

IPAC Activity Description

Name of Activity

Osw3go.net: Alternate Reality Simulations as Learning Tools

Contributor

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Brief Description of the Activity

Osw3go.net is a parallel universe. Specifically, it is an alternate reality simulation that takes place every year on our campus. Each year, the participants explore a different theme, whether it is racism, immigration, or fracking. The Osw3go.net simulations engage students in analyzing a fictional problem based on real-life situations, articulating a variety of possible responses to it, and examining the question of what form action should take in the real world after the simulation. The simulations are collectively played by students using a variety of interactive tools converging in one online environment, but they also combine online interaction with face-to-face activities. In other words, the participants in Osw3go.net do not inhabit a virtual world where they control anonymous avatars. Rather, they represent themselves in the simulation, interacting with other real members of the Oswego community, and learning about real local and global issues that impact their community. In 2012, after four years of successful prototypes, the project was awarded a \$25,000 Innovative Instruction Technology Grant from SUNY. This grant will allow the Osw3go.net team to develop a re-usable template that can support these interdisciplinary simulations, to be released under an open access license.

Interdisciplinary Nature of the Activity

The Osw3go.net simulations are exercises in collective storytelling, deliberation and planning in which authentic social issues are explored. The themes treated each year are interdisciplinary in nature, insofar as any social problem is a multifaceted problem that should be explored from different perspectives and disciplines. For instance, the "alternate realities" considered in past iterations of Osw3go.net have included the crisis of public education, racism on campus, the local impact of US-Mexico relations, Islamophobia, and hydraulic fracturing. During these simulations, students respond to a number of scenarios, accessing resources in order to inform their participation and better shape the outcome of the stories. The resources can include readings, films, scientific data, news items, and so on. Students do not merely consume resources, but create and share their own, and they can organize and participate in a number of

events such as teach-in's, panels, community forums, and even civic engagement projects. Students and faculty from all disciplines are encouraged to participate and work together. The Osw3go.net simulations directly support SUNY Oswego's strategic goals of Engagement, World Awareness, and Solutions by building collaborative ties, pluralistic social environments, and opportunities for the application of knowledge in order to solve real-world problems.

Relationship to Interdisciplinarity at Oswego

Past (and present) iterations of Osw3go.net have involved (and are in the process of involving) faculty and students from Communication Studies, English, Politics, History, Geography, Chemistry, and other disciplines. The Osw3go.net project also has institutional ties with the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) and the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

IPAC Support

Occasional use of the IPAC Conference Room for group meetings.

Recognition for Osw3go.net that may accrue from affiliation with the SUNY Oswego Interdisciplinary Center.

Relevant Dates

The foreseeable future.