



History Meets Games

Why do historians love games? Probably because we're awesome at them. Throughout our adult lives, we've studied human actions and outcomes. This has given us a vast set of lessons to learn from. For example, NEVER INVADE RUS-SIA. But it works the other way, too. Games are what got me interested in history in the first place. Back in my day, the best part of going to the computer lab was a little game called Oregon Trail. (Some of you may know about this ancient relic.) The hours I spent immersed on the trail, dodging snakes and avoiding dysentery, were some of the best hours of my childhood. I became obsessed with the Laura Ingalls Wilder books and from there continued expanding my passion for historical fiction. This obsession eventually led to me writing my master's thesis on the role of video games in the study of history.

Most recently, in an online game, my teammates were pondering breaking an alliance and aligning with a different group. I was reminded of the War of 1812 and suggested taking a different route. Nobody listened to me, but I

Why 435?

In 1920, the United States Congress faced a crisis that wasn't resolved for nine years. This crisis wasn't about wars or party politics. No, this crisis was about a very boring, yet necessary, responsibility of Congress: the reapportionment of House seats based on the decennial census. From 1790 until 1920 Congress had authorized censuses, collected population data, and added new seats and reapportioned those seats according to the new populations of states. But the 1920 census revealed "a major and continuing shift of the population of the United States from rural to urban areas" (<https://www.census.gov/history.html>), and rural House members refused to participate in reapportionment for fear that they would lose political power to cities. It took nine years of negotiations to pass the Reapportionment Act of 1929, which limited House membership to 435 seats, and redistributed seats based on that number. Rural states were jubilant; the solution wasn't perfect, but it increased the



power of rural states in America's increasingly urban society. However, the Reapportionment Act set the stage for a series of unintended consequences today that has left people in states like California with less power in comparison to voters in small states. How did all of this happen and is there anything we can do to balance the competing power of rural versus urban regions?

The 1787 Constitutional Convention created a strong national government and placed states into a subordinate position. The legislative branch was a bicameral legislature and representation in each house was based on states. The Senate consists of two senators per state, while House seats are distributed by the population of states. Throughout the 19th century this process continued. Although the number of people per representative increased over time, adding new seats helped to maintain

3 Things to Know About **Impeachment**

For only the fourth time in American history, the United States Congress is engaged in the process of impeachment of a president. The first president to face impeachment was Andrew Johnson in 1868, followed by Richard Nixon in 1974 and Bill Clinton in 1998. As we witness the current impeachment inquiry into the actions of President Trump, here are three FAQs to help make sense of this process and how it works.

1 What is impeachment?

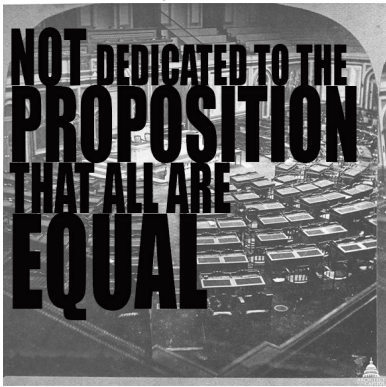
Impeachment is the process, granted to the House of Representatives in the Constitution, through which it brings charges against the president (or other officials) for actions that constitute either a crime or abuse of the power of the office. Many people describing impeachment say it's very much like a grand jury, which hears evidence and brings indictments in criminal cases.

2 Does impeachment mean the president's removal from office?

Not necessarily. If the House of Representatives impeaches the president, the charges are sent to the Senate as 'articles of impeachment', which is a list of alleged offenses. The Senate then holds a trial, very much like a trial in a courtroom. The Senators are the jury and two-thirds of the Senate must agree to remove the president from office.

3 Has any president been removed from office?

No. Andrew Johnson was tried and acquitted as was Bill Clinton. Richard Nixon resigned before he could be impeached by the House of Representatives once the White House tapes were released, which had absolute proof that the president was engaged in a cover-up.



fairness in representation across districts. In this way the number of seats in the House grew from 65 seats representing 34,000 in 1790 to 435 representing 253,000 in 1913.

So what made 1920 so different from earlier decades? The 1920 census starkly revealed what everyone 'knew' already: industrialization plus massive immigration of workers from all over the world had drawn millions into cities and away from rural regions of the country. Industrial cities were not evenly distributed across states - factories were concentrated in the Northeast and in coastal regions. This population redistribution had consequences for both the states gaining in population and those losing population in the midwestern 'heartland' of the nation. Rural states found themselves outnumbered in the House as states like New York gained new seats. A rural/urban divide had been created, and in 1929 rural states blunted the power of urban states by limiting House seats to 435.

Fast forward to today. The unintended consequence of this limitation is before us: we spread a constant number of seats (435) across a growing population that is not spread evenly across states. In the last 40 years, cities and states along the east and west coast have grown, while states like Wyoming have remained relatively stable, which has huge consequences to the power of an individual's vote and representation. In 1930, each district had approximately 280,000 people; in 2010 that number has grown

to 710,000 people per district. However, in states with a small population, Wyoming for example, the Constitution requires it have at least one representative even though its population was only 563,000 in 2010. In a state like Rhode Island, with 2 representatives and a population of 1.05 million people, each district is about 500,000 people. Yet here in California, our district's members represent a full 710,000 people. In essence, this means that our votes count LESS than the votes of people living in small states, thus giving an outsized voice to people in rural states over those

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of us living in more populous states. In 2019 we have the opposite problem of 1920 - the suppression of the power of urban voters to shape public policy. From issues like gun control to environ-

mental legislation, representation of the majority has indeed been 'blunted', but the questions now before us are: was this what our founders imagined and is this a sustainable democratic model? More on that in our next installment!

Eileen Kerr

History Meets Games continued was right about the outcome. So, although I didn't get my way, I was able to say, "I told you so." Some would argue that's more valuable.

This doesn't just apply to video games, but board games as well. There are almost endless options of historical board games out there, many of which revolve around nation-building. Personally, I love the relationship building (and breaking) games. There's one game in particular I've been dying to play called Diplomacy. (Heard of it?) I have a sneaking suspicion I'll be terrific at it, but I'm having a heck of a time finding anyone to play with me, largely due to its reputation as a friendship-destroyer. Maybe us historians just live for drama. (That would explain my obsession with Henry VIII.)

So, what does this all boil down

to? History and games go together like peanut butter and jelly. Learning history makes us better gamers and playing games helps us learn history. I prefer having history in my games, and games in my history. Because of this, I even use role-playing games in my history classes! Personally, I'm always looking for new games to play. If you have any recommendations for me, shoot me an email or find me in the halls! I've included a couple recommendations below.

Lastly, I want to plug the Gamers Club! It meets Wednesdays at 2:30 in CAT 218 and is advised by our very own Prof. Eileen Kerr (who, by the way, is one of my favorite gamer friends.)

Jill Connors

Game Recommendation

Board: Civilization, Axis & Allies, Merchants and Marauders

Video: Civilization, World of Tanks, Valiant Hearts: The Great War

Historical Curiosities

Did you know

...there was an attempt during WWII to use bats to deliver bombs to Japan? The goal was to use thousands of tiny bats, carrying miniature bombs, to be released in cardboard boxes above enemy cities. Unfortunately, the bats were unreliable and the project eventually abandoned, but not before a military base in New Mexico was significantly burned, and two million dollars spent.

William Newell



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