

The Hamilton Phenomenon

Edited by

Chloe Northrop

Tarrant County College

Series in American History



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Chloe Northrop

Introduction: From Nevis to New York

Chloe Northrop

Tarrant County College

The momentum of *Hamilton: An American Musical* initially appeared unstoppable. The Grammy, Tony, Pulitzer, and Oliver Award-winning musical leaped from Broadway fandom to mainstream popular culture. Infants donned onesies with “Young, Scrappy, and Hungry” emblazoned across the front, and grandparents participated in the #gramilton Instagram contest. However, the unique challenges of 2020 threatened Hamilton’s continued rise. With the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, other issues that had long been present in the United States also surfaced.¹ In addition to the ongoing pandemic, the pessimism and doubt that infects the country also menaces artistic performances and the future of live productions.² National Tours have been cancelled and rescheduled only to be postponed a second or third time to open to uncertain audiences in fall 2021. Many stage productions have announced permanent closures.³ Even the summer 2020 release of the live version of the Original Broadway Cast on the streaming service, Disney+, seems like a quaint recollection from the vantage of 2022. The arguments over American History, patriotism, and how these issues are presented are vigorously and violently contested on social media, in classrooms, and in the

¹ See Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).

² After shutting down in March, many Broadway shows began reopening in September 2021.

³ These include the musicals *Frozen*, and *Mean Girls*. They will both live on as national tours. See Thom Geier, “All the Broadway Shows Killed (and Postponed) Due to Coronavirus Shutdown,” January 7, 2021, <https://www.thewrap.com/broadway-shows-close-early-coronavirus-shutdown-hangmen-virginia-woolf>.

very halls of the United States government.⁴ The question is, does a musical like *Hamilton* have a place in our current society? With unprecedented responses to racial issues in the United States of America in summer 2020, including calls for the removal of controversial historical statues, Black Lives Matter protests, and outrage against the killing of unarmed individuals in America, this once “woke” musical now seems quite conservative to many observers. Does the “story of America then told by America now,” still have a place in current rhetoric? *The Hamilton Phenomenon* will discuss the impact of this musical on culture, scholarly studies, education, and our own lives as educators, researchers, and citizens.

Like many readers, I first encountered the *Hamilton* musical by chance. I remember in early 2015 seeing an article that Jonathan Groff, beloved Broadway star of *Spring Awakening* and the TV show *Glee*, would be starring as George III in a musical about Alexander Hamilton. Immediately incredulous about a musical focusing on the life of America’s first Treasury Secretary, I was interested but skeptical. Recalling the glazed look of my students in my survey-level United States History course at the community college of which I am employed, I did not see how anyone could muster too much excitement over funding and assumption, or the inner workings of the First Bank of the United States. Throughout 2015 I kept hearing about the musical, and, after defending my dissertation treated myself to a quick weekend trip on a budget airlines flight. I naively thought I would try out the lottery, where the fellow cash-strapped, Broadway enthusiasts line up and put their name in to see if they will be one of the lucky few to receive a front-row (or limited view depending on the production and venue) seat for a discounted price. My cousin and I gamely took the bus and subway from the airport and strolled up, ready to claim our prize. To my astonishment, the line to sign up for the lottery went around the block. I think that is when I first realized, if you will indulge me, that “this is not a moment it’s a movement.” Lin-Manuel Miranda and many of the Original Broadway Cast Members came outside for an infamous “Ham4Ham” performance that included the “Ten Duel Commandments”. Also, to commemorate the anniversary of September 11, Miranda gave a heartfelt

⁴ On Monday, January 21, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, in the last days of the presidency of Donald Trump, the *1776 Commission* released a report concerning America’s founding, in opposition to *The 1619 Project* by the New York Times. Historians soundly rejected the conclusions of the *1776 Commission*. Once Joe Biden took office, the original site, once part of the White House web page went offline. See also Kenya Evelyn, “Historians rail against Trump administration’s 1776 Commission,” January 22, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/22/1776-commission-report-trump-administration-historians>.

speech about that day that resonated with the crowd and connected the “greatest city in the world” with the tragedy that still elicited an emotional response. Unsurprisingly, we did not win the lottery, so we tried our luck with rush tickets at a different venue. More curious than ever, I left NYC with an unmet desire to see *Hamilton*.

