



Virtual Model United Nations, Analysis and Design

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Introduction

The Virtual Model U.N. (“vMUN”) is an asynchronous online version of a common interscholastic debate competition that occurs around the country where high school students participate in a simulated United Nations. In the real life Model United Nations (MUN), students research their selected country and prepare to represent its interests as delegates to various committees modeled on the United Nations. The traditional variety of this course is a school extracurricular club in which the research into the country's history and politics goes along with practice in Rules of Order and developing a working knowledge of committee procedures at the U.N. used to resolve world difficulties. Part of the fun is responding to a world crisis that is sprung on the delegates toward the end of the sessions once they have begun to master the method.

With respect to the particular task assigned in “Designing Online Learning Environments”, the pilot project will focus on a single topic of study envisioned for this course. This is with a view to making a template that may be applied in the creation of the number of additional topics necessary to create a complete half-year high school online course deliverable beginning in February 2016. Due to the small class sizes anticipated in this project, this virtual UN will consist entirely of a simulated UN Security Council. This represents a considerably scaled-down version for what really goes on at a full Model UN weekend event.

The target learners are students whose schools, due to size, cannot offer this program. The pilot project will be run from Schroon Lake Central School in the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year and advertising will get out to students in surrounding small Adirondack school districts in the months leading up to the start of the class in February. Of course, any student with internet access anywhere can apply to take the course. Students who usually sign up for this sort of course have an interest in politics and government, history, and enjoy formal debate. This pilot project will be part of a larger initiative to possibly offer an array of online credit-bearing high school courses out of Schroon Lake Central School. School-age populations of Adirondack towns are shrinking and it is becoming increasingly challenging for districts to offer educational programs that equal the quality of their wealthier and larger neighboring districts. Online asynchronous courses offer the benefit of scheduling flexibility. Small schools often only offer a single section of each course each day, which limits availability of interested students for elective courses. Principals have no trouble getting teachers in small schools to offer electives. The trouble is often finding a slot in a ten period schedule where interested students are free.

The Virtual Model U.N. was selected as the first online course offering to be an interesting elective that would attract students. The basis for the selection was discussion with superintendent of schools Stephen Gratto (Schroon Lake Central School) who suggested from his experiences in his last district that this would be a popular activity in the social studies department. Preliminary talk with students supports this hunch and makes me glad I am developing this rather than my initial two ideas (“Linguistics” or “Ancient Rome”). Like anyone, high school students often do not wish to do too

much more than they have to. They balance school work and jobs and sports and clubs in their busy lives. If we want to attract students to take elective courses for credit that will really make a difference in their lives, we need to begin by enticing them with something “shiny” and interesting. With the right advertising, the student matching the profile of those who often take these types of classes could possibly be enticed to try it out. The students who usually take these types of courses are those who demonstrate an interest in debate and critical thinking and who have a taste for studying history and international relations.

The subject is best learned through practice in resolving problems through structured debate. Students become skilled when faced with problems and being guided to resolve them using the structures of formal discussion. They are motivated to learn more about the nation they are representing in the simulation by being placed in situations where having that knowledge will benefit them in the spirit of friendly competition that evolves in these debates.

The learning environment will be delivered through an online asynchronous class. The learning management system (LMS) that will be used for the pilot is an older version of Moodle (the school's web site host is not ready yet to support the newest version of Moodle). Virtual Model U.N. can be visited in its incomplete and developing form at <http://schroonschool.org/iclass/>.

The course is organized in the following way. First, students have some basic lessons in international relations, the United Nations, and a modified version of Rules of Order devised for online asynchronous work. Following that, students develop a research portfolio for their assigned nation. Topics three through six are simulations of historical international incidents which I would envision rotating from semester to semester. Topics seven through nine will be simulations of modern problems. The final topic will be a surprise world crisis which students must resolve using the diplomatic skills they will have been developing through the course. The class will run for twenty weeks.

Assessment of individual's learning will include an assessment of the following elements of students' work products:

1. knowledge of international relations theories / concepts
2. research into the target nation's history and politics;
3. quality of discussion / debate;

Student formal writing tasks will be assessed using rubrics developed based on the Common Core State Standards.

