

# Pounding Dice into Musket Balls: Using Wargames to Teach the American Revolution

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RECENT DISCUSSIONS of the state of American universities and academia revolve around a number of key factors. In comparison to overseas competitors, American institutions remain strong. They have better facilities and salaries, they spend more on students (whether graduate or undergraduate), they charge larger fees but offer better access to financial aid, and the students are learning at increasingly high levels. Yet while American universities are strong in comparison to the rest of the world, they are falling from the position they once held high above the rest and they are increasingly coming under criticism for a litany of failings. The cause for this situation is much debated, but recent works come in two basic incarnations: 1) blasts against either professors or administrators for failing to do their job; 2) accusations of a lack of student preparation prior to coming to university as well as lackluster performance while there. After several years of teaching at the university level, it is somewhat difficult to dismiss either of these charges as completely without some merit. Problems abound in the present state of academia, but most are beyond my ability or reach to change.<sup>1</sup>

Yet there is an issue, which seems to be growing significantly with each year's passing, that I can address as an individual professor. Students arrive at universities today with a much different understanding of what learning is than when I was in school. Students today are used to an

idea of learning that goes far beyond the basic lecture, reading, and rote memorization of my education. Students want to be actively involved in the learning process, but they are bombarded with a myriad of distractions. If the educator fails to find ways to engage students in and out of the classroom, outside influences will dominate their interest instead, many with which the educator cannot compete: obligations for work and family; the draw of social media and video gaming; the desire to socialize rather than study or read; the re-enactment of college life as depicted in popular movies; and the lure of intercollegiate sports, especially football. The list of competing interests and distractions to learning on college campuses seems endless today, so educators should not be surprised when students do not consider classroom learning as their primary pursuit unless given a good reason to do so. To be successful educators in the evolving environment of academia, we have to stretch beyond traditional means of disseminating information in order to achieve student engagement.

For two consecutive fall semesters, I have experienced a unique (but I think easily repeatable) student engagement situation at Georgia Southern University. Much to my surprise, students in my American Revolution classes are choosing to spend several of their Saturday afternoons playing a history-based board game rather than participating in other campus and extracurricular activities. I should add an immediate disclaimer before I delve deeper into this curiosity. I did not have an interest or personal experience with historical wargames prior to introducing one into my class. I never played complex board games like *Diplomacy* or *Axis & Allies*. In truth, I was not even a fan of games like *Risk*, *Stratego*, or chess; although I did at least play all of these games as a child and was able to use that experience to devise a new set of rules for the classroom.

### **A Brief History of Wargames as Tools for Teaching**

Wargames come in a number of incarnations. They have been used as teaching tools since the dawn of human civilization, and they have a long lineage of use. The Chinese game Go can be traced back to the late twenty-third century BCE; the Indian game Chaturanga is a sixth-century CE innovation; and chess is derived from a Scandinavian game called King's Table. While most modern war-based games owe much to these ancient conceptions, table-top wargames emerged from the King's Table variant of chess called War Chess. It used modern European-style chess pieces as well as the easily recognizable checkered board. In the early 1800s, a Prussian military counselor named Baron von Reisswitz modified War Chess to create the game Kriegsspiel to teach students the finer points of war.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike chess, Kriegsspiel was played on a large sand table covered with terrain features. The game was divided into turns, with small blocks made of wood representing parts of each player's army. Complex modifier tables were used to control movement and decide casualties in engagements. Accounting for the unpredictability of the battlefield, participants cast die at the start of each battle turn to calculate attrition rates as well as other random events. A referee adjudicated the game. Players consulted the sand table, sent orders to the referee, and made any necessary die rolls. Once tabulated, the referee informed each side of the outcome of the battle as well as any changes to the battlefield that the participants would need to know to continue the next turn.<sup>3</sup>

