

HAMILTON: IN CONTEXT  
Class Syllabus  
Tufts University—Spring 2018

**Instructors**

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**Class**

Wednesdays & Fridays 1:30-2:45, Dowling Hall Milmore Room

**Course Goals**

The purpose of *Hamilton: In Context* is to analyze the life story of Alexander Hamilton—immigrant, scholar, soldier, founding father, economist, scoundrel. Hamilton's unique position among the Founding Fathers rose to recent national prominence through Lin Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* in 2015. While the play pioneers new territory in musical theater genre, Hamilton's biography has captured the imagination of millions, reignited interest in the American Revolution and the humanity behind many familiar names represented in dusty textbooks. *Hamilton: In Context* seeks to answer these questions: *Why care about a person who lived 260 years ago? What can his struggles and accomplishments show us about modern American politics and society? What do we learn from this particular founding father's history and life? How does Lin-Manuel Miranda's medium influence our sense of Hamilton's relevance? Why him? Why now?*

**Required Texts and Materials**

*Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow  
*Hamilton: An American Musical* (Original Broadway Cast Recording)

These and additional course materials—including *Hamilton: The Revolution*, by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, and case studies—will be available for shared use in the Dowling Hall textbook library.

**Respect and Discourse**

Given the discussion-based nature of this course, we will foster an environment of respect for the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of all course participants and guest speakers. Some exchange regarding issues may include disagreement based on ideas but must not demean the characters or background of the individuals holding those ideas. We ask that all class participants engage in minimal technology use in order to foster an engaged working and learning environment.

**Grade\* Breakdown**

30% Participation  
30% Response Papers (2)  
40% Final Presentation

1.0 point of extra credit will be given to participants who attend the Patriot's Day reenactment in Lexington.

*\*This is a Pass/Fail course; however, doing well in assignments and participating in class discussion will ensure you achieve a Passing grade.*

### **Papers**

Class participants will submit two (2) 500 word response papers by **16 February** and **14 March** further engaging questions raised in the course discussion.

### **Plagiarism**

Tufts has a strict plagiarism policy, so give credit where credit is due! For the two papers you will be writing in class, you will use TurnItIn in Trunk to help determine the originality of your work. When papers are submitted to TurnItIn, the service will retain a copy of the submitted work in the TurnItIn database for the sole purpose of detecting plagiarism in future submitted works. Students retain copyright on their original course work. For additional information regarding Tufts' plagiarism policies, please refer to:

**<https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>**

### **Student Presentations**

Student presentations will consist of twenty (20) minute presentations (in the delivery style of your choice) on any topic *either* not covered in class (i.e. anything else regarding Hamilton) *or* expanding further into a specific topic that we discussed.

### **Absences**

Given this course is participation and discussion based, it is imperative you attend every class meeting. Two (2) absences will be allowed before additional absences begin affecting your grade. For each additional absence, 0.5 points of your final grade will be deducted.

Unforeseeable events may always occur and put you in difficult situations that may require you to miss class. In a situation in which you find it impossible to attend class, reach out to both of us and let us know of your absence. Absences due to illness will be excused with appropriate documentation.

**HAMILTON: IN CONTEXT  
TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**

Week	Dates	Topic
Week 0	Friday 19 January	Hamilton: In Context
Week 1	Wednesday 24 January Friday 26 January	Hamilton: The Immigrant
Week 2	Wednesday 31 January Friday 2 February	Mulligan: The Spy Lafayette: The French Aid
Week 3	Wednesday 7 February Friday 9 February	Laurens: The Abolitionist Hamilton: The Sickly
Week 4	Wednesday 14 February Friday 16 February	Washington: The Resilient Hamilton: The Treasurer
Week 5	Wednesday 21 February Friday 23 February	Angelica: The Implacable Eliza: The Stalwart
Week 6	Wednesday 28 February Friday 2 March	Burr: The Archenemy
Week 7	Wednesday 7 March Friday 9 March	Hamilton: The Rapper
Week 8	Wednesday 14 March	Hamilton: The Human
<i>Spring Recess</i>		
Week 9	Wednesday 28 March Friday 30 March	Hamilton & Miranda: The Writers
Week 10	Wednesday 4 April Friday 6 April	Hamilton: An American Musical
Week 11	Wednesday 11 April Friday 13 April	Student Presentations
Week 12	Wednesday 18 April Friday 20 April	Student Presentations
Week 13	Wednesday 25 April Friday 30 April	Student Presentations Hamilton: Who Tells Your Story?

