of balancing theory and practice via S&RP activities:

- *Students report that S&RP are effective, enjoyable, and generally underutilized*. The various techniques available can be efficiently balanced with traditional information delivery methods. This was illuminated in a presentation by Joanna Sabo (Monroe County Community College) on expanding measurable student learning through an in-class, effective mock Congress exercise. Both in her track presentation and well-received conference workshop "Designing Classroom Activities that Meet Student Outcomes," Sabo demonstrated that S&RP, from the simple to complex, can achieve learning objectives by engaging students in memorable and enjoyable exercises.
- *It is important to effectively balance types of S&RP with goals of the course, curriculum, and students' academic skill level*. Students learn differently, so a range of activities leads to the broader use, development, and acquisition of more universal skills that are transferable across disciplines and that also enhance student employability. Patricia O'Reilly (Ryerson University) found of the types of simulations she has used in her public policy courses, policy (content-oriented) simulations worked better than process (institutions-oriented) simulations in building students' skills. Her S&RP assessments revealed that in-class negotiations via student interaction were most useful. Utilizing a three-day S&RP to replace the standard written MA thesis at the graduate level, G. Matthew Bonham (Syracuse University) reported, in his coauthored study, how S&RP activities can be more practical for students who wish to hone and combine demonstrable skills with more cultural knowledge and human interaction as preparation for a global workforce. This bold experiment has been positive for graduate students, but the challenge remains in determining how best to evaluate learning outcomes.
- *S&RP can be multipurpose tools used across several classes and/or in lower and upper division courses*. Renee Bukovchik Van Vechten (University of the Redlands) found that combining (lower and upper division) courses enlarges the scope of players' roles and the potential conflicts and challenges. Additionally such pairing can be used to teach course content, institutional rules, and procedures as well as encourage social interaction and learning across disciplines. More importantly when drawn out over a semester, S&RP activities become a little more realistic. Also cooperative learning increases social capital for students due to the various linkages formed. The results of students working together and interacting via groups are usually positive interdependence (or mutual dependence) and increased individual accountability to peers and professors. Additionally students who collaborate to learn in role-playing exercises tend to internalize lessons, have better information retention, and deepen their conceptual understanding of course material.
- *S&RP are effective methods of evaluating activity and student performance*. Given that classroom pedagogy is shifting from information processing to incorporate many more experiential modes of learning, this is an assessment tool that can integrate different kinds of learners and students at different stages of learning, as George R. La Noue (University of Maryland-Baltimore County) demonstrated when using practical and detailed models for teaching the courts and constitutional law. Kathleen M. Perez (Wichita State University) presented a coauthored exploratory study on student performance for a midterm and final, both using the same essays and short questions. The study revealed that students performed much better on the final than the midterm due to participation in S&RP exercises before the final exam.
- *S&RP recognizes both internal and external influences on decision-making processes*. When using an electronic decision-making experiment in devising a "route to the ocean," Douglas C. Nilson (Idaho State University) found that many students were surprised to learn that their decisions were not always rational and can often be tempered by unintentional or undetected biases. John E. Transue (University of Illinois-Springfield), who teaches political psychology and public opinion courses, demonstrated three approaches for evaluating decision making: interference (Stroop Test), accessibility (media priming), and framing. He found overall that psychological (cognitive) issues may be more relevant to decision making when made under time constraints.
- *There is value in incorporating S&RP into courses and curricula*. S&RP represent an invaluable learning experience that can increase the levels of authentic political engagement and participation by students. Rachel Paine Caufield (Drake University) and Angelo J. Gonzales (University of California, Berkeley) articulated that S&RP were not only useful for teaching students about process of politics (e.g., judicial politics), but also effective for teaching about the institutions (e.g., Congress). All students have to know the appropriate vernacular or vocabulary for the activity, but once that is achieved, students engage and become actively conversant about institutional features that may seem theoretically abstract, but are real, everyday practices.
- *S&RP techniques must consider clear objectives and measurable actions to balance, focus, and ensure students learn from the activities*. This will involve initial (sometimes extensive) preparation in lecture and/or outside of class.
- *Faculty must balance role as both instructor and facilitator*. All presenters agreed that is sometimes necessary for faculty to make students uncomfortable for the sake of learning. However priming by instructors matters because what we cue our students to learn or pay attention to will tend to be their focus. The use of S&RP allows for a critical examination of the role or goal of political scientists as educators. These activities, exercises, and experiments can address the often conflicting demands of providing students with a fundamental theoretical basis and framework for approaching the questions we as political scientists attempt to address in our research and scholarship. Not to mention S&RP research is an excellent way to bridge teaching and publishing.

Subsequently questions for research and scholarship exploration centered on how to measure learning outcomes. Discussants pondered which of these techniques are best to use given the S&RP utilized: priming vs. rubrics vs. reactions. Additionally how can S&RP be used in developing demonstrable job-ready skills? These are questions to explore

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further. Finally discussants mulled over the possibilities and advantages presented by multicourse participation in simulations. The viable solution would the establishment of a teaching/simulations lab connected with cross-curriculum opportunities.

