

take an education course. The open status also gives the department an outlet to publicize its master's programs to students outside the College of Education.

Evans and co-instructor Barbour created the syllabus, and VanSickle and Dinkelman gave them the go-ahead to proceed with the course.

"It is unusual for student-created courses to be offered," said Dinkelman. "It's not unusual for students working as instructors to 'develop' an existing course already on the books in the sense that instructors often have considerable agency to choose readings, create assignments, and select activities. It's pretty rare for doctoral students to propose and then sell ideas for courses to faculty."

This is not the first course Barbour has helped initiate. He, along with Peter Rich and Craig Shepherd, initiated a course on Pioneers in Instructional Technology. The instructional technology doctoral program strongly encourages such initiative.

"The goal of the [simulations and gaming] course is to have students understand that the way people learn is much different than when we went to school," said Evans. "We can't use the same teaching strategies and content."

Due to the stigma attached to video games, Barbour said that most teachers would object more to using the World War II game *Call of Duty* in class than showing the first 20 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*, despite the high amount of violence and gore in the movie.

The young instructors cite the support of College of Education professors with expertise in the field such as John Hoge, Tom Reeves, Lloyd Rieber, Tom Satwic, Gretchen Thomas and VanSickle, who have been guest speakers in the class.

In addition, nationally known experts in the field like University of Wisconsin professors James Gee and Kurt Squires spoke to the class on online games, informal learning and video games—via video conferencing, of course.

Gee's book *Sociolinguistics and Literacies* (1990) was one of the founding documents in the formation of the "New Literacies Studies," an interdisciplinary field devoted to studying language, learning and literacy in an integrated way in the full range of their cognitive, social and cultural contexts.

His book, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (1999), brings together his work on a methodology for studying communication in its cultural settings, an approach that has been widely influential over the last two decades.

His most recent books both deal with video games and learning. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2003) offers 36 reasons why good video games produce better learning conditions than many of today's schools. *Situated Language and Learning* (2004) places video games within an overall theory of learning and literacy and shows how they can



UGA undergraduate students (L-R) Evan Tighe, James Ebeling, Hannah Harlin and Elliott Bernstein test a new game in class.

help us to better understand deep human learning and lead us in thinking about the reform of schools. His new book, *Why Video Games Are Good for Your Soul* (2005), shows how good video games marry pleasure and learning and have the capacity to empower people. Students are required to read two of Gee's books for class.

"The 21st century is demanding a creative, competent person, and with the way that we teach our content, we're just not creating that person," said Evans. "We need to find new ways to do that, and using video games is one of the ways we can. [Gaming] is not the magic bullet; I don't think there is a magic bullet in education, but it's at least an arrow in our quiver."

Students are assigned projects in each of the focus areas: role playing, simulations and games.

For the role-playing project, the class collaborated with Tana Over's class of Advanced Placement (AP) students at Johnson High School in Hall County to create "Heritage Minutes," which focus on moments in history such as the Great Chicago Fire, St. Valentine's Day Massacre, and Wounded Knee rebellion.

Heritage Minutes are similar to public service announcements that can be used to teach history in short segments. The AP students chose the history moments and conducted the research, while the UGA students worked on the script, film and editing.

Heritage Minutes were showcased at Johnson High, with positive responses from the social studies department head and Over, who received a B.S.Ed. in social science education from UGA in 2005.

Since the UGA students are in different stages of their studies, the collaboration with the high school students was the first teaching experience for most of them.

At the end of the semester, the UGA students participate in a gaming and pedagogy showcase for their simulation project.

Evans and Barbour have been working together for three years, but their close partnership really began when they co-taught a course two years ago. Their team teaching eventually led to research, an article submitted for publication, presentations at national conferences and other courses taught together.

Evans earned his bachelor's degree in history from the University of Maryland and a M.Ed. in social studies from North Georgia College and State University.

Barbour earned a B.A. in political science from Carleton University, a B.Ed. and a M.Ed. from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

*Michael Childs contributed to this article.*

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