Kriegsspiel quickly became the main military learning aid for new officers in the Prussian army. Maps of actual locations were soon substituted for sand tables to add realism. According to wargame historian Matthew Caffrey, Prussian General Karl von Müffling was so amazed by the potential for instruction offered by wargames that he said it was "not a game at all, it's training for war." As a result, Müffling enthusiastically expanded wargames for use by the whole Prussian army. Wargaming remained a staple training aid within the Prussian Officer Corps through the mid to late 1800s. It grew from its simple role in officer training to a tool for pondering the possible outcomes of pressing military questions that ranged from projections on the avenues of attack of neighboring countries to more specific questions like how Napoleon was able to defeat the Prussian Army even though his army was so disadvantaged in the contest.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1900s, Prussian General Hellmuth von Moltke gave the wargame a new purpose, shifting it from a teaching tool into a theoretical laboratory. He made wargaming curriculum a major component of the Prussian War College. Wargames were used to analyze potential attacks by enemies as well as to plan Prussia's probable invasion of other countries. War College students studied theories of war and visited the actual battle sites. Once informed, students came up with plans and theories on how the "next war" would be fought. Results from the student games were kept as a manual to fight the next war. Wargaming became so effective in teaching future leaders in the Prussian Army that it was eventually adopted by the militaries of every other industrialized nation by the start of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

While professionals in the military played wargames to prepare for future conflicts, civilians began to play wargames as a pastime, especially in England. H. G. Wells was the progenitor of civilian wargames with the publication of a book called *Little Wars* in 1913. A crude version of Kriegsspiel, *Little Wars* was the first wargame available for the

commercial market and started the wargaming movement that would eventually grow into major industry by the end of the twentieth century, celebrating such wars as the battles of Napoleon, the American Civil War, and World War II.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Pedagogy of the Wargame**

As a historian of the American colonial era who is not necessarily interested in warfare, I find myself talking about wars quite a bit. It is not just that there are a lot of military conflicts during the period (although there are quite a few), but wars and warfare are topics in which students show great interest. They are fascinated by the minutiae of military conflicts: what units were involved in individual battles, where those units were located on the battlefield, how the various units altered the course of events during the battle, what their equipment was like, who the members of the armies were, who was in command, what caused the battle, etc. The list of details concerning military activities is endless. Covering the details of battles can bog down a class, and since I am not a military historian, it can make it difficult to address materials that I think are more important. With that in mind, I try to cover the biggest battles in class, but I rarely go as far into the details of the various military activities as my students would like.

Another problem concerning battles that inevitably develops in classes involves the question of why. It is relatively easy to teach details to students, but they often want to go beyond the details in order to know why a battle occurred at a specific time and place. They want to understand why the commanders planned for the battle as they did. They want to know why the plan failed or succeeded. But most of all, students want to consider counterfactual notions involving the battles in question. What if the British General John Burgoyne was not defeated at Saratoga? What if George Washington's army was destroyed in the defense of and subsequent retreat from New York City?

The list of questions and counter questions is endless. Answering questions remains a major part of the teaching experience, but sometimes it is best to let students answer the questions themselves. Often, this means using primary source materials as readings or assigning research papers. Both of these activities can be effective teaching methods, but they fail to provide students with direct historical experience. For years, I have struggled to develop a way to put students into the minds of people from the past. With the historical wargame, I have found an excellent tool to provide students with this perspective. Wargames force students to participate in the decision making process. They learn how to make

choices, whether they are good or bad, and how to deal with the outcome of their choices. Thus, students will choose where to place troops, how to plan battlefield campaigns, when to engage in battle, and even how to extract themselves from bad decisions. Simultaneously, wargames provide students with an intricate top-down view of the battles being examined as well as for the armies who participated in them. After introducing the wargame, I no longer feel compelled to spend an extended length of time discussing individual battles in class. Instead, the students learn about the various battles as well as campaigns, commanders, units, etc., from playing the game.

The wargame assignment has another intrinsic factor that makes it appealing as an instructional tool. Once the wargame is complete, I require my students to write a short paper on the experience. Within the paper, students give a brief description of the various campaigns they played and compare them to the actual events. The game is divided into historical campaigns, with each campaign covering a particular set of events in the American Revolution. Since students write about something in which they recently participated, the assignment does not deal with a nebulous historical event from the past, but something for which they have individual and very personal experiences. The paper also requires the students to learn the intricacies of researching and writing history, since they have to examine actual events and compare them to their own experiences.

More importantly, the wargame assignment has turned technology (particularly, handheld or similar devices that access the Internet) into an assistant for the instructor rather than a distraction competing for student attention, as it has often proven to be in past assignments. For a long time, I tirelessly devised parameters for individual assignments to keep students from using what I viewed as harmful electronic devices (especially the Internet) as the sole source for their research. The problem with using technology goes beyond limitations in resources, particularly in terms of quality, quantity, and types. Unfortunately, the expansion of technology into every facet of the students' lives has led to increasing incidences of fraud and plagiarism. Invariably, students blurred the line between improper appropriation and proper research. No matter what parameters I devised for assignments, nothing changed the problem.

