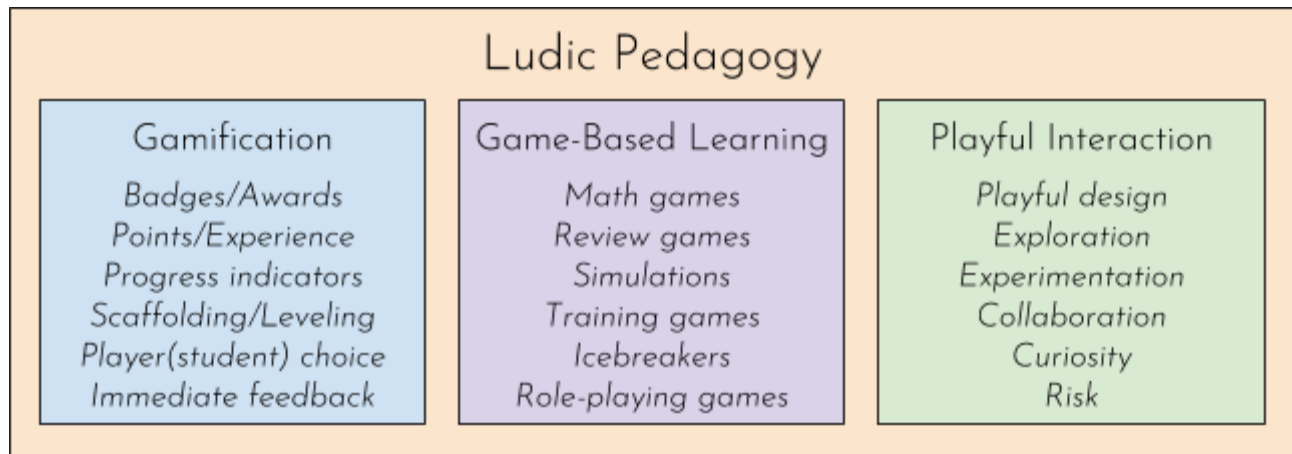


# Tech Snacks: Beyond Gamification

The idea of gamification — using game elements to enhance student motivation and learning — has been heavily discussed and explored over the last decade. But gamification is just one category within a broader field of teaching practices that integrate games and play, called (among other terms) Ludic Pedagogy. *Ludic* means playful behavior, and comes from the Latin *ludus*, which refers to games, sports, or entertainment.



We've gathered some narratives from instructors at MSU-Northern who are already using aspects of Ludic Pedagogy in their classes.

## Dungeons & Dragons

This semester Joey Todd used a roleplaying game to introduce students to ethical concepts and dilemmas, and to encourage classroom discussion and participation. In roleplaying games, each player plays as their own personalized character with unique abilities and traits. Players cooperate to complete challenges and puzzles using creative problem solving, group discussion, and a bit of luck in the form of dice rolling. Joey says the experience was extremely effective at opening up class discussions and facilitating an engaged classroom community. Those effects continued throughout the semester after the game was finished and contributed to higher levels of participation from more students and lively class discussions.

## Farming Management made fun

Brianna Bernhardt created her own board game for her Farm Business Management class. Students play a game (a bit like Monopoly) where they earn and spend money, and where random events affect their incomes and inventory. Then the students have to translate the outcomes of their gameplay to real-world balance sheets. Brianna says that practicing balance sheets is a tedious but necessary part of the class, and the inputs would usually just be created ahead of time and given to the students. Using the game to create the inputs adds an element of fun to the activity.

## The Harry Potter class

Val Guyant's Popular Genres literature class explored the Harry Potter book series through the lens of critical analysis. Val used a number of course design choices to engage students in the fantasy world portrayed in the books. In Brightspace, she embedded images, animations, and music in each weekly content module to set the stage for the topics being covered. She also used the new Awards tool to provide feedback and incentives to students as they completed assignments and participated in class discussions. The playfulness and theatricality of Val's course design encouraged students to take more creative risks in their class projects, including student-made videos and games.

## Law enforcement simulation

Jack Bieger uses a Firearms Training Simulator in a number of his Criminal Justice classes. The Simulator includes an interactive video screen connected to plastic guns that the player holds, which can record where the player is aiming. The Simulator plays scenarios including traffic stops, active shooters, domestic disputes, and other situations that law enforcement find themselves in. Jack lets students volunteer to use the Simulator during class, and then uses that experience to prompt classroom discussions based on the scenarios being used, and the criminal justice implications surrounding each scenario. Students tend to be far more engaged in discussion and classroom participation when using the Simulator compared to classes that just use the textbook or slides.

## Playful course design

Lanny Wilke tries to cultivate a sense of playfulness in many of his courses. For example, his Business Ethics class is heavily weighted toward in-class discussion, and students are expected to come to class having finished all required readings and ready to engage with the weekly topic. At the beginning of the semester, Lanny gives each student two million-dollar Monopoly bills. Each class, Lanny has a student pull names out of a hat to help lead that day's discussion. If for any reason a student doesn't feel prepared to lead that discussion, they can "spend" one of their bills to avoid having to lead. Any unused bills at the end of the semester can be "cashed in" for extra credit. According to Lanny, this playful touch reduces student anxiety, increases class engagement, and fosters an environment of trust between classmates and the instructor.

## What about you?

Are you implementing any aspects of ludic pedagogy in your courses? OTLE would love to hear about it. Want to try adding some gamification, game-play, or playful design to your courses? We'd be happy to help. Also feel free to contact any of the instructors mentioned in this handout to hear more about what they're up to.