**Monday 16 April, 2018: Optional Field Trip to Lexington Battle Reenactment**

## *Class Schedule Details and Assignments - Subject to change*

### **Hamilton: In Context**

*Week 0, Friday 19 January*

In which we go over the class syllabus and talk about fundamental questions for the class.

### **Hamilton: The Immigrant**

*Week 1, Wednesday 24 January & Friday 26 January*

In which we analyze the story of Hamilton as an immigrant from the Caribbean. His background and upbringing and how that shaped who he was later in life. How does late 18th Century discourse compare to present day politics and rhetoric regarding Muslims, xenophobia, refugees, and immigration in the United States? Did his immigrant status affect his relationship to the other founding fathers and his place in history?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 7-61

**Songs:** *Alexander Hamilton, My Shot*

### **Mulligan: The Spy**

*Week 2, Wednesday 31 January*

In which we look into Hercules Mulligan's role in the plot to overthrow the English rule and broader revolutionary spy networks. How did the Culper Ring and early espionage networks of the Revolution shape its outcome? How was this a precursor to active citizenship as part of the American identity?

**Readings:** Chernow's *Hamilton* p. 62-126,

University of Michigan Clements Library: Spy Letters of the American Revolution:

<http://clements.umich.edu/exhibits/online/spies/index-main2.html>.

**Songs:** *Aaron Burr, Sir, Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)*

### **Lafayette: The French Aid**

*Week 2, Friday 2 February*

In which we analyze the role of Marquis de Lafayette as a foreign aid to the efforts of Independence. We will analyze his relationship with the Founding Fathers and the promises that were made for the French Liberation movement. How did personal relationships inform early US diplomacy and how do they influence international relations today?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 126-218

**Songs:** *Guns and Ships, Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down), Cabinet Battle #2*

### **Laurens: The Abolitionist**

*Week 3, Wednesday 7 February*

In which we examine John Laurens as an early abolitionist who advocated for racial equality in South Carolina and the US. How did he influence Hamilton and Washington's views on slavery?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 220-290, "On the Origin and Persistence of Our National Shame", p 207, *Hamilton, the Revolution*.

**Songs:** *Aaron Burr, Sir, The Story of Tonight*

### **Hamilton: The Sickly**

*Week 3, Friday 9 February*

In which we explore the history of early maladies of the Caribbean and discuss the impacts of these in Hamilton's childhood and the rest of his life. We will also analyze the prevalence of culture of the 18th century; how does this part of American history and culture present itself today?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 695-709

**Songs:** *Alexander Hamilton, Ten Duel Commandments, Meet Me Inside, Wrote*

### **Washington: The Resilient**

*Week 4, Wednesday 14 February*

In which we discuss the General and First President's leadership and growth through failure and frustration, including the Continental Army's disastrous retreat in the Battle of Brooklyn. How did George Washington, the real person, learn from failure? How did it impact his decision-making and resiliency?

**Readings:** Chapter 21 "Disaster" of Chernow's *Washington, a Life*.

**Songs:** *Right Hand Man, Meet Me Inside, History Has Its Eyes On You, One Last Time*

### **Hamilton: The Treasurer**

*Week 4, Friday 16 February*

In which we discuss Hamilton's political influence as treasury secretary in the Washington administration. How have his policies and systems endured? How was his success received in the new republic and why did he become a polarizing figure?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 344-480

**Songs:** *Cabinet Battle #1, Cabinet Battle #2, The Room Where it Happens*

### **Angelica: The Implacable**

*Week 5, Wednesday 21 February*

In which we examine the influence of Angelica Schuyler Church on the new republic and on Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. How did Schuyler shape and influence American policies from the role she occupied? How is her portrayal in *Hamilton an American Musical* influenced by the gender norm of her time and by today's?

