Lesson Plan Template

ETECH 5203

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Lesson Title: Virtual Colosseum

Introduction: This lesson, taught midway through a semester on Roman history and culture, is designed to introduce students to the architecture and grandeur of the Colosseum in Rome, as well as the nature of the kinds of spectacles that took place there. In addition to this information, students will also explore and discuss how architecture and spectacle serve political goals and reflect cultural identities. These lessons will be taught through a series of virtual reality interactions with the remains and layered reconstructions of the Colosseum.

Grade or Age Level of Student(s): The lesson plan is for a class of approximately 20 college-level students in an introductory Humanities course on Roman culture.

Objectives:

- Knowledge
  - Facts about the size, architecture and terms associated with Colosseum
  - Basic knowledge on Spectacle culture in ancient Rome
- Analysis and Interpretation
  - Spatial analysis on use and impact of space
  - Analysis of preservation and reconstruction
- Application
  - Decision-making: how would space be used depending on person in charge and their motivation (How did Roman emperors use the Colosseum for political purposes?)
  - How does use of space reflect cultural and political identities?

Standards Addressed:

1. Discuss the significance of ideas, texts, performances, or cultural artifacts within an appropriate intellectual or historical framework.
2. Apply the interpretive or analytical methods that characterize at least one of the humanistic disciplines.
   Standards derived from Trinity University's (my current employer) curriculum requirements for Humanities courses

Timeline: 2 class days (1 hour and 15 minutes, each session). 2 nights of Homework (~1 hour/night)

Materials:

- 21 Virtual reality headsets with pre-programed virtual worlds, simulations and games
- 5 computer tables with game-design software loaded
- Video on Colosseum construction and use (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1bZuVdfP7I&t=2293s)
- Colosseum features Bingo handout (see attached)

- Scavenger Hunt instruction sheet
- Reading on spectacle in the Empire (attached)
- Emperor Prompt

Grouping Strategies:
Day 1: Whole class discussion. Each student and the instructor uses VR headset
Day 2: Computer tables with Game-design software. 5 tables needed for groups of 4

Learning Activities:
Homework for Day 1: Students watch YouTube video of the construction and use of the Colosseum. Students are asked to note three surprising things learned from the video and three questions.
Day 1: Two parts

Part 1: Using our virtual reality headsets, students are immersed into a virtual world of the Colosseum as it stands in modern times—in ruins. Students are led through the remains, just as a typical tour group would be done in the actual monument. If a substitute is present, they can load the "tour guide" application to the virtual world, otherwise tour conducted by instructor. Students are encouraged to ask their questions on site as we encounter and view the different features. Each student is also given a Bingo card with the various terms associated with the colosseum on it (see attached). As we move through the space, students define the terms and check them off. The first one to receive Bingo wins an extra credit point! This tour not only reiterates the major architectural features of this monument and its history of construction and use, but also adds an element of spatial analysis and appreciation, as the tour emphasizes movement through space and visual experience.

I chose to use a virtual reality tour of the Colosseum because travel to other countries has become increasingly restrictive legally and extremely expensive. Most of my students will not have the opportunity to visit the Colosseum in person, as traditional study abroad programs have all but diminished. Studies have shown that exposure to visual worlds encourages students to apply knowledge and be more engaged with the material studied. The Bingo card helps add a level of game-play and competition to the tour. Having student prepare questions and observations ahead of time also allows the instructor to guide the students through the monument based on their interest as opposed to lecturing them through it.

Part 2: After a tour of the ruins is finished, students are partnered up. Then we move from the virtual world of the Colosseum ruins to a created reconstruction layer. In this new virtual world, students will be able to move through the Colosseum and experience the space just as an ancient Roman would have. In this simulated world, students in teams of two will be sent on a scavenger hunt through the Colosseum. This scavenger hunt is designed in such a way to reinforce their knowledge of the spatial layout and use of the monument, but also then apply analysis as each area is experienced. The clues for the scavenger hunt will be embedded within the simulation itself. Basically, each student starts in a certain sector (the arena, the upper level seats, the imperial box, etc.). Students will explore each sector which will lead them to a secret box in the room. They open this box, complete a quiz over the information just covered. If they pass the quiz, they receive a code and move into the next room. The process continues through 5 rooms until the student acquire all the codes. Once completed, the students will receive their emperor prompt for the assignment on day 2.

I included a 2nd part as a game simulation because studies have shown that students are more engaged and have more lasting knowledge acquisition through game-based learning over simple virtual world interaction. Additionally, this approach follows the chosen educational model by encouraging the students to direct their own learning and progress through the monument.

Homework for Day 2: Read Kyle's chapter on Imperial Spectacle (attached)
Day 2: Students will get into groups of 4 (determined by who received what prompt from previous meeting's scavenger hunt). These prompts will provide each group with a different Roman emperor. Based on previous class meetings, students are expected to be aware of certain personality traits of these emperors and a general idea of their style of rule. The prompt will tell students that as that emperor, they are to organize a series of games to be housed in the Colosseum. They must determine the number of days, the range of spectacles, the invited guests, the types of battle reenactments, gladiators, executions, and animals, any additional events, the arrangement of seating, and invitation for special guests (who gets to sit in the Imperial box). They will also have to design coins to advertise the games. They must decide if the games are for an inauguration, an important birthday or holiday, or for a military victory. They will need to consider the economic condition of the empire at the time as well and the perceived popularity of the emperor. Class resources will be provided to research this information beyond the assigned reading. Based on these prompts, students spend the class using the computer tables, which are loaded with game design software and for which both the students and teachers already have training. On these tables, students, in groups of 4, design a simulation within the reconstructed virtual world of the Colosseum. In this simulation, they reconstruct the spectacle thrown by their emperor based on their prompt and their decisions.

I chose to have the students create their own simulation because this combines the ideas behind the effectiveness of game-based learning and also student-direct learning. As groups, students will be able to contemplate situation, gather evidence, and make decisions based on that evidence. Then the students will be able to implement their decisions as part of the creation of a virtual world, which they will be able to share with the rest of the class, justifying their choices and taking ownership of the game they created.

Diversity: The virtual reality headsets offer auditory descriptions of space for students visually-impaired, which is complimented by the use of 3D models for a better appreciation of space. Students with hearing impairments are provided with captioning of the tour. Movement impaired students would not be affected by the nature of the virtual assignment.

Assessment:
Students will be assessed at 4 instances. (1) A subjective assessment of participation during the guided tour, complimented by completion of Bingo card. (2) the completion of the scavenger hunt, which includes 5 short quizzes. (3) the design simulation which demonstrates knowledge of reading and application of materials. (4) a presentation of the game design in which students explain their decisions based on readings and spatial analysis.

References:

Freina, L. & M. Ott. (2015). "A literature review on immersive virtual reality in education: State of the art and perspectives." In *Conference proceedings of eLearning and software for education*. No. 1: 133-141.

Kyle, D.G. (2014). "Sport, spectacle, and the Roman Empire." In *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World.* 2nd ed. New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc.: 289-328.

Merchant, Z., E. Goetz, L. Cifuentes, W. Keeney-Kennicutt, & T. Davis. (2014). "Effectiveness of virtual reality-based instruction on students' learning outcomes in K-12 and higher education: A meta-analysis." In *Computers & Education*. 70: 29-40.

Van Eck, R. (2015). "Digital game-based learning: Still restless after all these years." *Educause review*. 50(6): 13-28.