Judging the overall success of the project will follow from the sentiments of the participants in the class and from their grades. The first hurdle will be to attract a large enough number of students to run the class. The local school administration and teachers' association are behind the project, so their assistance in spreading the word will be helpful. If at course's end, the students have good grades and report a positive experience, we will have been successful. If this pilot project lays the foundation for

the development of additional online asynchronous courses by staff, then we can deem ourselves successful.

Hierarchical Task Analysis

The course is divided into topics of study focused on simulations of historical or current events. Some of the historical situations will have occurred prior to the creation of the real United Nations in 1945. In such cases, students use their researched knowledge of their nation to maintain its likely perspective on the events. Remaining “in character” in this way is an important part of the course. A structured discussion among delegates online is convened with the goal being to pass a resolution that will resolve the international problem.

Content information pertaining to students' individual nations will be provided in the form of links to recommended resources. Students will conduct their own research as well. Content related to the specific simulated world event will be provided by the teacher in the form of short texts and video lessons. Discussion and debates will occur in the forum and chat environments provided by the Moodle LMS. Documents such as the country research, position papers, and formal resolutions will be uploaded in PDF form to the LMS. All assessments will be based on written work, both formal and informal, and devised in accordance with the Common Core State Standards for Social Studies 6-12.

Instructional Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Goal	Objective	Outcome
To develop knowledge, understanding and skills related to understanding international relations.	Students will view international events through the lense of different theories in international relations (Realism , Neorealism . Liberalism , Neoliberalism , Post-liberalism , Constructivism , and Marxism .	Students will include in their assessment of resolutions appropriate contextual reference to theories of international relations.
To understand a variety of perspectives of stakeholders in historical and contemporary internation relations issues.	Students will adopt their assigned nation's perspective on the issues posed.	Students will compose resolutions in the style and format of the United Nations.
To gain an in-depth knowledge of the recent history of one particular nation and its perspective on world events.	Students will research an assigned nation, its history and perspective.	Students will write a research profile of their assigned nation. Students will write position papers on each topic reflecting their nation's perspective.
To become skilled at identifying organizing, and explaining positions in a reasonable and persuasive way	Students will give reasons to support a particular idea or position, providing reasoning and evidence to support that claim.	Students will participate substantially and constructively in asynchronous discussion to develop resolutions to simulated international crises with their classmates.

Learner Analysis

The target population is English-speaking high school-level students aged fourteen to eighteen years old. At first, the course will be “marketed” to students in similar school districts to Schroon Lake Central School. The reason for starting the pilot project with a target of students in similar schools is that larger districts will likely already have equivalent programs in place.

Schroon Lake Central School is a small, rural school in the Adirondack Park serving around 200 students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve.

A variety of factors are included in defining a “similar school”. The New York State Education

Department groups schools by type in order to compare performance. The model has been based on the following three factors: grade range of students served by the school , school district capabilities , and needs of the school student population.

The New York State Center for Rural Schools identifies seven K-12 schools similar to Schroon Lake Central School across New York State: Keene, Long Lake, Maine Memorial, Westport, Lake Pleasant, Bolton, Minerva, and Wells. The NYS Center for Rural Schools uses a School Similarity Index that “clusters similar schools based on these factors:

- grade-level configuration
- enrollment
- percentage of students receiving free lunch
- percentage of English-language learners
- ethnicity
- needs/resource capacity index

The list of similar schools is then sorted from higher to lower performance. Performance is calculated based on a school’s ability to produce the desired outcome given its level of economic deprivation.” (The New York State Center for Rural Schools)

There is also a number of schools within thirty-five miles of Schroon Lake whose students may be interested in such a class. These include Johnsburg, Newcomb, Willsboro, and Crown Point Central Schools. Perhaps an element in the promotion of online coursework in the region will be the fact that students from these neighboring districts may be personally acquainted with one another.

Effectiveness of E-Learning in K-12

In a report entitled A Summary of Research on the Effectiveness of K12 Online Learning, authors Patrick and Powell report that “There is not a single, large-scale, national study comparing students taking online courses with traditional students, using control groups in the instructional design. The most in-depth, large-scale study to date is a meta-analysis and review of online learning studies from the U.S. Department of Education.” They report that “The overall results of the “meta-analysis found that, on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction” (Patrick and Powell).

In Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies, the Department of Education noted that “[t]he meta-analysis found that, on average, students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction.” (Means, et al.). Authors caution us, however, that “[a]n unexpected finding was the small number of rigorous published studies contrasting online and face-to-face learning conditions for K–12 students. In

light of this small corpus, caution is required in generalizing to the K–12 population because the results are derived for the most part from studies in other settings [...]” (Means et al.). In the state of Florida “[o]n June 2, 2011 Governor Rick Scott signed the Digital Learning Act into law, as part of House Bill 7197. All incoming 9th grade students in Florida are now required to complete an online course as part of the 24 credits required for graduation.” (Digital Learning Act FAQs).

At the college level, where online learning is more common, students with disabilities are experiencing challenges that sometimes are overcome by technology, but sometimes are not (Haynie). The adolescent population for whom this course is designed will vary greatly in academic ability, motivation, and resources from school to school across the region. Since it is being designed without additional support besides the teacher, guidance counselors should judge carefully whether this course is appropriate for interested students. It is a credit-bearing class that may negatively impact a student's GPA, depending on their school's policies.

Needs Assessment: MUN Programs Already in Place

The North Country Model United Nations is held at Northeastern Clinton Central School each year. Clubs at regional schools practice and research throughout the year to prepare to come to this event and participate with other high school students in the region. This would be the program in closest proximity to Schroon Lake Central School, about 86 miles north. Annual participation at the event includes nearly 500 high-school students from thirteen to twenty area schools in New York and Vermont (Livingston). In an interview in the Plattsburgh Press-Republican in 2012, then high school senior Justine Rabideau of Northeastern Clinton Central School explained that “[...] as many public schools are facing fiscal crisis, programs such as Model United Nations increasingly run the risk of being eliminated” (Livingston).

It would be good to have an average participation rate to judge the possible demand for such a course as this. Statistics are not available at this writing. A list of the twenty-odd participating schools is not available. Broadly speaking, perhaps a rough estimate of demand could be gauged from total school enrollment relative to participation at this event, two datum that are known. In 2013, the twenty-eight school districts located entirely within the “blue line” that defines the boundaries of the Adirondack Park enrolled 9,046 students K-12 (“School Enrollment”). This puts the participation rate at 5% of K-12 populations. This estimate has severe limitations owing to the limited likelihood that students in far corners of the park would participate and in that it includes in aggregate pupils under fourteen years of age who would not qualify for participation. Given that high school-age students can make up less than half of total school population, a ballpark estimate of demand for this course might be conservatively guessed at 1% of enrollment.

A fellow student in Developing Online Learning Environments shared experiences of her daughter at MUN events. She writes that “To encourage students to participate in the MUN in the school she attended at highschool level they had incentives such as credit [...] or in the case of the IB program --

CAS hours. In addition, they encouraged kids to see it as something that they can include on their CV for university applications, etc.” (Read).

The great distance to the event, pressures on budgets toward eliminating courses and clubs such as Model UN, and the small number of interested students, all conspire to limit opportunities for such a class in small rural schools. Perhaps this online course will be an attractive opportunity for students denied this experience by circumstances. Perhaps the added bonus of receiving one half high school credit may be a further enticement.

Adaptations to the Real-Life Model United Nations (MUN) for e-Learning

A full online virtual Model United Nations, truly equivalent to what goes on at a weekend MUN event, is beyond the scope of this project. Student participation in this class can serve as a valuable experience preparing them to participate in the “real deal”. However, limitations of time, place, and anticipated participation require that a smaller scale version be created.

High school MUN clubs typically register in advance for an upcoming event and spend the school year preparing for their group's participation by researching an assigned nation, preparing their debate skills and position papers. In similar fashion, students in the Virtual MUN will be assigned a nation, will research the relevant history and demography of this nation sufficiently to represent it, and devise position papers just as they would for a MUN. The first two topics of study are dedicated to this kind of training. Topic 1 is “Diplomacy 101”. Students study some basic theories in international relations and learn important rules of procedure and writing formats used in the MUN. Topic 2 is where students develop their research portfolio for their country. Each topic in the course is expected to run around two weeks.

