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Teaching Hamilton: A Team-Taught, Interdisciplinary Honors Course

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Abstract: This essay gives a broad overview of a team-taught course on Alexander Hamilton that merges discourses in music theory and political science. Authors describe pedagogical approaches to teaching both the musical *Hamilton* to non-musical students and Hamilton's history and politics to students not majoring in these fields. Contrasting challenges and outcomes of the seminar's first (2017) offering with its second (2020), authors consider the scope and implications of cultural intelligence and scholarly interdisciplinarity, maintaining that courses team-taught by instructors of different disciplines make connections across disciplines more explicit for students and enhance the transdisciplinary nature of the honors experience. Pre-course assessments are included, and future directions for team-teaching are discussed.

Keywords: teaching teams; team learning approach in education; interdisciplinary collaboration; theme-based curriculum; Butler University (IN)—Honors Program

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Honors programs are ripe for interdisciplinary approaches (Klein 1999; Letterman and Dugan 2004). At Butler University, the honors program's mission statement includes striving "to engage students in interdisciplinary academics to develop their innate sense of curiosity and empower them to expand their intellectual endeavors beyond the classroom by engaging in discussion, conversation, and research" (2019). While team-taught techniques are well suited to this mission (Letterman and Dugan, 2004), only one course—a study abroad experience in Germany—had been team-taught in the three academic years prior to the course on the musical *Hamilton*.

The goal for seminars in Butler's honors program is to examine a great work, thinker, or artist from various angles. Alexander Hamilton presents an ideal for this sort of charge. The "ten dollar Founding Father" has experienced a popular renaissance due to Ron Chernow's 2005 biography, a *New York Times* best seller, and Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway musical adaptation, which won a record eleven Tony Awards. In fall 2017 and spring 2020, we offered the course Alexander Hamilton: An American Revolutionary that fused our academic backgrounds and training in musical theory (Jones) and political science (Shufeldt).

A contextual background and broad overview of the course lay the groundwork for specific examples of the pedagogical approaches we took to teaching *Hamilton* to students with a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds and to the revisions of the course we made between our initial fall 2017 offering and second offering in the spring of 2020. To conclude, we discuss the reception and lessons learned from offering the course as well as general recommendations for future interdisciplinary collaboration.

APPROACHING A TEAM-TAUGHT COURSE

The University Honors Program at Butler University admits approximately ten percent of a given incoming class. The program stresses the importance of interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and it caps class enrollment at sixteen to inspire more student involvement in the classroom. Students must pass four designated honors courses and a thesis to complete the program; these include a two-course sequence of first-year seminars, a 200-level seminar, and 300-level colloquia.

Alexander Hamilton: An American Revolutionary, a 200-level seminar, explores the life and times of Hamilton through cultural, historical, political, and musical perspectives. Our backgrounds in political science and music theory provide complementary areas of expertise to an interdisciplinary approach. Neither instructor had previously team-taught a course, so the course was a learning experience, albeit a welcome one, for us as well as for the students. We had known each other for less than a year when we designed the course, so our initial experience was challenging. Revising the course after teaching together once and building a relationship over three years was significantly easier.

Courses team-taught by instructors who have expertise in different disciplines enhance the interdisciplinarity of a course and the quality of the student experience by presenting a variety of perspectives and influences in

each session (Anderson and Speck, 1998; Wentworth and Davis, 2002; Wadkins, Miller, and Wozniak, 2006). As we prepared our course, we reviewed relevant works to help us familiarize ourselves with team-teaching. In several preparatory discussions, we discovered that while we trained in different disciplines, we shared the common traits of reliability, flexibility, patience, student-centeredness, and a willingness to take chances. Perhaps most importantly, we both demonstrated a willingness to learn from and listen to each other (Wentworth and Davis, 2002). Bolstered by the newfound confidence that we were likely to mesh in the classroom, we continued our investigation into the difficulties and opportunities presented by team teaching.