Weeks later, while waiting for my students to turn in exams, I saw that the Cast Album had been released. I put on my headphones to see what the fuss was really all about. From the first chords, I could tell that this was something special. I reached out to my friends who were fellow Broadway lovers to see if anyone would join me for another trip up to see it in person. When all declined, I purchased one limited view seat, booked another flight on my favorite budget-friendly airline, and calculated that my funds would only cover one night at a hotel. The floor of La Guardia Airport would have to suffice for the second night. Seeing the Original Broadway Cast (sans Daveed Diggs, who was on vacation) proved to be worth the cramped seats on the bright yellow airplane, the questionable night on the airport floor, and the whirlwind trip from Dallas to NYC. Armed with my own enthusiasm, I returned and vowed to begin incorporating it into my college lectures and assignments.

As a newly-minted full-time faculty member of Tarrant County College, one of the first events that the History Department hosted in my first semester was a campus-wide lecture for Constitution Day. I suggested that we might reach out to someone who would speak about Hamilton and try to give some context for the increasingly popular musical. This proved to be a success as a professor from a neighboring University spoke about the connections between Hamilton and the U.S. Constitution to a standing-room-only crowd. Often, guest lecturers would only attract the few students longing for some extra credit in a class and a free pizza lunch. This, however, showed me how we could harness some of the energy produced by this production and contextualize it within a historical framework. Students gave the lecture high points in their evaluations.

The success in the Constitution Day Lecture caused me to research other ways in which students might learn more about our Founding Fathers through the intersection of public history and popular culture. To that end, I booked a small traveling exhibit from the Gilder Lehrman Institute, which our campus library graciously hosted. Students could look over the display at their leisure and connect it with the music emanating from their Spotify playlists. The library curated a special display of books in the collection to accompany the traveling exhibit. Like many other historians, I desired that my students, and the larger community, bolster the history disseminated through pop culture with scholarly publications.

My first assignment involving *Hamilton* predictably had mixed results. I asked my students to review the musical. Some students detailed how they were moved by listening to the album. Others stated that they would not play this music at “their worst enemy’s funeral.” Seeing the students, most of whom had never heard of *Hamilton* in early 2016, react with such emotion to the music alone made me as an educator feel like I was accomplishing something. With more accessibility due to the traveling tours, this assignment has seemed less novel throughout the semesters I have utilized it. I would later detail this assignment during the 2017 meeting of the Society of Early Americanists (SEA), and a Poster Presentation at the 2018 meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS). I remember one comment during the SEA Roundtable where a skeptical older gentleman scoffed at incorporating a Broadway musical into our classrooms. He pointed out that there were errors and the best practice would be to ignore the popularity of the production and stick to our own research. I balked at this notion. Wondering if this stemmed from my semi-outside status at academic conferences due to my employment at a community college, I challenged his point. Should we, as scholars of early American studies, ignore something that is obviously incredibly popular? I also wondered as well if this stemmed from jealousy. Scholarly publications by trained historians and scholars rarely reach the public’s attention. The commercial success of *Hamilton* was certainly enviable, but rather than ignore this phenomenon, I, like many others, sought to join the wave to discover what interesting intersections could be explored.

Throughout 2016, my personal obsession with *Hamilton* grew. Sharing the music with the uninitiated became a passion. This included my then seven-year-old niece, who could recite much of the musical with exuberance. That winter, on a cruise with my family, I realized that the local ferry could take us from our stop at St. Kitts to the neighboring island of Nevis, *Hamilton*’s birthplace. The bouncing ferry delivered us to the small Caribbean island, where we visited a local museum that had an exhibit on display detailing the life of this creole West Indian who rose to a Cabinet-level position in the United States of America’s first administration. This exhibit detailed how, after rising to such prominence, he then fell to relative obscurity until his rebirth through the musical. My family, along with a few other tourists, wandered around this small island and I wondered how many were brought by a similar desire to see this place that birthed someone who was quickly becoming a household name and figure.



Figure 0.1: Chloe Northrop, “Hamilton’s Grave at Trinity Church,” New York City, January 13, 2017.

I continued to ponder this journey as we too followed Hamilton’s path from the Caribbean to New York City a few weeks later. This trajectory seemed to be one that represented the American Dream. While walking through the halls of the Hamilton Grange, where Hamilton and his family once walked and lived

their private lives (albeit not in the exact same location), we realized that our meeting coincided with Hamilton's birthday on January 11.⁵ We were not the only pilgrims seeking to follow Hamilton's path in a relocated home that is now part of the National Park Service. Not unlike the experiences described by Julie Richter in her chapter "Thinking about 'The Room Where It Happens': Using Place to Teach about Alexander Hamilton and Early America," I desired to explore the spaces in order to gain a deeper understanding of this period. On this quest for knowledge, we encountered a gentleman from St. Croix at the "Grange." He shared with us how he visits yearly and brings items from Hamilton's early home to his burial spot at Trinity Church in Lower Manhattan. He shared how he had placed soil from Hamilton's mother Rachael Fawcett's grave in the Trinity Church memorial as a tribute to Hamilton's roots and those of his mother, who died in 1768.⁶ That year, the visitor from St. Croix had brought leaves from sugar cane plants to remind viewers of Hamilton's connection with the West Indian islands.