With the wargame assignment, I now encourage students to use technology, especially while they are playing the game, but also in the writing of their papers. In the midst of gameplay, handheld Internet-accessible technology allows the students to engage in real-time research as they try to understand how the actual battles progressed in history and compare that knowledge to events in the game. This makes technology

an asset for assisting them in their own decision making process while educating them about the past. The use of technological devices while the students are playing the game also gives me a chance to talk about the variety of historical sources available, how historians use historical sources, and how to properly acknowledge those sources. When the students complete the game and begin writing their personal experience papers, they have direct historical comparisons to the historical event as well as a clear understanding of how to provide proper recognition for source materials. Instead of hindering my ability to teach the students proper practices, technology now is a tool allowing students to investigate the actual events of the battle as they are recreating it in the wargame, which means the students are directly evaluating history while practicing it.

### **The Mechanics of the Wargame Assignment**

There is an endless number and variation of wargames available on the market. For this project, I used *1776* by Avalon Hills. It is a two-player, turn-based wargame played on a hexagonal grid map displaying the thirteen American colonies and eastern Canada. I used this game because it is primarily concerned with the military aspects of the American Revolutionary War, but there are several other games I could have chosen for the purpose of this exercise. The American Revolution (as well as the colonial era of American history) is a period ripe for wargame scenarios, and as such, it has a number of great wargames that would suit the purpose of this exercise. A few notable games (but certainly not all) include: *Hold the Line*, *Clash For A Continent*, *Liberty: American Revolution*, *We the People*, and *Washington's War*.

The rulebook for *1776* details a scenario for a basic game, various campaign scenarios played with advanced rules, and a long-term campaign game covering the course of the entire Revolutionary War. The rules provided with the game are written for expert game players, and they proved to be too complex for novices (especially those with no prior gaming experience) within my classes to learn and enjoy in an afternoon. In the end, I chose to devise my own set of rules based on the original set provided with the game as well as several rules from a few other games with which I felt the students would have a familiarity. Though I will describe the parameters for the wargame exercise as I use them, I encourage instructors to alter my design to suit their own particular needs and circumstances.

In my class, the wargame assignment is entirely voluntary. It is one of two voluntary assignments that I offer in the class so that students can

engage in learning activities that they are interested in or that best fit their skill sets. The other assignment requires students to watch three movies on the American Revolution and write reviews of them. At least four times during the semester, I hold movie nights for students who choose this option. After the first few weeks of classes, I divide the volunteers for the wargame option into two groups. The first time that I used this exercise option, ten of the twenty-five students in the class volunteered to play. In my recent class, seventeen of twenty-five chose the game option. Interestingly, in terms of gender stereotypes, I was expecting the wargame assignment to attract more male students than female. This assumption proved to be the case in the first class, where the participants divided out to six males and four females. Yet in the second class, my assumption proved entirely incorrect. I had eleven female and six male participants. While this finding may help to assert gender assumptions are rarely exact, what I think is most important to note is that the assignment appeals to a wide range of students.

Once the participants of the wargame assignment are identified, the students are given a copy of the rules in advance. After they understand gameplay, the students as a group select the best days for play and I provide them with a location. Students are required to participate in at least two periods of five hours or a collection of time periods no shorter than two hours and adding up to ten hours total. Surprisingly, I found in both classes that students ended up playing well beyond the stipulated time on each day and even chose to increase the number of days beyond the requirements. The first class played four consecutive Wednesday afternoons for about six hours each day. The second class played seven consecutive Saturday afternoons for as long as eight hours on one occasion, and only stopped meeting regularly due to homecoming.

In the rules for *1776*, the game is played between two players who take turns moving and then engaging in combat in consecutive order. Pieces are placed according to the individual campaign being played. Player One begins by moving some or all of their playing pieces (units), engaging in combat actions as applicable. Player Two repeats the same procedure. The outcomes of combat actions depend on comparing the strength of the moving player's units against the strength of the defending player's units to determine the odds of success between them. One die is rolled by each player, and a Combat Results Table is consulted to determine modifiers (a complex set of additions and subtractions to the die roll based on terrain, weather, fatigue, defense or attacker position, etc.) for each side. Once the entire number of modifiers and the outcome of the die roll have been added together, the player with the highest number is declared the victor. The object of the game is for one player to hold more

key cities than the opponent or to destroy the opposing player's army before the end of a set number of turns. The number and extent of cities (as well as military forces) is based on the campaign being played. If all of that sounds overly complex, then you can understand why I decided to change the rules.

