Using the *Reacting to the Past* Pedagogy in the Intermediate Latin Classroom

This paper will present the results of using the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy in the first course of a college-level intermediate Latin sequence during fall semester, 2012. *Reacting to the Past* is a pedagogy which was developed at Barnard College by Mark C. Carnes. Students are assigned identities from a historical period and learn by role-playing. Class is run as a forum for debate and is largely student-driven. This study will use "Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 BCE," written by Carl A. Anderson of Michigan State University and T. Keith Dix of the University of Georgia. Anderson and Dix are still developing this game, and the study will use the unpublished course materials which date to August, 2011. The game focuses on the days immediately following the assassination of Julius Caesar; students are asked to react to the resulting struggle for power in Rome in their roles as Caesarians, Republicans, or characters whose political leaning is indeterminate. The setting for the game is the Roman Senate, and students deliver speeches to their fellow senators in their attempt to carry out their individual characters' political goals. Subjects for debate include how to deal with Caesar's body, the possible election of new officials, whether or not the Parthian campaign should go forward, and whether to treat Caesar's assassins as liberators or as murderers, for example.

Our traditional approach to teaching this first intermediate Latin course involves reading both prose and poetry—usually selections from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* for the first half of the semester and then selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Amores* for the second half of the semester. There are two primary goals of using the *Reacting to the Past* game in this intermediate Latin course. The first is to encourage students to become more engaged with the Latin they read. So often, students at the intermediate level focus only on translating each sentence of the Latin correctly and miss the overall context of the text. Ideally, by approaching

the Latin in character as a Roman operating in a dynamic political environment, students will develop a deeper understanding of the author and of the Latin texts. The second goal is to introduce practical Latin composition into the intermediate classroom. The exercises in composition should help solidify the students' understanding of basic Latin grammar and syntax and also develop their Latin vocabulary.

In this study, students will spend the first third of a 15-week semester reading selected passages from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* and *Bellum Civile* as well as several passages from Suetonius and Cicero which serve to introduce students to the historical figure of Julius Caesar. For the second third of the semester, students will play "Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 BCE." During the game, students will develop their language skills by composing speeches in Latin for their characters which they will then deliver to the senate. Students will also have the opportunity to publish pamphlets and other political writings, create wills, write letters, and create political graffiti in Latin. After the game, students will spend the last five weeks of the semester reading selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as well as several other poems which reference Julius Caesar and Augustus.

This study will be qualitative in nature. Performance on quizzes and tests will be taken into consideration to determine the effectiveness of using the game, but, most importantly, students who choose to be included in the study will answer two questionnaires. The first will be handed out soon after the game ends. The second questionnaire will be handed out at the end of the semester. Each questionnaire will ask students to assess their confidence in reading and composing Latin and their own feeling about the improvement of their skills in Latin. Thus, concrete qualitative data will be available for determining the success of using the Game.