We later made our way to Trinity Church where we saw this display and Hamilton's grave. My family then enjoyed a viewing of the musical (sans OBC, but still as awe-inspiring, and their first). Like the theatergoers described by Kerry Goldmann in her chapter "Hamilton and Historical Memory," and Kristin Leadbetter in "Hamilton: An American (Psycho) Musical: Illusion and Identity in Two American Musicals," my privileged position allowed me to partake in these experiences with my family. Furthermore, my own journey, with different transportation, motives, and outcomes, inspired me to question both the Founding Father himself and what the musical was trying to portray.

During the long months of 2020, while reading *A Promised Land* by Barack Obama, I found myself in the same struggle as the former President. I too vacillate between hope for the future, love of America, and shame and disappointment with the failures, both past and present. Where does this musical fit in with this narrative? Should a stage production be tasked with something so monumental? What will be the enduring nature of the *Hamilton* musical? This work seeks to follow in the footsteps, while forging new paths. The 2018 work, *Historians on Hamilton*, treated readers with experts who questioned the veracity of the musical, and placed it in both theatrical and

⁵ See Noémie Despland-Lichtert, "A look at how Hamilton's tourist-flocking Grange house was moved," September 18, 2017, <https://archinect.com/news/article/150029055/a-look-at-how-hamilton-s-tourist-flocking-grange-house-was-moved>.

⁶ For more information on the efforts of the Alexander Hamilton Awareness Society, please visit: <https://www.the-aha-society.com>.

historical context.⁷ Long before any mainstream criticism, this work began to flesh out the inaccuracies in both the musical and the original source, Ron Chernow's biography on Hamilton. This groundbreaking work provided a foundation for future inquiries on this subject.⁸ The research since that publication has been fruitful as well.⁹ With the expansion of reach through the traveling tours of the musical and the scholarly talks and displays they have inspired, the interest in early America, and the intersection of theater and public history has been diverse. However, the reactions against *Hamilton*, once relegated to a more conservative sect, have expanded.

Historians have long grappled with the legacy of the Founding Fathers. These individuals, once revered as paragons of virtue, have increasingly come under negative scrutiny. With artists like Titus Kaphar crafting images of individuals like Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Andrew Jackson, modern audiences confront these stalwart figures in a new light.¹⁰ Kaphar's art situates these familiar faces in scenes that at once seem recognizable to modern audiences, but also include elements that might seem shocking to some observers. As an assignment, my students evaluate these paintings and deliver predictably diverse reactions. Seeing the nails on George Washington's face in *Shadows of Liberty* (2016, Yale University Art Gallery) with the strips of cloth hanging down from the canvas, students often ask if that is the United States' Constitution ripped up and why the artist would choose to do that. When they find out that the strips actually contain the names of enslaved individuals that the Washington's owned, a hush usually descends upon the classroom. Some are uncomfortable to see the first president, the beloved "General" from the American War for Independence, situated in a way that directly confronts his ownership of individuals in bondage. Others are pleased and state that they support this artistic inclusion that includes Washington's participation with enslavement. Kaphar's treatment of Washington is not a

⁷ Renee Christine Romano and Claire Bond Potter, *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018).

⁸ For more on Chernow's work and the historiography concerning Hamilton, see Chapter 4 in this volume.

⁹ See Lisa A. Tucker, *Hamilton and the Law: Reading Today's Most Contentious Legal Issues Through the Hit Musical* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Tiana Reed, "Artist Titus Kaphar Is Creating a New Artistic Canon; Through Work That Confronts History and Illuminates the Black Experience, Kaphar Is Breaking the Mold for Art Nonprofits at His Organization, NXTHVN," in *The Wall Street Journal, Eastern Edition*. New York, N.Y.: Dow Jones & Company Inc, 2020.

singular event for this artist, and extends to other popular Founding Fathers, Presidents, and politicians alike.