One of the lessons we quickly learned is that pre-planning the course is critical for team-taught classes (Leavitt, 2006). In the months before the

TABLE 1. PRE-SEMESTER STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

	2017 (N = 15)	2020 (N = 17)	Difference (2020 vs 2017)
Familiarity with Alexander Hamilton (0–10 scale)	4.79 (0.73)	6.00 (0.42)	1.21 (0.81)
Previously read <i>Alexander Hamilton</i> by Ron Chernow (dichotomous variable)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Familiarity with <i>Hamilton</i> : <i>An American Musical</i> (0–10 scale)	6.53 (0.84)	7.11 (0.65)	0.58 (1.05)
Previously seen <i>Hamilton</i> : <i>An American Musical</i> (dichotomous variable)	0.13 (0.09)	0.59 (0.12)	0.45 (0.16)
Previously listened to the <i>Hamilton Mixtape</i> (dichotomous variable)	0.60 (0.13)	0.71 (0.11)	0.11 (0.17)
Previously seen the PBS Documentary <i>Hamilton's America</i> (dichotomous variable)	0.13 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.11)
Previously read <i>Hamilton</i> : <i>The Revolution</i> (dichotomous variable)	0.00 (0.00)	0.12 (0.08)	0.12 (0.09)
Previous Music Background (dichotomous variable)	0.47 (0.13)	0.59 (0.12)	0.12 (0.18)

Note: Cells include mean score with standard error in parentheses.

semester began, we sent a course pre-survey to gauge the students' prior musical background as well as their knowledge of Hamilton. Results varied widely in both regards (see Table 1).

Our pre-course survey revealed differences in student experiences between sections. While students in each semester were more familiar with the musical than the man, students taking the class in spring 2020 were more familiar with both Hamilton and the musical. The fall 2017 offering of the course was eleven months after the Chicago residency began and six months after the first U.S. tour. As a result, only 13% saw the musical prior to the class compared to an impressive 59% of students who took the course more than two years later. In neither semester, however, had students read the biography by Ron Chernow that was adapted for the musical. The results verified for us the importance of the music as a vehicle and motivation to learn more about the history, and it furthered our resolve to intertwine the teaching of history, politics, and music throughout the semester.

A key part of our preparation was ensuring that the class reflected an interdisciplinary approach rather than just a multi-disciplinary perspective (Wentworth and Davis, 2002; Minnis and John-Steiner, 2005). The musical *Hamilton* allowed us to engage not just a work of art but a piece of political history (Bell, 2019). Consequently, our goal during course preparation was not to have musical days and political days but to be equal partners in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of the course. We each engaged beyond our disciplinary expertise and methodological training to pursue the following Student Learning Objectives:

1. Identify cultural, artistic, and musical influences and consequences of *Hamilton*.
2. Compare and contrast the accuracy of the musical with the historical record.
3. Consider and reflect upon the cultural significance of the life of Alexander Hamilton and the musical *Hamilton* with a critical eye toward social and demographic identities.
4. Read and assess primary texts, ideas, and theories as part of political analysis and critical engagement of *Hamilton*.
5. Evaluate competing arguments about the nature of democratic governments, the role of the state, specific policies, and other contemporary political issues.

6. Apply concepts and draw parallels between *Hamilton* and contemporary political discourse.
7. Demonstrate improved communication skills by participating in class discussion and engaging in formal debate.
8. Demonstrate improved writing by synthesizing and incorporating major themes from *Hamilton* through in-class writing exercises and formal assignments.
9. Engage in respectful discussions about controversial issues with individuals who disagree with them and analyze multiple perspectives on political issues.

We adopted pedagogical approaches to meet these learning objectives.

TEACHING THE MUSICAL TO NON-MUSICIANS

Experiencing the Musical

One challenge of the class was to engage the students intellectually with the musical even though none of the students in the course were music majors. In 2017, students enrolled in the class were from five different academic colleges, and most had no prior musical experience whatsoever. In 2020, enrolled students represented four of the six different academic colleges and were more familiar with the musical, but still none were music students.