Once in attendance at the MUN, students participate in a variety of committees. This Virtual MUN will not replicate that experience. In this simulation, the only committee will be the Security Council (which, incidentally, may have been a better title for this class). Upon enrollment, students will be assigned to one of the members of the current Security Council. In the event that more than fifteen students enroll, teams will be created.

Marian Read advises: “Measures need to be invented to keep the processes interesting and lively as even in the live version the very formal, slow process of negotiation and counter proposal risked being very tedious for the student teams.” (Read). It is a necessity that this course be devised as an asynchronous class. In the area of debate, negotiation, and voting, the online course will differ most significantly from its real-life version because these things will probably never happen in real time. A set of standards for online discussion, modelled as closely as possible on Robert's Rules of Order and procedures typical of the MUN, will need to be devised. In its current conception, such a model would entail students responding to challenging international situations by deadlines and with ability to call procedural and resolution votes. The Moodle LMS lends itself well to this level of complexity.

A student who takes this class will not come away with the same experience as those participating in the full MUN. However, it will nonetheless be a rich experience that may even prepare the student for eventual live participation. Perhaps such a course as this could be the seed for something that may eventually grow into a true, full, online virtual MUN with synchronous and asynchronous elements. That would be a significant undertaking.

Summary

Virtual Model United Nations is a credit-bearing half-year high school class in the social studies department in the area of international relations. It is an online, asynchronous class designed on the model of the United Nations Security Council. It will be pilot tested and marketed at first among similar small, rural schools in northern New York state, where Model UN programs may not be available to students. Online learning is shown to be an effective way to learn, though more research is needed. To the successful student, the course offers not only experience that would ready him or her for participation in a full Model UN event, students also come away with in-depth knowledge of a number of historical and contemporary international situations such that their performance can be enhanced in other courses and on the New York State Global History and Geography Regents exam given at the end of grade ten. Students will develop persuasive writing skills and interpersonal social skills such as are important to respectful debate. Another mark of success for the pilot would be to open the door for additional online classes sponsored by Schroon Lake Central School.

Sequence

VMUN Process

The pilot project for “Designing Online Learning Environments” will consist of topic #3 of this course where students try to address the problems faced by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

1. Historical Context

There will be lessons in historical context of the Congress of Vienna. Students prepare and submit position papers on behalf of the country they represent at the close of the history lessons to demonstrate understanding of the topic.

After the lessons in historical context, the instructor will open the “Speakers List Forum”.

2. “Speakers List Forum”

The President of the vMUN Security Council will facilitate discussion in the online discussion forums. I will play that role in the pilot.

The current president makes the first post consisting of opening remarks on the topic to stimulate and focus discussion.

Following the President's opening remarks, a speakers list is generated by the instructor and posted as the second post in the discussion forum. The speakers list will be in alphabetical order, starting with a random country.

Minimum length of discussion posts will be 250 words.

Maximum length of discussion posts will be 350 words.

Note: The Speakers List Forum is not a debate forum, but a speech forum. No rebuttals or replies are appropriate here.

3a. “Moderated Caucus Forum”

The current president makes the first post consisting of opening remarks on the topic to stimulate and focus discussion.

The instructor will make the second post to “charge delegates” with their purpose in the current international crisis under study.

Whereas in “real life” students would be recognized to speak by the chairperson, vMUN is an asynchronous environment where students log in at different times. Privilege to speak will be on a first-come first-serve basis.

It will be the President's job to help focus the discussion so that it does not veer too far off track.

Whereas in “real life” students are limited to time limits for speaking, in the Moderated Caucus Forum students participation is metered thus:

Maximum post size is 250 words. Minimum number of discussion posts will be 5 per topic.

3b. “Unmoderated Caucus”

At some point students will want to leave the formal, moderated chat and work with each other informally. One way to do this is the Unmoderated Caucus. There are two types available for this online course: forum and chat.

At any delegate's request, the instructor will create asynchronous forums or a synchronous chat areas. These areas will have start and end dates to define opening and closing. Where the online software allows, delegates can request forums / chat in small groups such that access is limited to the instructor and the group members. Members may also communicate via email.