Kaphar's rendition of Thomas Jefferson has less nuance than *Shadows of Liberty*, but is no less poignant. *Behind the Myth of Benevolence* takes inspiration from Rembrandt Peale's 1800 portrait of Jefferson. Peale's iconic image flaccidly folds back from the frame, exposing a canvas underneath. The inner canvas reveals a seated black woman who is gazing at the viewer. The simple background gives way to a single pitcher on the table next to the woman. Donning a green and gold head wrap with one shoulder and knee exposed, the viewer is left to ponder the identity of the woman. While some have described her as Sally Hemings, the enslaved woman who Jefferson likely fathered children with and freed upon his death, others have pointed out the dissimilarities in appearance between the light-skinned Hemings, and the sitter for the portrait.¹¹ Kaphar herself stated that she is "more of a symbol of many of the Black women whose stories have been shrouded by the narratives of our deified founding fathers."¹² The criticism inherent in Kaphar's pieces is largely absent from *Hamilton*. *Hamilton* does criticize Virginians in *Cabinet Battle #1* for their participation with slavery. Jefferson's debut in Act Two coyly refers to "Sally," but one has to go to the *Hamilton Mixtapes* to find a more explicit reference to the Jefferson/Hemings connection. This demo, *Cabinet Battle #3* did not make the final musical. In this number, *Hamilton* crows about Jefferson: "Yet still, people follow like lemmings/All your hemming and hawing, while you're hee-hawing with Sally Hemings."¹³ The mention of slavery puts the heroes of the musical in the best light, or dances around the topic. Indeed, the issue of enslavement is scant and fleeting in *Hamilton* and serves as one of the main criticisms of the musical.

The subject of slavery and *Hamilton* did not go unnoticed by scholars and early critics of the musical. Leading scholars joined together in *Historians on Hamilton*, which was one of the first publications to critique the musical, pointing out flaws in the production.¹⁴ For instance, *Hamilton* portrays the

¹¹ See Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

¹² Victoria L. Valentine, "National Portrait Gallery: Titus Kaphar and Ken Gonzales-Day Explore 'UnSeen' Narratives in Historic Portraiture," March 28, 2018, <https://www.culturetype.com/2018/03/28/titus-kaphar-and-ken-gonzales-day-explore-unseen-narratives-in-historic-portraiture-in-new-national-portrait-gallery-exhibition>.

¹³ Lin-Manuel Miranda, "What Did I Miss?," in *Hamilton: An American Musical*; "Cabinet Battle 3 (Demo)," in *Hamilton Mixtapes*.

¹⁴ Romano and Potter, *Historians on Hamilton*.

titular character as a “revolutionary, manumission, [abolitionist],” however, new research indicates he might have indeed owned and employed enslaved individuals. Jessie Serfilippi’s recent article, “‘AS ODIIOUS AND IMMORAL A THING’ Alexander Hamilton’s Hidden History as an Enslaver,” details Hamilton’s connection with enslavement.¹⁵ Through his in-laws, the Schuylers, Serfilippi uncovers damning evidence that Hamilton was not the “manumission, abolitionist,” so sympathetically portrayed in the musical. Serfilippi notes that in Ron Chernow’s biography, and the musical *Hamilton*, that the eponymous hero’s thoughts and feeling about slavery are not up for debate. However, with the popularity of both the book and musical, such research has gained new traction and reaches a wide audience. Popular articles that discuss Serfilippi’s findings include the *New York Daily News*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *History.com*, and *The New York Times*.

Hamilton therefore has helped reestablish several Founding Fathers in popular lore, and has inspired new research, and the widespread dissemination of that research. There is no denying its impact on popular culture. In the 2021 Presidential Inauguration, National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gordon invoked lyrics from *Hamilton* in her stirring piece “The Hill We Climb.”¹⁶ The ensuing Twitter banter between Gordon and Miranda demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of both the creator himself and the lyrics he produced. With Gorman’s inaugural poem they are now both becoming a part of contemporary American history. Artistic creations are not meant to be solid facts, but they can guide observers to a new understanding, and spark curiosity.

In the years since *Hamilton* has arrived on stage, the political climate and social upheavals have demonstrated the importance of historical inquiry in dealing with our past. Building upon previous scholarly works and investigating new information, *The Hamilton Phenomenon* demonstrates the vast possibilities present using *Hamilton* as a touchpoint. This work seeks to interrogate the historical roots present in the musical, including both on the stage and in the public, how *Hamilton* has inspired scholarly research, and finally, how it has informed and stimulated pedagogical experiments in the classroom. These authors contribute to the ongoing conversation with their

¹⁵ Jessie Serfilippi, “‘As Odious and Immoral a Thing’: Alexander Hamilton’s Hidden History as an Enslaver,” Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, 2020, <https://parks.ny.gov/documents/historic-sites/SchuylerMansionAlexanderHamiltonsHiddenHistoryasanEnslaver.pdf>.

