



# Be A Revolutionary! Using Games/Interactive Activities to Teach History and International Relations

VOICES IN LEARNING AND TEACHING: PARTICIPATORY  
METHODS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (BISA)

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# Presentation Agenda

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Introduction

FHEA Case Study

Be A Revolutionary!

My Reflections

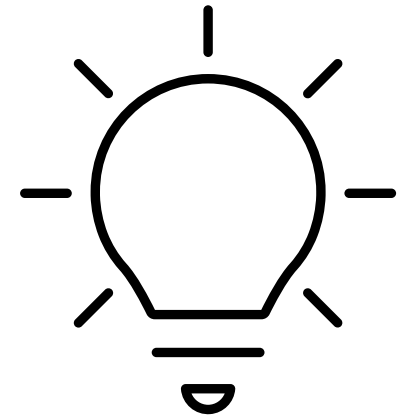
Dissemination

Final Remarks

# Introduction

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- FHEA Case Study → Using Games/Interactive Activities to Teach History and International Relations
- Introduce ‘Be A Revolutionary!’ → an interactive, strategy-based learning tool exploring authoritarianism and revolution.
- Gamified active learning → enhance participant engagement, reflection, and ethical awareness in fields like Politics, War Studies, and International Relations.



# FHEA Case Study – Awarded August 2025

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## Case Study: Using Games/Interactive Activities to Teach History and International Relations

- Following the methods outlined by Reynolds & Kearns (2016) → I use backwards design when planning learning activities, especially seminars, by first identifying the intended learning outcomes.
- This approach prioritises → student-centred and problem-based learning, understood as  
→ using ‘dynamic, interdisciplinary, generative learning activities that promote higher-order thinking processes [so as] to help students develop rich and complex knowledge structures’ (Grabinger & Dunlap, 2002, p.386).

# FHEA Case Study – Awarded August 2025

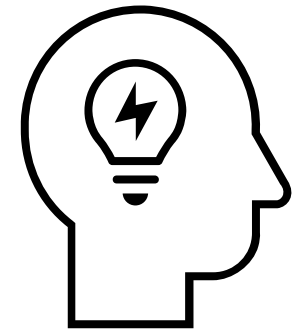
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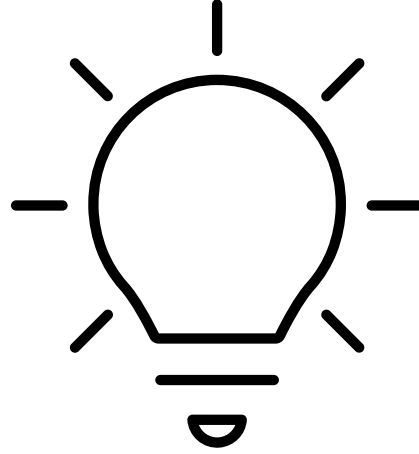
- This has been particularly effective in my teaching, from Pre-University, through BA1 - 3 and MA-level.
- Students are showing → a stronger understanding of theories, themes, and core concepts, and retaining knowledge more effectively when actively engaged and applying their learning in practice.
- It reinforces my commitment → to embedding active and applied learning strategies across all levels of teaching.
- Engaging in group dialogues and debates during the games → also helps students develop the skills necessary for constructing an argument in an academic essay.

# FHEA Case Study – Awarded August 2025

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- Through this process → my students can practise critical analysis by evaluating different perspectives, reflecting on evidence, and strengthening their reasoning - key components of effective academic practice.
- I also examine and evaluate my teaching by observing student engagement and meeting with module convenors to review expectations.
- I also use feedback from summative essay moderations → to refine future sessions and uphold quality standards.





# Be A Revolutionary!

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# Game Overview

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- ‘Be A Revolutionary!’ → is a strategy-based educational game that I created.
- Designed to immerse students in the dynamics of revolutionary change.
- The game invites players (i.e. the students) to draw inspiration from key modern revolutions\* – to challenge and overthrow fictional autocratic regimes (created by me - Dr. E).

\*i.e. the Haitian Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution.

- The design process → focused on combining historical inquiry, strategic thinking, and creative decision-making in an engaging, student-centred format.



# Defining Learning Goals

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- The first step in the design process → was clarifying the educational purpose.
  - Game play would take place during our seminar, following the lecture on 'Age of Revolutions'
- so that students would already understand the causes, contexts, and consequences of these three major modern revolutions.
- i.e. including key revolutionary elements – e.g. enlightenment ideals, class struggle, propaganda, leadership dynamics, external support, and military strategy.
- They would then be able to apply those insights → to new, fictional scenarios.
  - This approach was meant to help → emphasise critical thinking, comparative analysis, and the ability to recognise revolutionary patterns and strategies.

# Fictional Regimes

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- Rather than replicating historical settings → the game invites students (in their small Groups) to confront fictional autocratic regimes.
- Each of the 4 regimes I created → faced distinct sociopolitical challenges  
e.g. a military dictatorship or a deliberately constructed religious dictatorship.
- Additionally → 2 of the regimes were led by female heads of state, and 2 by male leaders.
- These settings → would provide creative flexibility for students while preserving educational rigour.
- Students would then → analyse their regime's weaknesses, identify potential allies, and craft revolution-specific narratives inspired by lessons learnt from historical precedent.