The Unmoderated Caucus is a spontaneously evolving activity in the course. There may be many or few depending on the topic and the energy of the delegates.

Students are required to participate in at least one Unmoderated Caucus.

3c. “Informal Consultation Forum”

Upon simple majority vote, the instructor can open an Informal Consultation Forum such as would exist in the UN Security Council. While Unmoderated Caucus may be restricted to groups working together, the Informal Consultation Forum is open to all delegates.

4. Resolutions

At the end of the time period set for discussion, each student will submit a draft resolution of his/her own authorship. *(Students may not co-author with other students at this time, though in “real life” that would occur.)*

5. Vote

Students will have time to read the resolutions offered by all students in the class. They will respond in writing to one in a forum. At the end of the review period, students will vote on the single “best” resolution for the international crisis under study.

All votes are created by the instructor, who controls the software.

Content Inventory

- Instructional video on the Congress of Vienna
- Written instruction on writing position papers, including sample
- Instructional video “screencast” on writing resolutions

The LMS

This course will be run through “Moodle” version 2.0.10 (Build: 20120706) hosted at the Schroon Lake Central School web server. This is an older version of Moodle that is compatible with the school's current web hosting service. One drawback is that it is not running under a SSL (secure socket layer). However, this is minor given that no sensitive data will be transmitted and that it is only for a limited time. The school will upgrade its web hosting service in summer 2016.

Project Timeline

1 Nov.	Design document is complete. The LMS is set up for vMUN. Placeholder links have been created in the vMUN class on the LMS and there are some ideas for content.
8 Nov.	Instructional materials are selected/created for the Congress of Vienna historical context.
15 Nov.	Instructional materials are selected/created for writing position papers
22 Nov.	“Screencast” is created for instruction on writing resolutions
29 Nov.	Links are created for all steps in the process and tested. User accounts are created for participants in the pilot test.
30 Nov.	Start of pilot test with classmates in “Designing Online Learning Environments”

Discussion

Selection and Analysis of Instructional Sequence

vMUN is an asynchronous online version of a real life event and as such the instruction sequence was dictated by imitation of the real life version. At a model UN conference, students prepare by learning their assigned nation's history and characteristics as well as learning the necessary historical context for

the committee in which they are participating. There are some difference from a real UN conference (Endless). The sequence of instruction was created by making a two-column chart where in column A was listed the series of events at a high school model UN conference ("MUN Made Easy: How to Get Started with Model United Nations") and on the right was the version of each step as it would need to be in an asynchronous environment.

UNA-USA Procedure	Modified for vMUN
<p>The flow of debate described below is a simplified version of the typical of North American high school conferences and many collegiate conferences around the world. Committees switch between Speakers List, Moderated Caucus, and Unmoderated Caucus until draft resolutions are complete, merged, and ready to be presented.¹</p> <p>1. Each committee is led by a Chairperson who facilitates the discussion for the committee. The committee will start with the Chairperson taking roll call. Afterward, the committee will vote on which of the assigned topics to discuss first. After the topic is selected, the committee is ready to begin debate on the selected topic.</p>	<p>1. Historical Context</p> <p>Time: one week</p> <p>The agenda for the vMUN is already set by the course curriculum; a series of historical and contemporary world crises to resolve. Where in MUN students would vote on setting the agenda, in vMUN students study the historical context of the topic under current study.</p> <p>Students prepare and submit position papers on behalf of the country they represent at the close of the history lessons to demonstrate understanding of the topic.</p> <p>After the lessons in historical context, the instructor will open the "Speakers List Discussion Area".</p>
<p>2a. There are three debate formats. The default debate format is called the Speakers List. This where delegates take turns making speeches in front of the room by the order that they are listed on the Speakers List as selected by the Chair. Speeches are typically around 1 minute or 1 minute and 30 seconds, but the speaking time can be changed by a majority vote from the delegates.</p> <p>¹UN Practice: typically, formal meetings at the UN work on a speakers list. These lists are usually in English alphabetical order, starting with a random country. In a typical formal meeting, each country will speak once, possibly with additional right of reply at the end of the meeting if a response to another country is required. After each country has spoken once, the formal meeting closes." (source: footnote 2)</p>	<p>2. "Speakers List Forum"</p> <p>Time for steps 2 and 3: one week</p> <p>The President of the vMUN Security Council will facilitate discussion in the online discussion forums.</p> <p>The current president makes the first post consisting of opening remarks on the topic to stimulate and focus discussion.</p> <p>Following the President's opening remarks, a speakers list is generated by the instructor and posted as the second post in the discussion forum. The speakers list will be in alphabetical order, starting with a random country.</p> <p>Minimum length of discussion posts will be 250 words. Maximum length of discussion posts will be 350 words. The average person speaks around 250 words per minute so this seems a fair quantity for a</p>

