Examining the effectiveness of using Role-Play Gaming to teach Comparative Politics to Chinese students.

Michael Toomey; Xin Yan; Zhou Xinhe

Wenzhou-Kean University

Abstract: A significant body of literature has been compiled which testifies to the effectiveness of role-play gaming and other types of simulation exercises as a pedagogical method in Political Science. Several authors have found that simulations could be used to improve students’ satisfaction and enthusiasm about the subject material, while also improving their self-reported learning outcomes. Many of these studies have focused on examining the efficacy of role-play gaming among students with a Western background (at least from a Political Science perspective) and among Political Science majors with a relatively advanced and broad knowledge of the subject, or of the various concepts associated with the subject, upon entering the classroom. Relatively little information exists on the effectiveness of this method for teaching students hailing from a non-Western environment and that are not Political Science majors, who would not be reasonably expected to have familiarity with these concepts prior to taking the course at the university level. As such, this study aims to assess the efficacy of role-play gaming as a method for teaching Political Science in an immersive and interactive manner to Chinese students. Levels of long-term knowledge retention and enthusiasm towards political science are examined among a control group of students, who have completed at least one political science course but have not participated in a politics-based role-playing game, and are compared against a test group who have also completed the same political science course and who have participated in a role-playing game. It is hypothesized that because of the greater levels of active involvement and immersion demanded by the RPG simulation, the test group will display significantly better knowledge retention and enthusiasm, when controlling for prior academic performance.

Keywords: role playing, active learning, comparative politics, China

Introduction:

In recent years, a growing body of literature has emerged surrounding the use of role-play simulations and games as a tool for political science pedagogy, and attesting to the merits of ‘active learning’ exercises in a variety of manners. This emergence has coincided with a growing awareness regarding the limitations of the traditional “signature pedagogy” of many political science departments which are typically centered around teacher-centric, lecture-based courses or smaller, student-centric group sessions (Murphy and Reidy 2006), and about the variations in student learning styles which can influence educational and pedagogical outcomes (Fox and
Ronkowski 1997). It is clear that at present, certain limitations exist in terms of the reliability of the data used to test the effectiveness of these simulations and games. For instance, it can be inherently difficult to use controlled experimentation to test the usefulness of simulations as opposed to traditional methods of teaching through lectures and assigned readings (McCarthy 2014). Without this, it can be somewhat difficult to isolate what necessarily is the benefit of simulations, and to what extent simulations have added value to a course, which would not otherwise have been added had traditional methods been used only (Baranowski and Weir 2015; Stover 2007, 113; Wheeler, 2006). With that said, a significant and growing number of works, albeit perhaps somewhat tenuously, report that simulations have had positive effects in areas such as student interest and engagement (Hess 1999; Grant 2004; Weidenfeld and Fernandez 2017), student satisfaction and enthusiasm about the respective course (Dougherty 2003; Glazier 2011, 376-377), student understanding of theoretical concepts and applications (Langfield 2016; Biziouras 2013), knowledge retention (Switky and Aviles 2007), and so on. Predominantly simulations seem to be used in the more structured and rules-based field of International Relations, although increasingly simulations are used as an active-teaching component in classes on American, European, and Comparative politics (Baranowski and Weir 2015). However, broadly speaking, to date the research on the use of simulations tends to be focused on the use of simulations in Western classrooms, and/or in classes that are being taught to political science major students. Relatively little research exists on the use of simulations in non-Western classrooms, and on the efficacy of using simulations to teach students who do not major in a political science-related subject and who may not be expected to have a sophisticated understanding of the various concepts related to politics prior to taking a political science class. While there is not a complete absence of literature on the use of simulations in non-Western classes, it is a somewhat under-researched area, especially considering the growing number of political science programs and courses being offered in Asian universities (and the concurrent growth in the number of Western universities creating campuses in the region).

