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Adare-Tasiwoopa ápi, Sierra and Nathan K. Silva. Gamification in Higher Education: A How-to Instructional Guide. Routledge, 2024, 252 pages.

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Adare-Tasiwoopa ápi, Sierra and Nathan K. Silva. *Gamification in Higher Education: A How-to Instructional Guide*. Routledge, 2024, 252 pages.

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As an avid gamer who is looking to add more gamification into my composition courses, I was immediately intrigued by Adare-Tasiwoopa ápi and Silva's practical focus on gamification in classrooms. While I had explored a lot of the theory on assessments of gamification, I'd hoped that the book would point me in the direction of some techniques and examples that I could quickly implement into my own classrooms. The book delivers on that, and even offers some activities that I would never have interpreted as being "gamified." With each chapter and section focusing on different levels of gamification (a small game such as *Jeopardy*, a large activity/module like a mock trial, or an entire gamified course), the organization of the book was ideal for when I needed a classroom activity or when I wanted to plan out future potential courses or modules. This book is also very timely, as gamification (digital or otherwise) appears to be gaining steam in education (Oliveira et al., 2023; Zeybek & Saygi, 2024).

The book offers an overall introduction followed by four sections, each discussing various levels of gamification in a course such as a single activity, a large assignment, a unit, and an entire course. The authors begin by defining gamification and justifying its use in higher education. They consider a range of perspectives on gamification, explaining various terms associated with it and the activities discussed in the book. They draw on scholars such as Pelling (2011), who was the first to define gamification, albeit in a very technologically-centered way, in the early 2000's and Deterding et al. (2011), who emphasized the importance of "serious" games for learning. They then effectively explain why gamification belongs in higher education where play and games "tend to be a sticking point for many educators" (27). The section ends with a clear and practical list of dos and don'ts. This section could be crucial to help instructors make a case for gamification in their courses to administrators and evaluation committees, particularly for temporary instructors, teaching assistants, or not-yet-tenured faculty who are less established or secure in their current positions.

Section II offers practical instructions and examples with a focus on case studies and role playing as gamification. For example, Chapter 4 details a case study of a fictional woman created for the course named Mercy used to engage students in a Women's and Gender Studies course. The authors provide the entire series of questions/story related to the main character; they also explain what students should learn from this activity and how similar cases could be used. This transitions nicely into Chapter 5's strong focus on role-playing and potential ways to leverage it to bring various forms of representation into the classroom. The section ends by discussing a mock trial, arguably the most complicated and intense activity of the section, and a "whodunit" activity. This section is ideal for instructors who not only want to jump straight into gamification but also have the confidence and experience to plan for such a large portion of their course.

Section III discusses completely gamified courses in its three chapters. In many ways, this is the strongest section of the book. The authors clearly and concisely explain each major project of the courses represented, which come from the fields of biology, composition/English, American Studies, and nursing. Each separate system of points and badges students could receive in each course is clearly explained, contextualized, and justified using classroom experiences. For example, in Chapter 8, the authors describe a fully gamified biology course in which students take on the role of cadets on a colony on Mars. Their assignments come in the form of “missions” from their instructor, the “base commander.” Their successes lead to them gaining access to new modules and “star points” which could be exchanged for various assets like study guides or practice tests. Despite how daunting a completely gamified course like this is to think about, each chapter is presented in such a way that it makes the prospect seem doable, even to someone who has only used review games in class.

Section IV introduces and, occasionally, reframes the simplest forms of gamification. Chapter 12 describes various forms of tabletop games, which can be particularly useful for a quick activity to bring into the classroom. Chapters 13 and 14 address games that were frequently referenced as part of the gamified courses, while Chapter 15 goes into recognizable games that many students will know, such as *Jeopardy*. The book concludes with a short summary of a few key points and concepts to keep in mind when implementing gamification, some words of encouragement, and a great “end game” pun. This “toolbox” section was what I was originally anticipating when I began this book, and it’s one of the reasons that it will remain on my (electronic) bookshelf for future classes.

The greatest strengths of this book are its practicality as well as its emphasis on what didn’t work in their “lessons learned” section at the end of most chapters. Adare-Tasiwoopa ápi’s story of her multiple attempts and failures to engage her students in the mock trial, particularly how the side that lost the trial “took out their frustrations with losing on their end of the semester course evaluations” (76) offers insight into course development. Many instructors, myself included, may worry about how students would react to “losing” in a gamified course or module and how that could affect the overall success of the course. These “lessons-learned” descriptions effectively warn readers of potential pitfalls while also offering potential solutions.

The main drawback with the book is that many of the technical aspects are tailored for the learning management system Canvas, and the authors offered only limited advice on how to use other systems or how to incorporate their gamification examples into classrooms/courses with limited access to technology. This is particularly important for instructors in areas with limited internet access or whose students have limited access to technology. In addition, many of the gamified courses discussed in the book were asynchronous, and adding in more advice for other LMSs and technology-free versions would help this book be useful to a wider range of instructors and institutions.

In short, this book is ideal for instructors who are relatively new to gamification or who feel uncomfortable with their ability to incorporate it into their classes. It offers clear, useful, detailed examples for a wide range of courses, subjects, and levels, and the explanations can be very helpful for instructors, provided they use Canvas as their LMS. This book does a good job of completing its purpose: offering practical ways to help instructors add more gamification techniques to their repertoire as these practices

gain popularity in education. I, for one, am looking forward to adding systems like “star points” and badges into future courses to further engage and motivate my students.

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