Illustrating the two-column process I used to devise the online version of a Model UN.

The initial instructional activity in each topic is the historical context. A basic outline of the circumstances and important individuals associated with the topic is delivered through various media, especially video lesson and short articles. Some students will be motivated by the competitive nature of debate to research more deeply into the historical context, since this will give them an edge. An important goal of this course is that students come away with historical knowledge. The kind of reflection on a topic demanded by seeing things through a particular lense stimulates memory. It is expected that students will

likely do more research during the discussion phases of the instructional sequence in order to support their positions. Students produce a position paper ("Position Papers") that reflects their work learning the historical context. The position paper runs about 500 words. It includes the following elements:

- Brief introduction to the student's country, its history concerning the topic,
- How the issue affects the country,
- The country's policies with respect to the issue and the country's justification for these policies,
- Quotes from the country's leaders about the issue,
- Statistics to back up the country's position on the issue,
- Actions taken by the government with regard to the issue,
- Conventions and resolutions that the country has signed or ratified,
- UN actions that the country supported or opposed,
- What the country believes should be done to address the issue,
- What the country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution,
- How the positions of other countries affect the country's position.

Following from the historical context, students will engage in discussion of how to best resolve the issue. There is no way to predict how this will go. Sometimes it may go quickly as delegates agree after limited debate upon a resolution. Sometimes it will be drawn out. In deference to authenticity, there will be flexibility in the time spent on a topic. Argumentation is a powerful tool for student learning. Dr. Leslie W. Zorwick and James Wade write:

“Argumentation is the process of giving reasons to support a particular idea or position. It involves making some claim and providing reasoning and evidence to support that claim. When one makes an argument, she becomes an advocate for that position. To be successful, an advocate must identify, organize, and explain her ideas in a reasonable and persuasive way. (Zorwick and Wade, 47).”

Teachers and forensics coaches report debate to be a powerful teaching tool in content area classrooms (Zorwick and Wade). Research documents the connection between forensics participation and quantifiable gains in writing and literacy (Carr). Wade and Zorwick write:

“Competitive debate provides a model for engaged, cooperative learning.[...] The impact of debate as an educational tool has been proven through decades of interscholastic competition and a diverse range of academic studies [...] (Wade and Zorwick).”

Writes Akerman and Neale:

“The strongest body of evidence exists around the relationship between participation in debate activities and improvements in academic attainment. A range of studies suggest that debate has a practical and meaningful influence on the attainment of young people from diverse backgrounds, and in particular on the development of literacy skills (Akerman and Neale, 2).”

It will be important for the instructor and even to a fair extent for the students to become skilled at moderating online debate. Students will rotate the presidency of the Security Council through the topics we cover in the course. Priority will need to be given to creating successful debate because that is where the greatest benefit to students lies.

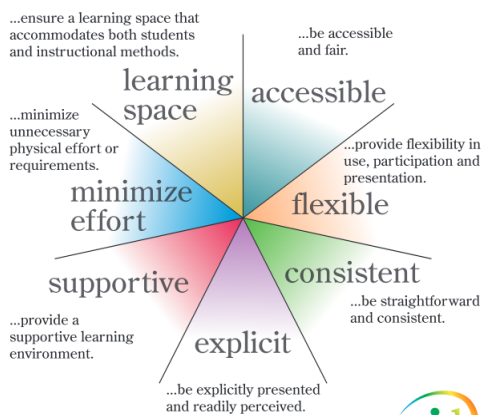
The penultimate and final tasks of a topic are the writing of resolutions, review and voting. Students are called upon to review and assess a resolution of one other classmate. They will be looking for form (How well did the student conform to style and format conventions?) as well as effectiveness (How well would this resolution help the international crisis under discussion?). The usefulness of this task is that it calls upon the student to reflect deeply on alternatives. It is expected that there will be a lot of overlap in students' final resolutions, since an international crisis has only so many possible resolutions. It is not yet known whether allowing students to collaborate on resolutions will prove workable. Proceeding from work in the first topic on international relations (IR) theories, students will earn the highest marks on the rubric for resolution assessment who refer to theories in IR.

