September 29, 2022

Via Email

Re: Teaching Philosophy With Role Immersion

Dear Linda Nuoffer:

It is my pleasure to report on the outcome of the grant I received from the American Philosophical Association. My small grant of $1,000 was to support a conference I organized to train philosophy instructors in the use of role-immersion pedagogy.

The conference took place on Zoom on June 16-17 2022. It was attended by 16 participants who came from UC San Diego, the University of San Diego, Stanford, Rutgers, UNC Chapel Hill, Utah State, Skidmore, UC Riverside, Cal Poly Pomona, Oklahoma School of Science and Math, as well as three Canadian schools: St. Mary’s, Memorial and New Brunswick. They played Justice, a role immersion game I created, modeled on the Reacting to the Past series of games that have become popular in history departments. In addition, conference participants heard a panel presentation by instructors who have used role-immersion games to teach philosophy.

The main budget item for the conference was a $600 advertisement on Daily Nous. In addition, I hired two student proctors, which cost a total of $450. Both of these items were crucial to the success of the event. Because the game requires a critical mass of players to work, the main challenge was having enough people sign up. The ad on Daily Nous made a big difference in this regard. In addition, the two proctors were able to participate in game play on different days, which allowed us to comfortably meet the threshold of players needed for a successful game.

A survey at the end of the conference indicated a high level of interest in using role-immersion among participants, who now have access to all the game materials. Many participants have also since become active in the Faculty Lounge, a Facebook group for instructors who use role-immersion. Three participants who met at the conference are also currently working on creating a new role immersion game, to teach environmental ethics, and two other participants are planning to co-author a journal article analyzing role-immersion as a form of active learning. Since the conference occurred a graduate student who attended and I have co-taught a summer class that used Justice. One of my fellow faculty members also attended, and he and I are now planning to co-teach an ancient philosophy class next year, in which we plan to use a Reacting game.

None of these encouraging outcomes would have happened without the financial support of the APA. In addition, I believe that advertisements for the conference indicating that it had APA support enhanced the events’s credibility and appeal with the wider philosophical community. Please accept my gratitude for the association’s support.
Best,

Andy Lamey
Associate Teaching Professor
Philosophy