### **My Rules for the Game**

As I stipulated in my description for the parameters for the wargame exercise, I encourage instructors to alter my rule design to suit their own particular needs and circumstances. The rules for wargames are designed to recreate historical accuracy, which adds a level of complexity that can be daunting for novice players. The attempt to reach historical accuracy within the game was intriguing for me as a historian, but I knew as a teacher that I had to alter gameplay to make it more accessible to novice players without sacrificing historical accuracy. As a result, I kept the campaigns designed for *1776*. Not only are they well explained and fun to play, but they are historically accurate. On top of the campaign design, I employed my own set of rules based on several important changes I made to the original structure of the game.

The first change was an obvious necessity. The original game is played by two players. Since I was using the game in a relatively large class, I had to devise a way to increase the number of participants for each game. Many wargaming associations stage weekend tournaments with multiple, simultaneous, two-player games to allow all attendants to participate in a limited amount of time, but such a system did not seem feasible for my classes. Students were hesitant to give up an entire weekend due to their many other responsibilities (and interests). As a result, I was left with an important choice: develop a system to play multiple games of one-on-one over the course of the semester or play the game using teams. I chose the team option, and it seems to work remarkably well. Once I know how many students will be playing the game, I create two teams that are as close to equal as possible. Students from the individual teams pick a leader for the game. During the course of the game, the leader will move the game pieces, roll the dice, and carry out the team's decisions for gameplay. I encourage team decisions to be made by means of a group consultation (or as is sometimes the case, argument) about what the team should do for each turn. Once a group decision is made, the leader carries out the plan. Interestingly, this system of deciding as a group what should be completed each turn is not outside the scope of historical events. In the course of the Revolutionary War, there was a great deal of consultation among the individual leaders on each side in terms of developing strategies



and tactics. Thus, playing *1776* as one group against another group adds to the historical authenticity of the game.

Each campaign in *1776* stipulates the initial placing of armies and designates which team will go first. Once the board is set, the first turn begins with the option to move. The first team can move any or all units up to the limit of their movement allowances (as stipulated on each unit counter), subject to terrain limitations established by the campaign or the presence of enemy units. After movement is completed, the first team must decide whether they wish to attack enemy units on adjacent hexagons. Units can only attack once per turn, and attacking units must have at least one movement point available. The object of an attack is to defeat all the opposing armies in the adjacent hexagon in order to occupy it.

The next and biggest change involved how the class played *1776* compared to the actual rules for the game. With no real experience playing wargames, I found the rules for *1776* to be somewhat confusing and a bit daunting, especially keeping track of and properly utilizing the various modifiers. Although Avalon Hill claims otherwise, *1776* feels more like a game designed for experienced wargamers rather than novices. This is not meant to be a criticism of the game per se, as it is a complex simulation of war. Nevertheless, there are many things about *1776* (and wargames in general) that are very familiar to games I had experience with in the past. Players move or place stackable game pieces on the board, then engage in combat with the roll of dice deciding the outcome. These basic parts to the game make *1776* very familiar to Hasbro's classic board game *Risk*, which most of the students played before. While the idea of adding and subtracting modifiers was somewhat foreign, I decided to keep it (although again, somewhat altered), since the idea of having terrain, weather, defensive positions, etc., affecting the outcome of combat actions adds a level of realism not associated with *Risk*.

In the end, I combined what I believed to be the best of both games. From *1776*, I kept the campaigns, the game board, the stackable pieces, and some of the modifiers. *1776*'s reliance on the roll of one die per side (plus the addition/subtraction of modifiers) to determine the outcome for combat seemed to take away an element of individuality and luck during battles. To remedy the problem, I took the concept of using multiple dice as practiced in *Risk* to represent combat for multiple units engaged in the battle. Units in real battles may fight as individuals, but they generally attack in groups. The multiple dice gives each team the chance to win or lose several units per combat cycle, as long as they have units on the space being fought over. This means a player using multiple dice has a higher chance of killing off the opposition, but they could also lose large numbers of units if a dice roll goes the wrong way.