Principles of e-Learning Applied

For the pilot project being designed in *Designing Online Learning Environments*, I will create an instructional video on the historical context of the Congress of Vienna (1815) and an instructional screencast on writing resolutions. Clark and Mayer provide research that would guide the creation of these materials such that they will be created following these principles:

- The Multimedia Principle is that e-Learning courses include words and graphics rather than just words alone.
- The Contiguity Principle is that text and graphics be presented in an integral fashion (printed words are presented next to the graphic they describe).
- The Modality Principle is that words should be presented in audio rather than on-screen text.
- The Redundancy Principle is that e-learning experiences should not contain redundant on-screen text with graphics and animation.
- The Coherence Principle is that there should not be extraneous audio or graphics.
- The Personalization Principle supports using familiar speech and writing patterns over formal ones.

Instructional materials and activities should...



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 University of Guelph Principles of Universal Design

The Segmenting and Pretraining Principles support e-learning experiences that are broken into sufficiently small segments for effective cognitive processing and for which students are prepared by having training in the background knowledge or skills necessary to succeed in the targeted e-learning task. The students in the pilot test will already have some familiarity with Moodle because it is the same software we use in our class. The actual high school students who will take this course in February 2016 will have a set of tutorial screencasts showing them how to operate the controls. Video lessons and screencasts will be limited to 8-10 minutes in length.

The design principles will serve as a guide for selection of video lessons made by others, such as found on youtube.com and etc. For the full implementation of this online course after the pilot project, it will not be feasible for me to create the instructional videos for all content for a twenty-week course and no real necessity for me to do so.

Incorporation of Universal Design and Accessibility Compliance

Palmer and Caputo, in “Universal Instructional Design Implementation Guide”, write: “UID as a

strategy considers the potential needs of all learners in the design and delivery of instruction. While it would be undesirable, not to mention impossible, to design individual instruction for this matrix of possibilities, UID offers strategies that remove barriers and provide flexibility to enable students to access learning in ways that make sense for them. (Palmer and Caputo 2). In the real-life classroom, differentiated instruction has been the focus of my professional work and I expect to carry this into the teaching of online classes.