This article tests this gap by discussing the use of a simulation of a parliamentary election campaign in three sections of an introductory course on Comparative Politics, which was conducted at Wenzhou-Kean University in Wenzhou, China during the Fall 2016 semester. It begins by situating the exercise used within the universe of simulations that are used in Political Science classes, and also be establishing the unique pedagogical challenges posed by the teaching of a (stereotypically) Western-oriented subject such as political science in a non-Western country. It will then describe in detail the manner in which the simulation was carried out, the goals and objectives of the various actors and the specific tasks they were asked to carry out. It will also examine the effectiveness of this method in terms of encouraging long-term knowledge retention and enthusiasm towards political science amongst the participants in the simulation. It does this by comparing scores on a pre-test and post-test taken by a control group (who did not complete the simulation) and the test group (who did complete the simulation). Finally, the article will conclude by drawing inferences and conclusions from the data, and by making some future recommendations regarding the use of simulations as a pedagogical tool in political science.
Choosing the simulation: ‘games’ vs. ‘simulations’, open-ended vs. closed

Upon deciding to use simulations as a teaching method, it is broadly agreed that much consideration must be given to the form and structure of the simulation, and that they be designed in an effective manner, with a clear set of learning objectives and goals (Asal and Kratoville 2013, 133, 141). One of the first decisions to be made is whether to use a ‘game’, an abstraction of real-life cases using a fictional setting for the exercise, or a ‘simulation’, which is much more closely based on real-world events and is usually based in ‘reality’, or a potential counterfactual reality (Asal and Blake 2006; McCarthy 2014; Langfield 2016; Gilley 2013). These alternatives will lead to different outcomes, and should be used for different purposes; while games are somewhat more suitable to exercises designed to teach students about processes and abstract theoretical concepts and ideas, simulations are more useful for content-oriented outcomes, and for helping students to understand the perspectives, views and objectives of real-life actors (Asal and Blake 2006; McCarthy 2014).

Another important (and related) choice to be made at an early point is how the simulation should be structured, in the sense of being an open-ended, ‘sandbox’ game without a set ‘script’, with looser roles to be filled, and a (somewhat) unconstrained set of possible outcomes; or a more rigorous, structured and ‘closed’ simulation, with an inherently more narrow set of potential outcomes and clearly defined roles for participants. This can often be conditioned by the nature of the specific sub-field of political science on which the class in which the exercise is being used is based. For instance, given the more strictly rule-based and rigorous nature of fields such as International Relations and American/British/European politics etc., ‘closed’ simulations are more commonly used in these classes (Biziouras 2013, 185). And indeed, it seems that articles published on the effectiveness of simulations that were used in International Relations classes are particularly prevalent; for instance, in a recent review article on the usage of simulations, 81% of the studies examined were based on simulations conducted in International Relations or American politics classes (Baranowski and Weir 2015, 395). ‘Closed’ simulations typically have a very clear scenario which the students need to deal with, which have a clear set of objectives and directives for participants, and which might (but not necessarily) actively involve the course instructor as a participant in the discussion. In addition, in certain exercises, the various different roles may have varying amounts of power ‘resources’ available to them, with some simulations based on international negotiations allotting larger demographics to one side or another, greater economic resources, and preferential international allegiances, etc. While such simulations may occasionally have very clear ‘red lines’ for participants, or specific (and potentially contradictory) objectives for the different actors in the simulation, it is generally advised that there should be no specific outcomes which are considered “correct”, and that there still remain a wide variety of avenues and opportunities for students to engage with the exercise (Shaw 2006, 53). Nor should it be assumed that these more rigorous and structured exercises always take the form of simulations: for instance, both Shaw (2006) and Switky (2014), to name but a few, used more ‘closed’ and rigorous designs, but also structured their exercises as games, which emphasized process-based and abstract learning outcomes. Additionally, describing a simulation design as being ‘closed’ should not be taken to imply a pejorative meaning: such simulation designs are equally, if not more so, valid than their open-ended counterparts. However, such a design will tend to focus on illuminating particular
concepts and ideas, and will generally have a more narrow set of pedagogical objectives and outcomes.