Lessons Learned: Resources and Recommendations

Overall the 2008 workshop reiterated some of the former S&RP track themes. The discussion lead to serious questions and possible solutions on how S&RP can and should be factored in merit evaluations for those faculty who engage in them. Last year discussants explored how such faculty could receive more FTEs while students could receive more credit hours for S&RP engagement when taking teaching and class loads into account. The possible solution could be the creation of simulation learning labs to supplement coursework (*PS*, July 2007, 583). This year Neal Allen (College of St. Benedict and St. John's University) suggested that perhaps the APSA Standing Committee on Teaching and Learning could initiate a committee or research project to explore the topic of "Developing the Dedicated Lab in the Political Science Curriculum." The purpose would be to conduct departmental surveys to gauge if existing teaching/simulations labs exists, and if so, what are the criteria in relation to student/faculty FTEs? The results of such a survey could be a mechanism by which the profession can advocate for learning labs in other institutions.

As reported last year, to achieve these goals faculty engaging in S&RP must work to develop institutional standards for what simulations should accomplish through more collaboration on S&RP models, best practices within and across universities, as well as the organization and sharing between conferences via list servs, web blogs, and web site links. The suggested recommendation in 2007 was the creation of a list serv that linked the faculty engaging in S&RP within the discipline (*PS*, July 2007, 583). This initiative has come to fruition with the creation of a political science S&RP web site by Douglass Telling (Framingham State College): http://mysite.verizon.net/dtelling/Simulations%20Home%.

Note

*Special thanks to the many workshop discussants who contributed additional written comments for this summary.

Track Seven: Core Curriculum/General Education

—**Kweku Ainuson,**
Clemson University
—**Stacy G. Ulbig,**
Sam Houston State University

Meeting Our Challenges with Innovative Tools

The Core Curriculum/General Education track comprised a wide range of institutions, different areas of expertise, and levels of teaching. Institutions represented were both private and public, and four year colleges and community colleges. Participants were made up of seasoned and experienced teachers, novice teachers, and graduate students. Presenters described their innovative teaching techniques and how they could be effectively employed both inside and outside the classroom. Presentations gave rise to the discussion of various teaching methods and how to tailor the techniques to fit specific needs. In the ensuing discussion one thing became apparent. The goal of the successful teacher is to engage students in a number of ways.

At the most basic level we wish to impart a knowledge base by engaging students in the class material. More generally we seek to make connections between our classroom activities and the larger civic world around us by engaging students in politics and public affairs. Additionally we aspire to enable students to view themselves as active world citizens by engaging them with their own internal self-image. Finally we encourage students to positively interact with those around them by engaging each other. In achieving these levels of engagement, two more specific tasks emerged during our conversations. First, many of us stressed the importance of imparting basic knowledge and skills. Second, our group felt it was important to strike the appropriate balance between specific facts and larger concepts. As last year's track participants pointed out, political science courses can "teach several key skills, including critical thinking, independence, citizenship, global awareness, and the importance of recognizing and respecting alternate viewpoints" (Boomgard et al. 2007, 576).

In seeking to achieve these goals, we came to recognize that we often face a number of perceived dichotomies. Most of us face the challenge of teaching both non-majors and majors in the same classroom. We are confronted by the task of conveying a general knowledge base to non-majors while simultaneously laying the foundation for continued study of political science by majors. We grapple with the task of imparting knowledge to students who have little interest in the material, while at the same time providing political science majors with a rewarding experience that fuels their interest in the subject. Similarly we are often faced with the decision of teaching breadth versus depth. Should we be concerned with covering only the most basic information about most topics or should we focus on communicating a comprehensive understanding of a subset of topics? At the same time we struggle to teach substantive knowledge and build critical skills. We often find ourselves quizzing students on basic factual knowledge on objective exams at the expense of assignments that build more advanced critical thinking and communication skills. Finally we often feel a tension between institutional requirements and the classroom experience. Institutional imperatives such as teaching more students for fewer dollars and measuring learning outcomes often collide with a fruitful and productive classroom environment.

Throughout our conversations the members of this track offered a number of strategies for managing these numerous, and often seemingly irreconcilable, goals. We hope that by sharing a number of the approaches presented and discussed we might encourage others to think creatively about navigating the turbulent waters of teaching classes in the general education/core curriculum area, and to share their survival tools with the rest of us. As practitioners one important issue that confronted us was how to overcome the challenges outlined above. As a group we felt that we could better achieve our goals if we utilize effective and creative teaching methods, better align our assessment with our goals, and approach our challenges as reinforcing rather than contradictory.

Use Good Tools

Our goals can be reached by effectively presenting the materials to the students, engaging the students by encouraging participatory learning both inside and outside the classroom, and by developing critical thinking skills so students will be able to make sense out of their experiences in the classroom and apply them effectively to understand important issues confronting society. Our track participants explored a number of different methods for achieving these goals, including classroom presentation methods, out-of-class participation

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