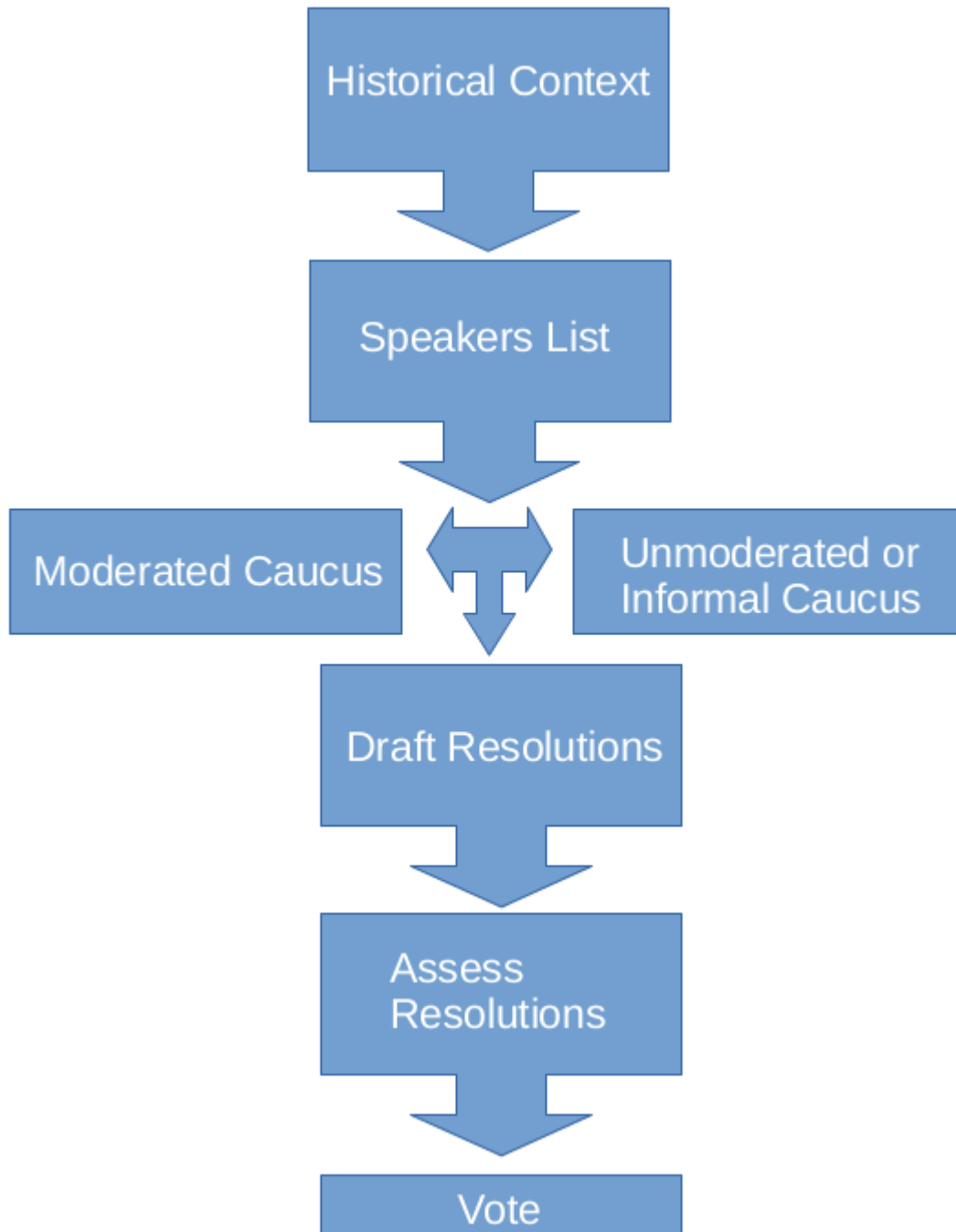
In consideration of universal instructional design (UID), the Moodle LMS is a powerful tool. As an open-source project, Moodle has “continued to evolve since 1999 (since 2001 with the current architecture). It has been translated into over 100 different languages and is accessible in many countries worldwide” (“Language Packs”).

In consideration of accessibility, the LMS “Moodle” is an open-source project that by virtue of that fact has evolved a highly accessible nature. Among the principle of accessible design suggested by Introduction to Web Accessibility that are found built in to the LMS are: provide appropriate alternative text, provide appropriate document structure, provide headers for data tables, ensure users can complete and submit all forms, ensure links make sense out of context, ability for me to caption and/or provide transcripts for media, will not rely on color alone to convey meaning, allows me to make sure content is clearly written and easy to read, and the web site will be designed to HTML compliant standards. The principle of straightforward consistency supports accessibility considerations in particular for people with cognitive disability types (Introduction to Web Accessibility).

The screenshot shows the Moodle LMS interface. On the left is a sidebar with a green background containing three menu items: "Question bank", "Switch role to...", and "My profile settings". The main content area has a white background and features a course header "3 Historical: Congress of Vienna (1815)" with a small square icon to its right. Below the header is a paragraph of text describing the Congress of Vienna. Underneath the text is a list of resources, each with a small icon and a text label: "Background Guide: Congress of Vienna", "Congress of Vienna Position Paper", "Speaker's List Forum", "Moderated Caucus Forum", "Delegate's Chat Request (Sample)", "Unmoderated Caucus (Sample)", "Informal Consultation Forum", "Congress of Vienna Resolution", "Congress of Vienna Final Vote (Sample)", and "Resolution Assessment".

Screenshot of the Moodle interface for the pilot test

Instructional Sequence Flowchart



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