In contrast, open-ended and ‘sandbox’ simulations offer a much broader range of possibilities, with the student participants being the primary drivers of the exercise without constant oversight from the course instructor. In such simulations, there is no specific ‘result’ envisaged, and participants are more strongly encouraged to focus on discussing and engaging with the issues. Indeed, in simulations such as this, direct interactions between participants may be somewhat more limited, with minimal negotiations and debate between groups, and with a much greater amount of the simulation being conducted informally and within the respective simulation groups. Whilst students may be provided with detailed background on the roles they are to take on, or may be given extensive briefings on the issues at stake, specific instructions may be more sparse, and/or templates may be somewhat simplified. Open-ended exercises generally tend to be somewhat more similar to games, and where they are rooted in the ‘real world’, they tend to be constructed around hypothetical or counterfactual scenarios. For instance, Gilley (2013) uses a more open-ended design in the creation of his ‘virtual history conference’ simulation, which used a comparatively unstructured format to allow students to probe counterfactual propositions about the 2003 Iraq War (227-228). In the same vein, Weidenfeld and Fernandez (2017) used a similar approach in a political theory-based simulation, whereby students adopted the roles of various political figures from the Revolutionary era in American history and thus presented argumentative essays from the perspective of their ‘character’. Computer-based simulations can also occasionally be open-ended in their design, as in the case of the Excel-based “independent artifact simulations” used by Jackson (2013), or in the “roving bandit” videogame simulation described by Nishikawa and Jaeger (2011), wherein a computer program is devised and then students are allowed to interact with the program in their own time and in their own ways, with little in the way of direct instruction and supervision from the instructor.

The uniqueness of political science education in China

With this in mind, it is also important to understand and consider the unique pedagogical challenges posed by teaching political science in Chinese classrooms, as opposed to Western classrooms. Indeed, given the cultural and political differences between China and the United States and Europe, a political science instructor is going to be faced with significant challenges in terms of relating what is often (and oftentimes with good reason) consider to be a Western-centric field of study. When it comes to the academic research on the use of simulations in political science classes, it is also quite clear that the prevailing focus of publications to date seem to have been on the use of simulations in Western classrooms and to comparably sophisticated audiences i.e. majors of Political Science-related subjects, who can reasonably be expected to have a rounded understanding of many of the basic concepts associated with the study of Political Science.

If one is to ignore the language barrier, teaching Political Science in a Chinese environment presents unique challenges which are not often faced by academics based in Western universities. For one thing, professors in China do not enjoy the same breadth of academic freedom and freedom
of speech as their colleagues in the West, as topics such as the 1989 Tienanmen Square massacre, the status of Taiwan, and Tibetan separatism and the Dalai Lama (amongst others) are culturally and politically sensitive subjects which have the potential to offend student sensibilities (at the very least) (Toomey 2017). More importantly, however, is the basic knowledge gap the average student has regarding Western, and particularly European, history and political systems, which necessitates some creativity and flexibility on the part of the lecturer to ensure that they can develop this understanding. Given the often Euro-centric and Western-centric nature of political science, it is sometimes easy to forget that events and figures that are seen by Europeans as being of eminent importance, may not carry the same (if any) cultural or historical resonance in China (Ibid.). And while Chinese students do receive some high-school education on Western political systems, this is largely filtered through a Sino-Marxist perspective, not to mention that its depiction of these systems is somewhat thin, descriptive, and lacking in analytical depth. As such, when many students begin studying subjects such as Comparative Politics, they are truly starting at the very beginning.

There is some debate in the literature over the efficacy of using active learning methods for novice students. Fox and Ronkowski (1997) argue that active learning styles are more suitable in classes populated by introductory students and underclassmen, as these groups generally tend to have a greater appreciation for such methods, and active learning has the potential for engaging and interesting a larger audience in political science from an earlier stage of their academic development. Jackson (2013), on the other hand, argues that simulations are most effective in classes with a more advanced group of students and upperclassmen, as they are more likely to retain the effects of the simulation (in terms of knowledge retention and understanding) going forward. Likewise, Weidenfeld and Fernandez (2017) noted that students with a comparatively higher level of exposure to political science, such as political science majors or upperclassmen, were more likely to evaluate courses using simulations and other forms of role-play gaming more positively than those from a relatively unsophisticated background.¹ In designing our simulation, we accept the basic arguments of Fox and Ronkowski whilst remaining aware of the limitations identified by Jackson and Weidenfeld and Fernandez. With this in mind, and also bearing in mind the cultural, social and political differences (outlined above) between Western and Chinese students, it is important to try to accommodate the students and adapt the simulation to match the backgrounds of the students; as Du-Babcock and Babcock (2000, 37) argue, such adjustments can more effectively contribute to the success of simulations in Asian classrooms by adding a greater sense of realism and relevancy to proceedings.