<b>Combat Modifiers</b>		
<b>Terrain Modifiers</b>	<b>Attacker</b>	<b>Defender</b>
Mountains, Hills, Woods, Cities, and Swamps	-1	+1
Rivers	+1	-1
Fortifications and Fortified Cities	-1	+2
Cities without Fortifications	-1	+1

**Figure 1:** Combat modifiers for the *1776*-based wargame assignment.

Engaging in battles remains a choice of individual teams. Attackers may engage the enemy by rolling up to five dice. For each die, there must be one corresponding unit on the hexagon the army is attacking from, which means the attacker must have at least five units to use five dice. Defenders only get up to four dice (again, one per unit on the hexagon being defended). Before rolling, each side must announce the number of dice they intend to roll, and then both must roll at the same time. The outcome of the battle is decided by comparing the highest die each team rolled. On top of each die number, modifiers (see Figure 1) are added or subtracted in order to retain the level of realism established by the original *1776* rule system.

The outcome of each die plus modifiers decides which side will lose. One or more units can be subtracted depending on the number of dice being used and comparing rolls from highest to lowest. In case of ties, the defender always wins. At the end of the battle, if the defender has lost all of its units, then the remaining attacking units occupy the space in question. If all attacking units are destroyed, the defender remains in place. If the team chooses not to attack, then they may fortify their position (which adds defensive modifiers if attacked) and the second team's movement phase begins. The teams continue with their turns until the campaign is complete.

The time for each game depends on how quickly one side gets an advantage over the other. So far, individual campaigns have rarely lasted more than two hours. Generally, two to three campaigns can be completed in a five-hour session. There are six basic campaigns to the game, covering the main battles of the American Revolution, so it is entirely possible to complete all the campaigns in just two sessions. I require my students to attend both sessions for the assignment, but since my classes have chosen to continue playing the game even after meeting the requirements, attendance has not been a problem. One class

exchanged sides and replayed the entire game again, while the second class chose to only replay selected portions of the different campaigns after changing sides.

### **Tips for Wargame Management**

Regardless of when the students decide to play, the instructor needs to attend the game. Running a battle simulation can be somewhat intimidating. Make sure you have played the game several times so you understand the rules and campaigns you intend to play. In the course of a game, numerous different issues concerning the rules or play will probably come up. As in the original *Kriegsspiel*, it is important that the instructor take the role of a decisive referee, but not so rigid as to prevent improvising new rules if needed. More likely than not, there will be at least one student with past experience with wargames who can assist with the game, pace of play, and adherence to the rules. If none of the students have prior experience with wargames, then the students will need the instructor/referee to help them play and maintain a sense of fair play.

As with all classroom group activities, I find that it is important to mentally prepare for various scenarios that may arise in the course of the assignment. Sadly, you may be required to teach the students more than just history while playing the wargame. It is becoming increasingly important to stress proper behavior when interacting with a group. At times, it may be necessary to specify how courteous players should act. In my classroom, courteous players do not gloat when their team is winning, nor do they whine if their team is losing. I try to praise students who are civil and respectful during the game in order to create a climate where peer pressure works to encourage each other in a positive way. Nevertheless, no matter how well-prepared classroom managers may be, there will likely be at least one problem player in the group who needs proper encouragement. With that individual in mind, here are five problems I have either encountered or expect to encounter with individuals and teams—along with strategies for preparing in advance to handle them properly.<sup>7</sup>

*1. Inattentive Players/Teams:* With so many outside sources of entertainment, some players will become distracted once the battle slows down a bit. They might start talking to friends, use cell phones and other handheld devices, play with the dice, or just stare off into space. When these behaviors develop, I try to get some action back into the game as quickly as possible. Unless the distracted student is interfering with the battle, I tend to not worry about this type of student too much, because they inevitably get back into the game relatively quickly on their own since a grade is attached to the assignment. If the individual distracts other

students, I warn the team that they could lose a turn if everyone does not get involved. Teammates who are paying attention are rarely willing to miss a turn more than once.

2. *Timid Players/Teams*: Some players are reluctant to make moves or take casualties, especially during the first battle. This can be a minor nuisance during the early part of the game, but it becomes a major annoyance later in the game when the timidity and inaction begins to frustrate teammates and competitors. I find it best to offer timid players/teams tactical advice and to praise their decisions once taken. If that fails to move them along, then it may be necessary to put a time limit on the team that is dragging their feet. If the team fails to make a decision in the time allotted, then they lose a turn.