The 2017 section featured a trip to Chicago to witness a performance of *Hamilton* in late September. The honors program purchased tickets for the students and instructors, and the challenge of procuring eighteen seats together for a popular show forced us to attend the musical on September 16, only three weeks into the semester. Because of this practical reality, the first unit focused disproportionately on the musical. The libretto for *Hamilton* largely adapts Ron Chernow's biography, the primary text for the course, so focusing heavily on the musical in the first few weeks helped students develop an equal footing with the history, yielding benefits for the in-depth political and historical explorations that followed. Students had listening assignments for each class leading up to the road trip, and everyone had listened to the complete soundtrack before departing for Chicago, with in-class discussions about the music occurring in each class meeting.

The 2020 iteration of the course was quite different. *Hamilton* concluded a two-year Chicago run before the spring semester began. One of two touring

companies visited Indianapolis, where Butler University is located, for a two-week stint prior to the beginning of the semester. As a result, many students were familiar with and able to see the musical before the semester began, but students were not able to see the musical itself as part of the class experience. The section did offer a local performance with Leslie Odom, Jr., (the Tony-award-winning actor who originated the role of Aaron Burr in the original Broadway cast) and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. The Butler University Honors Program purchased tickets for interested students, but the event was an extra-credit opportunity and not formally incorporated into the course curriculum.

The experience of exploring the musical was quite different in the two courses. Strangely, we feel we were able to do a more thorough job in 2020, when we did not attend the show as a class. In 2017, being able to attend the musical as a class obviously enhanced the students' appreciation for the work as they were able to witness the choreography and staging firsthand. Although we had covered some of the analytical references to key songs in the work before attending the show, we found that their intrinsic motivation to learn more about the music was even greater after seeing the show. Unfortunately, the front-loaded curriculum for the music made for a more rushed experience with the significant historical study that followed. Students had longer readings for each session, and we were not able to delve into some of the historical and political topics as deeply as we would have liked. Although we had intended to go back and revisit most of the songs in the musical from an analytical perspective, the compressed nature of the political/historical content often prohibited us from doing so.

In 2020, we were not able to attend the musical as a group, but 59% of the students had previously seen it. A small number of students frequently expressed anxiety that they had not seen the performance and felt that they did not fully understand the musical by listening alone even though we made several efforts to persuade them to the contrary. Nevertheless, the analytical pedagogy was better paced and more complete. Without the external pressure of preparing students to see the show just a few weeks into the semester, we were able to devote more class time to actively listening to the recording over the full fifteen weeks. We delved more deeply into other sources such as the *Hamilton Mixtape*, which includes some deleted material from the musical such as the striking "Cabinet Battle 3," which argues for the abolition of slavery; we also watched video recordings of Ham4Ham performances that are freely available on the internet. We had much more time to intertwine our

discussions of the relationship between *Hamilton*, history, politics, and society, and we found many of the students more engaged with the readings since we were able to reduce the workload somewhat in 2020. Overall, we provided students a structured study of the *Hamilton* recording without attending the performance and felt that it was perhaps more thorough than in 2017, allowing us not to have music days and political days.

The Pedagogical Approach of Teaching the Musical to Non-Musicians

The musical presents key elements of the history in a manner that is accessible and entertaining to students. *Hamilton* has a special appeal to many undergraduate students due to its inclusion of hip-hop and rap along with memorable historical characters. The pedagogical challenge was to develop a means to teach non-musicians how to engage musical elements beyond the text itself. We explored the music in four ways throughout the semester:

1. *The Libretto*: We explored the text from the perspective of both the historical content and rhyme scheme. Lin-Manuel Miranda's libretto features numerous internal rhymes as well as the assonance and consonance common in the popular rap and hip-hop genres. Students of all backgrounds appreciated the poetic construction of the libretto through our in-class discussions. (See Eastwood and Hinton for a detailed analysis of Miranda's rhyme scheme.)
2. *Easter Eggs*: Miranda pays homage to hip-hop and rap influences with subtle, hidden references throughout the musical, commonly referred to as Easter eggs. Exploring these references—ranging from Grandmaster Flash, The Notorious B.I.G., Beyoncé, and the Beatles as well as popular musicals—gave students a greater appreciation of the hidden humor and allusion in the music and thus an awareness of its influences and cultural significance.
3. *Race-Conscious Casting*: One often-discussed element of the musical is its race-conscious casting. We assigned supplementary readings discussing the pros and cons of this practice and discussed them prior to attending the performance (Reed, 2015; Monteiro, 2016; Gordon-Reed, 2016). Throughout the semester, we discussed the important contributions to early American society made by immigrants and African Americans.