**Designing and creating the simulation: the 2016 Chinese Parliamentary General Election**

Based on this, we turn to describing the simulation that was run at Wenzhou-Kean University in Fall 2016. The participants in the simulation were students in three sections of Introduction to

¹ While these points may be valid and interesting, they do not distract from the basic research purpose of this paper, which is to examine the effectiveness of using role-play gaming and active learning vis-à-vis the traditional methods of read-and-lecture to teach basic concepts of comparative politics to a group of novice Chinese political science students.
Comparative Politics classes, none of whom had taken a political science class prior to that semester. The primary motivations for this simulation was to help students gain a more tangible and concrete understanding of the relationship between political cleavages and the formation and successes of political parties, the significance of political communication and how parties signal their strategies, and the importance of governmental types (i.e. parliamentary, presidential, semi-presidential etc.) and voting systems (i.e. proportional versus majoritarian) in shaping political outcomes. Participating in the simulation was expected to teach students about the relevance of issues and divisions within a society to party formation and strategies, and to help them to understand how the salience of these parties’ platforms to the demands of their electorates will shape and inform their successes. Most importantly, though, this simulation was designed to facilitate longer-term retention of the basic concepts and ideas associated with electoral campaigns, and to encourage greater enthusiasm amongst the students towards the study of political science. Given that for many students at Wenzhou-Kean University, the first political science class they take will usually be their last, these latter objectives are of particular significance.

The simulation aimed to replicate a hypothetical multi-party parliamentary electoral campaign and election in modern China: given the students’ lack of detailed familiarity with the issues at stake in other countries, it was decided that the only way of conducting the simulation in such a manner as to develop their understanding of the importance of political cleavages would be to relate it as closely as possible to their own lived experiences. Students were then separated in groups of four or five (depending on the size of the class) into various different political parties, which were subsequently divided into six broad archetypes: conservative, social democratic, centrist liberal, green, radical right, and radical left. Students were each provided with briefing material on the simulation and on the traditional policy preferences of their parties, and were required to broadly form their party around these preferences. With that said, the various different groups were allowed to shape their party’s identities and platforms in a manner that they perceived would be most relevant to the Chinese ‘electorate’, and which would give them the best chance of winning the election. Each group was also given four specific roles that they had to fill: party leader, finance and economics spokesperson, justice and home affairs spokesperson, foreign affairs spokesperson, and campaign manager. The party leader was to be the ‘public face’ of the party, and was largely responsible for the overall performance and strategy of the group; the various spokespersons were expected to formulate and defend the party’s policies and strategies in the relevant areas; and the campaign manager was responsible for any advertising the group put out, and was expected to formulate an “official” response from the party to the results of an opinion poll. Given the political constraints on Chinese society, it was also necessary to protect students...

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2 As a small Sino-American collaborative university, Wenzhou-Kean University at the time of writing has only seven major degree programs: English, Graphic Design, Finance, Accounting, Marketing, Global Business and Management. Students take political science courses (amongst others) as part of their general education requirements, and may also take extra courses as free electives. However, the number of students who have taken more than one political science class is typically very low. In the Spring 2017 semester, for instance, only three students were taking a political science class for their second time.