3. *Destructive Players/Teams*: Some students and groups, due simply to bad decisions or poor luck, will manage to get their entire army or at least a key component of it annihilated early in the campaign being played. The only way to reduce the chances of this happening is by offering advice during the course of the game. If it happens several times in the course of play, it may be necessary to mix the teams up a bit after the first couple of campaigns in order to add new ideas into the destructive group.

4. *Rude Players/Teams*: All it takes is one unhappy player to spoil the experience for everyone playing the game. To avoid this situation, it is important to set a good tone from the beginning. Explain the importance of courtesy and respect, and let the other players apply some peer pressure on problem players. If peer pressure fails, you have to either ignore the behavior of the bad sport or remove the individual from the game.

5. *Cheating Players/Teams*: Strangely, I have not yet encountered a problem with cheating in the wargame. Nevertheless, cheating is becoming a common problem on assignments and other grade-based exercises at my university, so it is a problem I prepared for in advance. Since you cannot keep an eye on everything that happens, cheating will probably be identified by another player complaining of a skewed dice roll or movement or something similar. When this occurs, the best remedy is simply to do it over again. If it happens more than once, it may be necessary to assign a reliable player to watch the offender with future dice rolls or movements. If cheating continues to cause a problem, turn forfeiture is another option, with a last resort of asking the student to leave.

### **Student Assessment and Future Uses**

Every time I have used wargames in the classroom, I have had all the participants complete evaluations for the assignment in order to assess its value. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. All the respondents

reported that the game and the writing assignment associated with it were valuable learning experiences. One student, Cal Frank, stated it best:

First-hand experience is often the best way of learning how to do something. Whether it is learning how to ride a bike or trying to understand certain aspects of history, first-hand experience can be integral to a true understanding of the events. Taking part in the *1776* board game gave me a very good top-down and administrative view of several of the battles that took place during the period directly before and during the American Revolution.

Another student, Erica Carter, added to this feeling by stating:

*1776* proved to be thought provoking and extremely accurate. It gave me a much greater insight into the minds of British officers during the Revolutionary War and the hardships they faced fighting at a disadvantage so far from their home country. After playing the game, I have a much better understanding of the American Revolution and why leaders on both sides made the decisions that they did which resulted in an American victory.

Student Jackie Grizzell wrote that the wargame assignment was:

An effective learning experience and helped me to understand the war. It is too bad more students did not participate. It could have made the experience even better if the entire class had to play. Then we could talk about what happened as a class and compare it with our readings.

In the end, student Carson Stepanek summed up the experience of the participants by saying, "it was a really great assignment," but "it was a pity that we could not keep playing."

Several students noted that the paper relating the events in the game to actual historical events turned out to be one of the best assignments they had encountered so far as students. Although they all admitted that they have had past assignments that made them employ basic research skills, analyze various secondary sources, practice their writing skills, and learn significant historical knowledge, the wargame assignment was the first to give them a personal reason to do so. Cal Frank paid the highest tribute to the value of the wargame assignment by saying, "The experience of participating in the *1776* assignment gave me a greater understanding of the actual battles themselves." Erica Carter echoed that sentiment, stating that "the assignment does give an accurate historical portrayal of the American Revolution and provides extensive insight into the strategic planning involved for the players."

While I originally developed this assignment for use in my upper-level American Revolution class, the student interest in the assignment and the pedagogical value it offers has led me to begin utilizing this teaching technique in a couple other classes that I teach on Colonial America.

There is an endless number of wargames from every period of history that could easily be applied to other upper-level history classes. For my class on first contact and the early settlement of the Americas, I recently used a game called *Conquistador* by Simulations Publications, Inc., which is a four-player game in which individual teams take on the role of one of four of the European powers in a bid to colonize the New World. It requires students to consider several important problems that arose for the colonizing powers, including the raising of finances, organization of expeditions, and then actual process of taking possession. Students in one trial enjoyed the game and learned a great deal from it, though a downside is that the game ignores the Native American perspective.<sup>8</sup> In a class on early America that covers the period between first contact and the American Revolution, I plan to use Avalon Hill's French and Indian War expansion pack for their game *Hold the Line*. It has five campaign scenarios covering the major events of the conflict as well as Pontiac's Rebellion and allows students to play from the Native American perspective.

