Welcome

We are looking forward to the “Reacting to the Past” conference at Gustavus Adolphus College. This conference will introduce participants to “Reacting to the Past,” an award-winning active learning pedagogy that has been adopted by instructors at over 300 campuses in the U.S. and abroad.

“Reacting to the Past” consists of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work. While the pedagogy bears some resemblance to the simulations used by graduate programs in international relations, political science, and business, most of these exercises are of short duration, rarely occupying more than a few classes. “Reacting to the Past” games consist of hundreds of pages of instructions, primary source readings, and roles, and take place over a month or more. They plunge students into complex worlds and oblige them to defend unfamiliar texts and ideas. “Reacting to the Past” also provides a framework in which students debate the “big questions” of the human experience, such as the role of religion in society, the meaning of human freedom and equality, and competing visions of political organization.

During the conference, you will learn about the “Reacting to the Past” pedagogy by engaging in an intensive two-day workshop of either Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence, 1945 or Mexico in Revolution, 1911-1920. Additionally, plenary discussions will provide an opportunity to explore issues related to student engagement, teaching, and curricular applications.

This conference is generously supported by the Kendall Center for Engaged Learning at Gustavus Adolphus College, with additional support from the Office of the Provost; Center for International and Cultural Education; Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program; Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean Studies; First Term Seminar Program; and Three Crowns Curriculum.
Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence, 1945 is set at Simla, in the foothills of the Himalayas, where the British viceroy has invited leaders of various religious and political constituencies to work out the future of Britain’s largest colony. Will the British transfer power to the Indian National Congress, which claims to speak for all Indians? Or will a separate Muslim state—Pakistan—be carved out of India to be ruled by Muslims, as the Muslim League proposes? And what will happen to the vulnerable minorities—such as the Sikhs and untouchables—or the hundreds of princely states? As British authority wanes, smoldering tensions among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs increasingly flare into violent riots that threaten to ignite all India. Towering above it all is the frail but formidable figure of Gandhi, whom some revere as an apostle of non-violence and others regard as a conniving Hindu politician. Students struggle to reconcile religious identity with nation building—perhaps the most intractable and important issue of the modern world. Texts include the literature of Hindu revival (Chatterjee, Tagore and Tilak); the Koran and the literature of Islamic nationalism (Iqbal); and the writings of Ambedkar, Nehru, Jinnah, and Gandhi.

Convener: Judith Walden is an Associate Professor of Modern European and Asian History at Simpson College (IA) and the Director of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program. She has been teaching with “Reacting to the Past” since 2009, and is the author of two chapter-length games in development: “The New is Strong”: The Hundred Days Reform in China, 1898 and A Virtuous Woman? The Abolition of Sati in India, 1829. She is also a member of the organizing committee for the annual “Reacting to the Past” Game Development Conference.

Preparation: To prepare for the workshop, participants should read the game book, Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence, 1945, in addition to their assigned role sheets. Participants are also encouraged to peruse the following companion texts:

Student Addendum Packet

The Bhagavad-Gita (optional; the Bantam Classics Barbara Miller edition, 1986 recommended)
Mexico in Revolution, 1911-1920 (game under review) is set in Mexico City during the tumultuous time of the Mexican Revolution. The game starts on November 25, 1911, the day that Emiliano Zapata and the Zapatistas have issued the Plan de Ayala calling for agrarian reform—only a few short weeks after Francisco Madero assumed the presidency. Amidst the violence and chaos of the Revolution, students take on roles representing a variety of factions (Anarchists, Zapatistas, Maderistas, Felicistas, Foreigners, etc.) and grapple with topics such as the role of government, land and labor reform, foreign investment, foreign intervention, rights of women and ethnic minorities, freedom of the press, the role of the arts and more, as they struggle to compose a constitution that reflects the concerns and interests of their character—all while considering intersections of ethnicity, identity, memory, and nation formation. Ideas surrounding the democracy of Francisco Madero, the anarchism of Ricardo Flores Magón, the agrarianism of Emiliano Zapata, and the Liberalism of Justo Sierra (among other ideas) inform the students as they make their decisions and negotiate the future of Mexico.

Author/Convener: Jonathan Truitt is an Associate Professor of Colonial Latin American and World History at Central Michigan University and the Director of the Institute for Simulations and Games as Methods for Engaging Students. He is co-editor (with Mark Christensen, Susan Kellogg, and Mathew Restall) of the forthcoming Dead Giveaways II: Testaments from the Americas and author of “Courting Catholicism: Nahua Women and the Catholic Church in Colonial Mexico City” and “Adopted Pedagogies: Nahua Incorporation of European Music and Theater in Colonial Mexico City.” He is also a member of the organizing committee for the annual “Reacting to the Past” Game Development Conference.

Preparation: To prepare for the workshop, participants should read the game book, Mexico in Revolution, 1911-1920, in addition to their assigned role sheets.
SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Friday, March 14

1:00–2:00  Registration  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

2:00–2:30  Welcome and Introduction  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

2:30–4:00  Game Setup and Faction Meetings  
India Game: Old Main, Room 05  
Mexico Game: Old Main, Room 04

4:00–4:30  Coffee Break  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

4:30–5:30  Plenary Session: “Faculty Perspectives”  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

5:30–7:30  Dinner and Reception  
Three Crowns Room, Jackson Campus Center

Saturday, March 15

8:15–9:00  Continental Breakfast  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

9:00–11:00  Game Session 1  
India Game: Old Main Room 05  
Mexico Game: Old Main, Room 04

11:00 –12:00  Plenary Session: “The Student Experience”  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

12:00 –1:30  Lunch  
Three Crowns Room, Jackson Campus Center

1:30–3:30  Game Session 2  
India Game: Old Main, Room 05  
Mexico Game: Old Main, Room 04

3:30–4:00  Coffee Break  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

4:00–5:30  Plenary Session: “Finding your Inner Gamemaster”  
Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center

5:30–7:30  Dinner and Reception  
Three Crowns Room, Jackson Campus Center
Sunday, March 16

8:15–9:00   Continental Breakfast  
*Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center*

9:00–12:00  Game Session 3 and Post-Mortem Discussion  
*India Game: Old Main, Room 05*  
*Mexico Game: Old Main, Room 04*

12:00–1:30  Lunch and Closing Plenary  
*Heritage Room, Jackson Campus Center*

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

For questions concerning workshop materials, please contact:  
Maddie Provo, Membership and Outreach Coordinator  
Reacting to the Past, Barnard College  
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For day-of-event inquiries, please contact:  
Alisa Rosenthal, Associate Professor in Political Science  
Gustavus Adolphus College  
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**TRAVEL**

Gustavus Adolphus College is located 60 miles from the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. For detailed travel information and an interactive map, please visit [https://gustavus.edu/about/maps/](https://gustavus.edu/about/maps/).

**Airport Shuttle:** The Land to Air Shuttle provides transportation from the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport to the College. Online ticket purchases and schedule and pricing information are available at [http://www.landtoairexpress.com/msp-airport-shuttle/](http://www.landtoairexpress.com/msp-airport-shuttle/). Prices range from $30-$35 each way.

**Driving:** Drive times vary depending on traffic levels, but with good traffic conditions, it will take about one hour to drive to Gustavus from the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport, about 75 minutes from downtown Minneapolis, MN, and about 90 minutes from downtown St. Paul, MN.