3 This latter position was somewhat redundant, and the simulation was designed to work with four-person groups; however, given the size of some of the sections, to strictly apply this criteria would have meant the creation of redundant party groups. As such, and in order to maintain clarity within the simulation, it was decided that having redundant roles was less of a problem than having redundant parties.
from doing anything which could potentially cause offence or put themselves at risk of legal consequences. As such, students were explicitly forbidden from discussing any real Chinese political or historical figure, living or dead, and were asked not to discuss any issue in Chinese politics which is considered to be particularly sensitive or controversial, whether that issue is contemporary or historical (e.g. Taiwanese independence, Falun Gong, Uyghur and Tibetan separatism, etc.). In essence, they were asked to envisage a hypothetical situation whereby the Communist Party had never existed in China, but the country had developed in the exact same manner with a parliamentary system nonetheless. The simulation was conducted over the course of roughly half a semester, and was broken into a series of stages, which are listed in table 1 on the following page. Prior to beginning the simulation, students were provided with several readings on the basic concepts underpinning the exercise, namely the importance of governmental types, electoral systems, and social cleavages in shaping political outcomes. These were Norris (1997), Morelli (2004), Clark and Lipset (1991), Dalton (1996), and Tsebelis (1995). In addition, the early parts of the simulation coincided with the sections of the course on political party types, thus further helping to prepare them.

Following this, in the first stage of the simulation, the various different parties were asked to come up with a name for their party and a catchy slogan for their party, as well as to assign the various portfolios to each member; students were also advised that their party names should accurately reflect their party archetype (for example, and despite the existence of such a party in Russia, the students were advised that it would not be suitable to call their party the ‘Liberal Democratic Party’ if they were, in fact, a radical right-wing party). In the second stage, the parties were required to begin formulating their electoral campaign message, and to create a campaign video (or series of campaign videos) which was to be presented in class and on the campus closed-circuit televisions. The third stage was a far more substantial exercise, requiring the participants to devise and disseminate a comprehensive electoral manifesto, detailing the various policies that they would implement should they be in a position to form the ‘government’. The various groups were given a great degree of flexibility in terms of the policies they could propose, and were encouraged to devise a plan that they felt would resonate with their electorate (the other students in the class). With that said, they were advised not to stray too far from their archetypal overview; a green party would have been strongly discouraged from proposing policies that would drastically lower taxes on large, carbon-intensive industries and which would allow fracking in natural reserves, for instance. It is this stage which contained much of the substance of the simulation, as students would need to relate their manifestos to what they understood to be the most salient cleavages in Chinese society, but also to bear in mind the preferences of their electorate. They would then have to try and balance these two issues in such a way that would allow them to successfully fight the campaign, as political parties do in real elections. Following their dissemination of the manifestos to the other participants in the simulation (who were all required to read the manifestos of the other parties), results from an “opinion poll” were presented to the students. This was intended as a ‘crisis’ moment in the simulation, to see how the students would react and adjust to a change in the information available to them. Students were required to provide a public response to these results, whether it be to disavow the poll as “fake news”, to make a change to their manifesto, to affirm the results and re-assert their manifesto, and so on. The next stage of the simulation involved an in-class debate between the various parties, and an election. In
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Party formation</td>
<td>Assignment of party roles, unveiling of party names, mottos, and logos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2-3</td>
<td>Communication of party messages</td>
<td>Creation of an electoral campaign video (or series of videos); the total length of the videos should not be less than five minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2-4</td>
<td>Unveiling of party manifestos</td>
<td>Creation of a comprehensive party manifesto, detailing the party’s proposed policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Opinion polling results</td>
<td>Publication of an official response to an opinion poll conducted amongst members of the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>Public presentation of party manifestos, inter-party debates, in-class voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Government formation</td>
<td>Formation of coalitions (if needed), presentation of joint program for government, preparation and submission of response essays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: timeline of the simulation

order to ensure that students did not try to ‘win’ the simulation for their own party, regardless of the merits of their arguments, students were forbidden to vote for their own party. Voting was conducted based on a ranked choice, proportional party list system. Finally, in the last week, the students were required to work together to form a coalition government (if needed), and to present a joint program for government. Following this, the students were debriefed by the lecturer on the purposes of the simulation, the likely future prospects of the respective parties, and the potential for stability or instability within the governments formed. The students were then asked to write a response paper, explaining their understanding of the events that transpired during the simulation and the reasons for the outcomes of the electoral campaign.