Wargames could also be used in other history courses, including small survey courses on American or World history, if an appropriate wargame could be identified. Finding a wargame for specific wars is not difficult, as there seems to be a wargame covering every battle in history.<sup>9</sup> In particular, games like *Axis & Allies* or *Diplomacy* would be particularly useful for instructors who wanted to place their students into the minds of historical figures during the events prior to and in the midst of World War II. These two games both require players to consider multiple aspects of war for a nation, ranging from economic development to diplomatic relations with allies.

### **One Final Note on Using Wargames in the Classroom**

Teaching exercises that use wargames allow students to engage dynamically in the learning process. In the course of the assignment, students actively create a historically based experience with their peers through gameplay—especially in the discussion and debate required for decisions in game—while engaging in research to assist in the decision making process for each team's maneuvers. After the game is finished, students are required to engage in historical research, organize information, and then write papers about their experiences. By combining active and interactive learning experiences, the wargame assignment enhances student comprehension of how historical events are created and interpreted. As a result, it gives them a better understanding of history, the historical process, and the historian's craft.

As an instructor, wargames let me provide firsthand active experiences with history to the students while also teaching life skills. Students learn how to make sound decisions—as well as the process of conducting research before making decisions—which they can use well beyond the classroom. Since the wargame assignment is not part of the classroom work for the students, it allows me to teach elements of military history to students in the detail they usually seek without sacrificing class time devoted to other facets of history. Thus, the use of wargames gives me yet another tool to engage students while providing another option for expanding the materials covered in the class.

## Notes

1. There have been several in-depth discussions of the current situation in academia, but one of the most salient is Anthony Grafton's "Our Universities: Why Are They Failing?" *The New York Review of Books* 24 November 2011, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/nov/24/our-universities-why-are-they-failing/>>.

2. For more information on the origins of Chaturanga, King's Table, and chess, see Tim Eagen's "The Chess Page" at <<http://www.stmoroky.com/games/chess/chess.htm#shaturanga>>; for King's Table, see Greg Lindahl's "King's Table: Game of the Noble Scandinavians" at <[http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/articles/kings\\_table.html](http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/articles/kings_table.html)>. For a good history of wargames up to the modern era, see Frank W. Brewster II, "Using Tactical Decision Exercises to Study Tactics," *Military Review* 82, no. 6 (November/December 2002), <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/brewster.pdf>>. Another great history of wargames was written by Matthew B. Caffrey Jr. in his presentation, "A History Based Theory of Wargaming," <<http://www.armyconference.org/ACAS00-02/ACAS00/CaffreyMatthew/CaffreyMatthew.pdf>>. Caffrey notes that historians rarely credit Kriegsspiel to Reisswitz since he created the original game to teach his son about military tactics and strategy. His son later introduced it to fellow officers.

3. Caffrey.

4. For the Müffling quote, see Caffrey. On Prussians studying to defeat Napoleon, see Michael Kernan, "Outsmarting Napoleon," *Smithsonian Magazine* (September 1999), <[http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/mall\\_sep99.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/mall_sep99.html)>.

5. Officers of the United States Army utilized a game called Strategos during the nineteenth century. See C. Totten, *Strategos: The American Game of War* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1880).

6. H. G. Wells, *Little Wars; a game for boys from twelve years of age to one hundred and fifty and for that more intelligent sort of girl who likes boys' games and books* (London, United Kingdom: F. Palmer, 1913). For a description of the evolution of wargaming in the latter half of the twentieth century, see P. Young and J. P. Lawford, *Charge! Or How to Play War Games* (London, United Kingdom: Morgan-Grampian, 1967); D. F. Featherstone, *Advanced War Games* (London, United Kingdom: Stanley Paul, 1969); and C. F. Wesenraft, *Practical Wargaming* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974).

7. For a more in-depth discussion of problem students and how to deal with them, see Matt Fritz, "Historical Miniatures in the Classroom, Based on a Seminar Given at Historicon 2002," <<http://www.juniorgeneral.org/howto/seminar.html#anchor33775>>.

8. Another game that deals with the subject of conquest is *The Conquest of North America* by Fantasy Games Unlimited. It allows players to take either a European perspective of conquest or that of Native Americans using the mechanics of the game *Diplomacy*. The game is extremely rare to find, but the description makes it sound like an excellent choice.

9. The website BoardGameGeek (<http://boardgamegeek.com/>) is an excellent place to discover games for nearly every subject imaginable. It is a user-generated site, so there are plenty of reviews, discussions, and help available if you are unfamiliar with wargames and their variety.