4. *How to Listen*: Students learned to hear and appreciate musical techniques that occur throughout *Hamilton*. We discussed recurring leitmotifs, themes that appear throughout the musical to highlight individual characters and ideas, such as ambition and the work ethic in “My Shot,” as well as the nineteenth-century operatic source of the use of leitmotifs. We introduced musical techniques, such as the fugue in “Stay Alive,” along with some historical examples of these techniques. Finally, we discussed text-setting choices, such as using the harpsichord during the music of King George III to portray him as old-fashioned in contrast to the fast-paced rap of the plucky Americans.

Through this study, the students became engaged listeners, and in subsequent feedback many expressed that the course opened for them a completely new world of how to listen to music.

TEACHING HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE TO NON-MAJORS

The Pedagogical Approach of Using *Hamilton* to Teach History and Political Science

We had the pedagogical challenge of developing a means to teach non-history and non-political science students how to engage the historical and political elements beyond the musical. Of the sixteen students enrolled in the 2017 course, only two were history or political science majors or minors, so the majority of students had little classroom exposure to basic tenets of U.S. government beyond a high school civics course. We experienced a different type of challenge during the 2020 section, in which seven of the sixteen students were history or political science majors or minors. Each semester we had to balance the tension between those more and less familiar with the relevant political history. We explored the musical *Hamilton* in five ways throughout the semester:

1. *Primary Texts*: The biography by Chernow is an exemplary work of political history, but to provide students with a fuller account of many key historical and political events, we supplemented this book with multiple primary source documents. For example, we included materials about (a) the American Revolution, (b) the country’s founding, which is largely covered in a single song “Non-Stop,” and (c) the denouement of Hamilton’s political career. Specific primary source

documents included Samuel Seabury's "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress" and Hamilton's response in "The Farmer Refuted," the U.S. Constitution, *Federalist Papers #10 and #51*, Washington's Farewell Address, and the Reynolds Pamphlet. Going to the source documents allowed students to have a better understanding of which parts of *Hamilton* were historically accurate and which were changed for narrative convenience or other reasons.

2. *Historical Narratives*: One key question we emphasized was who gets to write history, as echoed in the closing song of the musical, "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story." After viewing the musical, we returned to debates about race-conscious casting, how the musical neglects to share stories of any African American characters or perspectives, and how the topic of slavery is engaged (Reed, 2015; Monteiro, 2016; Gordon-Reed, 2016). Likewise, we discussed whether *Hamilton* represented a feminist perspective in its treatment of women or failed to pass the Bechdel Test, a simple way to assess gender equity by having at least two named female characters who talk to each other about something aside from men (McMaster, 2016). If history represents the perspective of white cisgender straight males, we asked students to consider how *Hamilton* perpetuates and deviates from that norm.
3. *Political Themes*: Many of the political issues and components central to the story of *Hamilton* are timely today. For example, we engaged Hamilton's own personal history as an immigrant and later political opinions critical of immigration as a way to engage President Trump's policies. Students discussed how perpetuating the American Dream, the idea of "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps," informs why the American welfare system looks different from those in other advanced industrial democracies. More generally, Hamilton's life provided us a lens to discuss diverse topics such as political sex scandals, negative campaigning, and the role of a free press in a democratic society. Even without the benefit of seeing the musical, the political reality of contemporary politics is likely to make this class relevant and timely for the near future.
4. *Current Events*: We adapted our curriculum each time we offered the course to address political unrest. In 2017, our course began weeks after violent protests in Charlottesville at a white supremacist rally,

providing a particularly timely relevance to discussions about how we memorialize the past, including slave-owning Founding Fathers. During 2020, the House of Representatives impeached President Trump. We assigned students readings from *The Federalist Papers* to provide Hamilton's take on impeachment. Students analyzed his writings to analyze why both proponents tried to coopt Hamilton for their cause.