**Readings:** Klotz, Kelsey "Hamilton is Innovative, but not Quite Revolutionary."

February 2017 *The Common Reader*:

<https://commonreader.wustl.edu/c/hamilton-innovative-not-quite-revolutionary/>,

"Hamilton," *The Feminist Spectator*, February 24, 2016:

<http://feministspectator.princeton.edu/2016/02/24/hamilton/>

**Songs:** *The Schuyler Sisters, Satisfied, Take a Break* Eliza: *The Stalwart*

### **Eliza: The Stalwart**

*Week 5, Friday 23 February*

In which we discuss Eliza Hamilton's role in Hamilton's life and her portrayal in *Hamilton an American Musical*. In what ways and why did she "write herself out of the narrative" and then put herself back in? How did the Reynolds Papers scandal set precedent in American tabloids and political intrigue? To what extent is Eliza's portrayal sympathetic, complex, and reflective of gender roles of her time and our own?

**Readings:** p. 526-542, 623-731

**Songs:** *The Schuyler Sisters, Helpless, That Would Be Enough, Take a Break, Burn, The Reynolds Papers, It's Quiet Uptown, Best of Wives and Best of Women, The World Was Wide Enough*

### **Burr: The Archenemy**

*Week 6, Wednesday 28 February & Friday 2 March*

In which we discuss Aaron Burr's role as a rival in Hamilton's life, including Burr's relative caution and vacillation on political issues. Analyze Burr's role in early US presidential elections, particularly the election of 1800. In the soundtrack and show, how is his role as villain complicated by his outsider status? Is he a sympathetic character?

**Readings:** *Hamilton*, p. 607- 722

**Songs:** *Aaron Burr, Sir, Wait For It, Dear Theodosia, The Room Where It Happens, The Election of 1800, Your Obedient Servant, The World Was Wide Enough*

### **Hamilton: The Rapper**

*Week 7, Wednesday 7 March & Friday 9 March*

In which we analyze music as a medium to bring history and culture to the masses and why Lin-Manuel Miranda approached the musical with many different genres. How do we contextualize *Hamilton an American Musical* within musical theater history? We will dig deeper into the references to Broadway and Classic 1990s rap.

**Readings:** *Hamilton, The Revolution*

**Songs:** *My Shot, Guns and Ships*

### **Hamilton: The Human**

*Week 8, Wednesday 14 March*

In which we analyze Hamilton outside of work, his lack of work-life balance and what that implied for his mental health—and the role of mental health, delusion, and stress in the early republic and in the current political scene.

**Readings:** TBD

**Songs:** *Non-Stop, Take a Break, Say No To This, The Adams Administration, Hurricane*

### **No Class Friday 16 March**

### **Hamilton & Miranda: The Writers**

*Week 9, Wednesday 28 March & Friday 30 March*

In which we analyze both: Alexander Hamilton as a writer, what he wrote and his purpose; and analyze Lin-Manuel Miranda's work and his creative journey to transform Chernow's biography into the groundbreaking Broadway production.

**Readings:** Elberse, A, and Schoppe, J., *Hamilton an American Musical, Case Study*, July 2016, Harvard Business Review

**Songs:** *Non-Stop, Take a Break, The Reynolds Pamphlet*

### **Hamilton: An American Musical**

*Week 10, Wednesday 4 April & Friday 6 April*

In which we analyze the musical given the knowledge we have gained. We describe theatre as *safe spaces* and overview the different musical styles utilized in the show and their relevancy to specific instances/characters.

**Readings:** Mead, Rebecca, "The Renewed Relevance of Hamilton" *The New Yorker*, November 16, 2016

**Songs:** *The Whole Soundtrack*

### **Student Presentations**

*Weeks 11, 12 & 13, 11-25 April*

### **Hamilton: Who Tells Your Story?**

*Week 13, Friday 30 April*

In which we reflect on the themes raised in the course and understandings gained.