In summer 2017, after teaching an introductory ODE course in a traditional format for many years, I decided to try incorporating a “modeling first” approach into my fall 2017 course, using projects from SIMIODE. In this talk I will outline the projects chosen and look at how they fit into the overall course structure, how they were introduced to the students, student reactions and responses to the projects, and the impact of the changes to the course on the students. I will also discuss what worked and what did not work and how the course could be modified for subsequent offerings. (Received September 22, 2017)