5. *Political Debates*: One of Hamilton's biggest virtues and vices is the fact that he wrote as though he was "running out of time," staking out positions on the issues of the day to bring supporters closer to his cause while alienating countless others. To echo Hamilton, we frequently forced students to take sides. We tasked students with reading both the 2016 Republican and Democratic Party platforms to look for Hamilton's influence. In 2017, our class discussions culminated in an in-class debate where we assigned students to represent the positions of the Federalists (Hamilton) versus the Democratic-Republicans (Jefferson) or the modern-day positions of the Democrats and Republicans across a range of issues including the appropriate size and role of federal government, arguably the fundamental debate that splintered political parties then and now. In 2020, the move to online instruction during the semester negated the feasibility of an in-class debate, but we continued to play devil's advocate and encourage students to engage topics from multiple, competing viewpoints. Good interdisciplinary teaching can help students learn to see topics from multiple perspectives and develop respect for opposing viewpoints (Wentworth and Davis, 2002). To this end, when possible, we assigned students to argue for political beliefs that were contrary to their personal ones. As an example, we assigned a class member who belonged to the College Democrats to a leadership position for the Republican Party for debate purposes. Subsequent feedback indicated that she learned from the experience of our forcing her outside her comfort zone.

REFLECTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

In 2017, two main assignments related to our trip to witness *Hamilton*. First, we asked students to write a graded reflection on their experience of the *Hamilton* field trip and how it differed from simply studying the soundtrack. We required students to provide their general thoughts, feelings, and observations on the musical. Within that broad framework, students engaged specific

concepts such as the crowd (especially the lack of racial diversity in the audience), the staging, the choreography, the music, and their most/least favorite performances. Second, we asked them to write a substantive, formal review in the style of the *New York Times*. Students were encouraged to read reviews of other works that they liked to get a sense of how to write a professional review. The review had a 1,250-word limit and had to take a critical perspective as its primary focus rather than a plot summary.

Each semester we offered the course, it included two major written assignments emphasizing the historical and political themes of *Hamilton*. First, we tasked students with discussing a key theme from Act I of *Hamilton*, which spans his humble origins on the island of Nevis in the Caribbean to his appointment as Secretary of the Treasury in President Washington's administration. For the second writing assignment, we tasked students with considering a key theme from Act II, spanning his role in Washington's cabinet to his premature death at the hands of Vice President Aaron Burr. In both assignments, students used *Hamilton* to engage some of the political debates previously discussed such as slavery, the reality of the American Dream, immigration policy, the role of the federal government, and political polarization.

These major writing assignments provided an essential assessment tool to evaluate the course's interdisciplinarity. We assessed students' ability to incorporate and integrate multiple course source materials. An exemplary paper needed to incorporate Miranda's musical and Chernow's biography as well as other assigned readings. To meet several of the course's learning objectives, we required students to engage a counterargument and consider opposing views in support of their main arguments. In our opinion, students gained an appreciation of *Hamilton* while engaging in a serious, critical inquiry related to themes that cross the narrowly defined boundaries of any one academic discipline (Romano, 2020).

STUDENT RECEPTION, FUTURE APPLICATION, AND LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, students positively received the first offering of the course. We conducted an early-semester course evaluation where students provided feedback after seeing the musical. Students most frequently commented on (1) liking the connections we made between the musical and both contemporary music and current political events and (2) presenting the information through a variety of sources, techniques, and perspectives. One student

anonymously wrote, “You guys do a good job of providing context to the different concepts that I feel helps make what we are reading and what we saw in the musical make more sense and be more impactful.”