# Gameplay in Groups

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- Game designed to encourage both collaboration and individual agency.
- Together in Groups ( 4 - 5 students) → make strategic choices, such as whether to pursue:

e.g. pathways including unionisation, counterpropaganda, diplomatic reform, violent uprising, or mass mobilisation etc.

- Decisions taken in the Groups would be inspired by → built-in consequences and historical lessons.
- Students encouraged → to think on, voice opinions and devise their plans to topple their assigned regime i.e. Be A Revolutionary!

# Reflection and Presentation

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- Clear need for → in and post-game (in Group) reflections.
  - The need for presentations of their revolutionary processes to the class (i.e. defend and explain reasoning and revolutionary actions).
- Both are integral to the learning process.
- Students were also guided to think about and analyse the outcomes of their revolutions:  
i.e. what new style of regime or style of government would emerge?
  - This helped to reinforce → not just the ‘Making of the Modern World’ module content knowledge but also help promote more metacognitive skills and historical empathy.

# Implementation

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- I played the 'Be A Revolutionary' game with my three BA 1 seminar groups last year in *Making of the Modern World*.
- Students were predominantly studying History, Liberal Arts, War Studies and History  
→ I also had around six Study Abroad students who were studying subjects like Political Science, Political Economy, International Relations etc.
- In four Groups of 4 - 5, they played the Game for 15 mins, followed by a 3 - 5 mins presentation on their revolutionary approach and rationale behind their decisions  
→ i.e. Total Game play = around 30 mins.
- Game play took place after students → had answered their normal 2 main seminar questions for the week.

# Scenario 1

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## Scenario 1: The Tyrant of Edria

In the mountainous kingdom of Edria, King Udriss rules with an iron fist. Over the last decade, Udriss has crushed every revolt with his elite army, known as the Royal Guard. His kingdom thrives on mining, and the nobility is rewarded with great wealth while the common folk toil endlessly in the mines. The king's network of spies, known as the Whisperers, makes it nearly impossible to plan rebellion without being discovered. Dissenters disappear overnight, and any whisper of rebellion has so far been swiftly silenced. However, the mines are becoming dangerous, with frequent cave-ins and accidents, stirring unrest among the workers. The Whisperers' influence doesn't reach deep into the mines, but the Royal Guard enforces the king's will. You must engineer a revolution. How will you navigate a highly militarised kingdom, avoid the spy network, and rally the miners without being discovered?

Scenario 1 of 4 created

# Dissecting the Scenario

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Actor	Motivations
King Udriss	Maintains absolute control and wealth
Nobility	Profit from mining
Royal Guard	Maintain order → rewarded directly
Whisperers	Protect regime → through information dominance
Miners / Common Folk	Safety, survival, seeking fairness and freedom

Consideration of Key Actors and Motivations

# Dissecting the Scenario

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Power Structure	Key Agents / Groups	Methods of Control	Scope & Limitations	Potential Fissures / Tensions
Military Enforcement	Royal Guard	Public punishment, suppression of uprisings	Elite, loyal, feared, highly mobile	Rivalry with Whisperers?
Intelligence & Fear	The Whisperers (spy network)	Information monopoly, preemptive repression	Strong in cities and nobility, weak underground & remote settlements	Rivalry with Royal Guard?
Economic Control	Nobility controlling mining wealth	Economic dependence of workers	Mines dangerous; nobles profit; workers suffer	Nobles vs. Workers; Rural vs. Urban tension



# Dissecting the Scenario

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Geographical Element	Impact on the Situation
Rugged mountainous terrain	Difficult to move large armies → good for guerrilla action and covert resistance.
Mines deep underground	Areas where royal surveillance is weak → a natural cradle for dissent.
Central royal capital (implied)	Seat of power, wealth, political control.
Remote mining towns/villages	Populated by labourers with little loyalty to the crown; communication is tough → but resentment is high.
Limited trade routes	The king can choke supply lines → but rebels can sabotage them.

# My Reflections

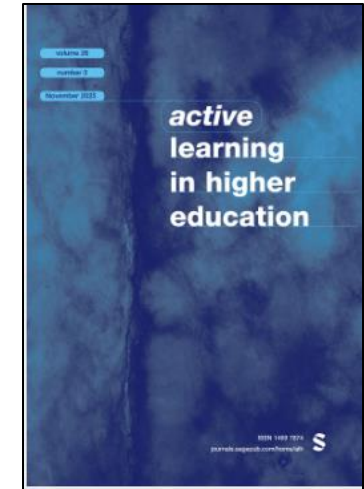
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- I think my students really enjoyed the game.
- Feedback from students included that it was “a great way to have fun via learning” and “it made me think more about the importance of unions and standing up for what you believe in”.
- Shared scenario with my fellow seminar leader → Also received positive feedback.
- I would definitely play it again → and adapt it for MA/MSc level classes in War Studies, International Relations, History and Security Studies.
- Thoughts → Could create more scenarios and run game in pairs? Would love to do a longer simulation game?

# Dissemination

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- Presented on game at the Green Games Jam at KCL in April 2025.
- Part of FHEA case study → Active learning.
- Writing an article on → ‘Be A Revolutionary! Using Games Activities to Teach History, War Studies and International Relations’.
- Plan to submit → to the Journal Active Learning in Higher Education.
- Presenting on my game → for a BISA workshop in January 2026 for ‘Teaching ethics in dark times’.





# Thank you!

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Questions?