**Assessment of the simulation:**

In order to analyze the effectiveness of this simulation as a pedagogical method, the performance of the students was measured against a control group of students who had taken the same class in three sections the previous semester (Spring 2016). In order to ensure the validity of this
comparison, the course was structured in virtually the same manner in both semesters, with only minor changes being made to the syllabus and to the lectures. These changes largely consisted of updates of information and some small adjustments to the course readings (but not to the textbook), but were generally fairly inconsequential. No changes were made to the syllabus for the sections of the course on voting systems and governmental types, and minor changes (largely updates of information) were made to the syllabus for the sections on party types. In addition, all assessments and assignments prior to the beginning of the simulation were the same for both groups: they each had the same requirements in terms of class participation, mid-terms, etc. Finally, the demographic make-up of the two groups was largely the same; the students in the course ranged from sophomores to seniors, and none of the students in either group had studied a political science class previously at either Wenzhou-Kean University or at its ‘parent’ campus in Kean University, New Jersey. However, while the test group completed a lengthy simulation which encompassed the majority of the assignments for the rest of the course, the control group completed traditional assignments including topical essays, presentations, and in-class exams. In each case, the lecturer for both groups was the same.

As a pre-test, results from the mid-term exams for both classes were assessed. This was done in order to ascertain the level of background knowledge on comparative politics for each group before the divergence in pedagogical methods occurred. The mid-term results were useful, as an identical question bank was used for both classes that year. Students were asked to answer twenty multiple choice questions on basic comparative politics concepts from the first half of the course, which dealt with regime types and federal, confederal, and unitary states. The results are detailed in table 2 below. Two-tailed t-tests were used in order to analyze the differences between the two groups, with a 95% confidence interval. According to the t-test, the control group performed significantly higher on the pre-test than the control group. On average, they scored one point higher than the test group. This is largely to be expected, as Wenzhou-Kean University has increased its enrollment every year since its foundation in 2012, and has lowered its admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>16.4861</td>
<td>0.270478</td>
<td>2.295084</td>
<td>15.94679-17.02543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15.4857</td>
<td>0.29188</td>
<td>2.44204</td>
<td>14.90343-16.068</td>
</tr>
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</table>

$H_0$: <0 = 0.9935
$H_0$: =0 = 0.013
$H_0$: >0 = 0.0065
T-test is significant at 0.0065

| Table 2: Two tailed t-test analyzing differences in pre-test results between the control group and the test group |

4 Indeed, only three students from either group have subsequently taken a political science class, and two of them took that class after the post-test was conducted for their group.
criteria from year to year in order to achieve this increase.

For the post-test, students were asked to complete a survey roughly four months after the end of the semester they took Introduction to Comparative Politics (October/November 2016 for the control group, April/May 2017 for the test group). This time delay was implemented in order to ensure that a reasonable amount of time had passed such that one could analyze the level of long-term knowledge retention in each group. The survey asked the students multiple-choice questions about several of the concepts studied in the second half of the semester (after the completion of the mid-term) for both the control and test groups (see the appendix for the post-test questions). Again, the results from the two classes were compared using two-tailed t-tests. According to these results, the test group had a statistically significantly higher score of nearly one point over the control group on the knowledge retention test.

Finally, the level of enthusiasm towards politics and the subject of political science was tested. The results from this are detailed in table 4 on the following page. In order to ascertain this, students were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 how they would rate their interest and enthusiasm towards politics, with 1 representing the lowest possible level of interest and enthusiasm and 10 representing the highest level of interest. Again, the mean score of the test group was slightly higher than that of the control group, but in this case, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that virtually none of the students in either group have chosen to take a political science class again, and can largely be explained by the fact that none of the students in either group are Political Science majors, and instead only take Political Science classes as a general education requirement or as a free elective.