The final course evaluations were similarly positive. Overall, the course received a summary score of 4.5 on a 5-point scale on the IDEA evaluation, combining student assessment of the course’s progress on relevant objectives, the teachers, and the course overall. Qualitative feedback included comments like “[I] learned so much not only about history but current events/modern politics as well” and “[t]his was an experience that I would not change for the world.” The most common area for improvement echoed by many students, however, was that the timing of the musical and the scale of the biography made it difficult to line up the readings, music, and discussion.

In 2020, we were able to better pace the 700+ pages of the Chernow text throughout the semester. With a more relaxed schedule, the Chernow readings could be assigned for Monday’s class meeting and shorter supplemental readings for Wednesday’s meetings. Another significant pedagogical change in 2020 was the incorporation of “class discussion leadership” assignments in groups of two throughout the semester. The idea was to give students the opportunity to lead the class with some pre-approved discussion ideas. Each student had two opportunities in the semester to lead the class for what we had envisioned to be 15–20 minutes. While students appreciate the leadership opportunity, and they respond well to each other, feedback indicated that they would have preferred more of us and less of themselves. Moving forward, we would reduce this requirement to a single opportunity or modify it significantly to reduce the amount of class time involved.

Overall, students favorably reviewed the second iteration of the course. We are confident that our rapport as team teachers developed over the two years between offerings and strengthened the in-class experience in 2020. Our Class Climate surveys received a 4.5 on a 5-point scale (Butler having shifted to this evaluation system after 2017). Two qualitative comments illuminate the second time we offered the course:

1. I enjoyed how this course intertwined the history of Hamilton with the musical. I appreciated being able to gain a better understanding of the history and how it related to the musical.
2. This course was truly emblematic of an interdisciplinary honors seminar. The course content managed to integrate topics from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. While the course focused on *Hamilton*

the musical, it also created space for discussion of countless topics related to the founding of the United States.

Student feedback indicated that they responded well to our team-taught, interdisciplinary approach, and we had several requests to develop something new for the future. We have identified other topics and pairings that we, or perhaps others, might be interested in pursuing. We could merge history, politics, and musical theory through the study of works such as *1776*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, and *Les Misérables*. We have identified other topical pairings for politics—such as the relationship between art, music, social movements, and political protest—or other topical pairings with music—such as English, history, or religion with musicals like *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The history of rock and soul music as it intertwines with race relations, sociology, politics, and history intrigues us as well.

A successful team-taught course requires many intangibles that require more work than a traditional class, such as pre-planning and communication, but we strongly feel that the rewards for students and instructors alike outweigh any difficulties. We both developed new areas of critical inquiry, became better teachers (and students!), and inspired the class to take creative and thoughtful approaches to their assignments. We hope that our experience will inspire other team-taught, interdisciplinary courses with instructors from disparate fields. Although the assembly of a teaching team with different backgrounds, personalities, and areas of expertise can be akin to an “anti-dream team” (Wentworth and Davis, 2002, p. 21), our differences yielded a more diverse and engaging classroom experience. By working together and being deliberate in our planning, we were able to promote an interdisciplinary, rather than multidisciplinary, course.

Despite its pedagogical advantages, team teaching presents challenges in many university settings. At a small liberal arts college like Butler, committing to team teaching often pulls instructors away from other commitments. Two teachers working together to offer one course reduces the number of available courses available to other students, creates deficiencies in what home departments can offer their majors, leads to disagreements about how departments are rewarded, and creates conflicts about how resources are allocated (Wentworth and Davis, 2002). The logistical difficulties of assigning faculty members’ teaching load credits frequently reduces the opportunity to engage in team-teaching.

An honors program already incorporates many of these considerations, making it an ideal home for team-teaching interdisciplinary courses (Klein,

1999; Wentworth and Davis, 2002; Letterman and Dugan, 2004). For example, we were able to offer the course a second time two years later as part of our regular teaching rotations but would be unable to offer this experience on an annual basis. The honors program prioritizes small class sizes, capped at sixteen students per course, ensuring an intimate 8:1 student to teacher ratio. Finally, Butler is fortunate to have financial resources at its disposal to support honors programming such as tickets and transportation to see *Hamilton* in 2017 and tickets to see a local performance in 2020.

We are mindful of the generosity of Butler's honors program and aware that this kind of support might not be readily available to others. However, we do believe that many parts of our experience can be readily applicable to other institutions. First, the team-teaching component provides faculty more opportunity to work closely with students than a course taught by a single faculty member. Second, ways to reduce expenses are usually available; for instance, *Hamilton* is now widely available for students by purchasing a \$6.99/month subscription to Disney+ and allows teachers to incorporate the show as part of the curriculum when it best suits their needs. Finally, we were able to promote an interdisciplinary approach in even more depth after moving to online instruction for the second half of our spring 2020 section due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and, in our opinion, the challenges of teaching online suddenly amplified and reinforced our pedagogical goals in many respects (Hallam and Partridge, 2007). We encourage other honors programs to consider ways that online delivery of team teaching might enhance or supplement traditional face-to-face instruction.

By moving to asynchronous content delivery, we no longer were constrained to a hundred minutes a week and could share a larger volume of material that students could incorporate into the online discussion based on their own interests. For example, to facilitate our online discussion, we pre-recorded short videos using Zoom and could engage the material as equal teammates (Hallam and Partridge, 2007). In general, we recorded a short video (less than ten minutes) for each chapter assigned from Chernow in a given week. We also recorded videos to highlight a particular song from the week's listening assignments. By recording what amounted to a discussion between friends, students were able to glean our personalities, hear different perspectives, and consider the types of questions that sparked high-quality online discussion in more depth.

Recordings can be particularly helpful for engaging music online (On Tam, 2012). We incorporated widely available YouTube videos to engage the musical, which, along with recordings and asynchronous content delivery,

allowed us to point to Easter Eggs in the music while referencing and linking the original source material. For example, while discussing *Hamilton* and race, we shared a link to a video of “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” from *South Pacific* (explicitly referenced in a line that the Aaron Burr character raps in “Aaron Burr, Sir”).

Our experience generating online content together also made us mindful of a practical lesson we both learned in the classroom: the role one should play when not actively serving as the presenter in a discussion. Wentworth and Davis (2002) outline ten roles for good practice in this regard, among which we found that being a “model learner” was perhaps the most important for inspiring students. Showing students the importance of good preparation for class, respectful questioning, and active engagement with a topic outside one’s discipline had a significant effect on the students’ own preparation levels and engagement with the material. Since we were learning from one another in each class, whether face-to-face or online, students learned from each other and us as well.

Stanford professors Lanier Anderson (Philosophy) and Joshua Landy (French and Italian) have documented ten specific challenges inherent to the team-taught experience (ctd. in Leavitt, 2006). We conclude by synthesizing and condensing their ten commandments into four recommendations for future team-taught courses below:

1. *Pre-planning is critical in the team-taught classroom.* We conducted a pre-course survey to design a course specific to existing student knowledge. We both had to reach a consensus about every element of the course. Our private discussions inevitably yielded a more robust teaching environment. Additionally, we had to ensure that we took special care to apply the same grading standards to assignments if we divided them between ourselves.
2. *Presenting contrasting ideas in a model debate is a great means of introducing students to their own interdisciplinary studies.* Presenting a respectful counterpoint to your colleague’s ideas can stimulate classroom discussion and inspire a variety of student perspectives.
3. *You must not forget to inspire student participation.* By presenting a variety of perspectives and ideas, we found that our students were more willing to speak in class and share their ideas. With two instructors in the room, we had to take special care to make sure that we involved the students directly and gave them many opportunities to have their voices heard.

4. *Be flexible and learn from your colleague.* We frequently found ourselves exploring a new direction in the classroom, consistently surprising each other by a new idea that one of us presented. A willingness to improvise and stray beyond the pre-planned agenda based on a newly presented idea frequently yielded some of our most robust in-class discussions. This flexibility proved critical when forced to offer the second half of our spring 2020 course online.

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