### Conclusion:

It is important not to make sweeping judgments on the effectiveness of this simulation as a tool for increasing long-term knowledge retention amongst students. Part of the variance may possibly be explained by the fact that the test group studied Introduction to Comparative Politics at the height of the U.S. Presidential election, whereas the control group only took the class during the
Two-sample t-test with equal variances

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.793</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>2.059</td>
<td>5.010-6.576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6.102</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>5.492-6.712</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H₀: <0 = 0.266  
H₀: =0 = 0.532  
H₀: >0 = 0.734  
T-test is not significant

Table 4: T-test analyzing differences in enthusiasm towards the study of politics between control group and test group

Presidential primaries. Given the highly publicized and controversial nature of this election, it is possible that this may have inspired the students to take a greater level of interest in the various policy stances of the respective candidates, and in so doing, to engage more closely with the issues associated with the course. This could potentially explain some of the variance between the two groups. Additionally, further testing and replication of the study amongst subsequent classes would provide a more robust set of results, and would allow for firmer conclusions to be made. With that said, the results of the data gathered from the pre-test and the post-test are very encouraging. After being significantly outperformed by the control group on the pre-test, the test group was able to reverse this situation on the post-test, thus indicating that there had been a greater level of retention of knowledge amongst the latter over the long run. While the data is not so promising when it comes to increasing enthusiasm and interest, it does suggest that active learning and role-playing may be a highly effective method of relating Western concepts of political science to a non-Western audience with a low level of background knowledge. Based on this, it is possible to tentatively add this study to the growing literature that demonstrates the effectiveness of simulations and role-play gaming as a pedagogical tool in Political Science.

Appendix:

Knowledge Retention Test

Question 1: Please indicate in the space provided when and where you took Comparative Politics (PS2300):

a) Fall 2016, Wenzhou-Kean Campus  
b) Spring 2016, Wenzhou-Kean Campus  
c) Before Spring 2016, Wenzhou-Kean Campus  
d) Did not take PS2300 at the Wenzhou-Kean Campus

Question 2: Which of these is a policy commonly associated with a green party?
a) The imposition of a carbon tax to lower CO2 emissions
b) Restrictions on the rights of women to obtain abortions
c) Tax cuts for people earning over $100,000 a year
d) Increased military spending and rearmament campaigns
e) None of the above

Question 3: Which of these is a common traditional political cleavage, found in nearly all countries throughout the world?

a) Racial cleavages
b) Agricultural/Industrial cleavages
c) Owner/Worker cleavages
d) Christian/Muslim cleavages
e) All of the above

Question 4: Which of these is a policy that is most likely to be associated with liberal/social democratic parties?

a) Privatization of the health industry
b) Increased welfare benefits for unemployed workers
c) Increased grants to solar energy companies to encourage the development of renewable energy
d) Increased military spending and rearmament campaigns
e) All of the above

Question 5: Which of these is closest to the definition of a proportional electoral system?

a) A system of voting where the winner is the one that gains the most votes
b) A system of voting whereby power is distributed in accordance with the percentage of votes received
c) A system of voting whereby the winning party will receive all decision-making power within the state
d) A system of voting wherein the losing party will receive little or no political representation
e) None of the above

Question 6: Which of these types of policies is a party with a large proportion of urban-based supporters most likely to favor?

a) Socially progressive policies
b) Socially regressive policies
c) Fiscally redistributive policies
d) Fiscally conservative policies
e) None of the above

Question 7: Which of these is a policy most likely to be associated with a radical right party?
a) Increased delegation of state sovereignty to international organizations such as the United Nations
b) Raising taxes on corporations to ensure they pay their fair share
c) Lowering environmental restrictions on corporations to allow them to function without excessive interference from governmental authorities
d) Restrictions on the numbers of immigrants allowed into the country
e) All of the above

Question 8: Which of these policies is a conservative party most likely to support?

a) Increased taxes on middle- and upper-middle class households
b) Restrictions on access to abortions for women
c) Introduction of relatively generous minimum wage laws
d) Equality of access to marriage for homosexual as well as heterosexual couples
e) All of the above

Question 9: Which of these types of parties would most likely have supported Britain leaving the EU?

a) Liberal political parties
b) Social democratic political parties
c) Green political parties
d) Parties which are most likely to support the interests of major banking companies
e) None of the above

Question 10: Which of these political issues most closely relates to the traditional values/progressive values political cleavage?

a) Increased decision-making power for regional political assemblies
b) Legalization of drugs
c) Increased social welfare spending
d) Abolition of university education fees
e) None of the above

Question 11: On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate your interest and enthusiasm in politics? Please write your number in the space provided (1= lowest possible interest and enthusiasm; 10= highest possible interest and enthusiasm)

References

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