¹⁶ Sarah Bahr, “Amanda Gorman Alludes to ‘Hamilton’ in Inauguration Day Poem,” January 20, 2021, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/20/us/amanda-gorman-hamilton-inauguration-poem.html>.

varied approaches that will certainly inspire additional research and new publications.

The first section of this work, “Strike the Stage,” might at first seem at odds with opening chapters. “Strike the Stage” typically refers to the routines at the end of a production, including taking down the set and readying the items for storage or the next destination. For *The Hamilton Phenomenon*, we use this designation to refer to the deconstruction of the musical. While metaphorical, these authors interrogate themes that resonate throughout *Hamilton*. Using the musical as an embarkation point, they engage and critically examine issues that emerge from the popularity surrounding the musical, as well as in the early American period itself. Though multidisciplinary in their approaches, these authors demonstrate the opportunities present in this theme. Setting the stage, Kade Ivy’s “Dramatizing the American Revolution on the Way to *Hamilton*” uses interpretations of the American Revolution on stage, reaching back into the eighteenth century. Showcasing many theatrical productions that are far less popular and well known than *Hamilton*, Ivy demonstrates the legacy in which Miranda inserted his own inclusion into this rich history. Through interpretations of these historical plays, as well as the inclusion of these readings in an undergraduate course, Ivy engages with the popularity of the musical and encourages both students and readers to question historical memory as it relates to stage productions.

While Ivy examines several theatrical compositions in relation to early American history, memory, and performance, Kristin Leadbetter focuses on one musical, *American Psycho*, in relation to *Hamilton*. Debuting around the same time as *Hamilton*, these two productions appear to be quite different in their objectives. With New York City as the background for both pieces, the similarities between the two are fleshed out by Leadbetter, who examines the motivations behind two ambitious leads, who find themselves in conflicts with their peers over the need to distinguish themselves. Whereas one of the leads becomes a Founding Father, and the other a serial killer seems to be a stretch of the imagination, Leadbetter demonstrates how themes such as ambition, performance, and the need for recognition transcends both pieces. Although one found box office success, and the other closed after fifty-four regular performances, the comparison showcases some of the darker sides of *Hamilton* through the lens of the competing musical, *American Psycho*.

The first two chapters examine *Hamilton* through theatrical performances ranging from the eighteenth to twenty-first century, Kerry Goldmann’s “*Hamilton* as a Conservative Revolution: An American Musical Raises the Curtain on Historical Trauma and Decolonization of American Identity” employs a decolonial lens in order to critique the musical. While pointing out the cultural sensation that *Hamilton* has produced, Goldmann calls for

further theatrical performances that would perhaps build upon the success and interest of *Hamilton*, and stage a more “radical revolution” that would challenge the existing genre of American history that relies on a colonial-dominated lens and memory. By challenging theatrical performances to take into consideration works by scholars of decoloniality, Goldmann presents a striking path forward for artistic productions.

The second part of this book, “Don’t be shocked when your history book mentions me”, unveils chapters that deal with *Hamilton* through the lens of historical memory and records. These scholars utilize the popularity of *Hamilton* to inform their own research and work. The three different chapters interrogate themes ranging from historiography, fashion, and archival research, these chapters demonstrate the various ways scholars can build upon the themes, popularity, and cultural relevance of the musical to enhance their own research. This begins with Eric Medlin’s “Hamilton and the Historical Perspective”, which traces the historiographical background of how scholars have examined both Hamilton and the early American period. Chernow’s biography itself is part of this tradition and owes a great deal to the scholars whose work his builds upon. Medlin argues that the musical itself is part of a larger conversation that often gets obscured because of a few very prominent contributions. This reminds us that these canonical pieces often are a portrayal of the political climate, author’s preferences, and cultural milieu, that is often better understood in hindsight.

Larissa Knopp’s “Ladies Don’t Wear Red: Gender, Class, and Fashion in *Hamilton*” connects the costumes on stage to the fashion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While acknowledging that historical accuracy is not always the goal of musicals, due to the constraints of performing on stage, the blend that *Hamilton* strikes between the historical dress and necessities of the costume design provides an interesting entry point for analysis in this chapter. The character traits, gender, class, and status all play a role in the sartorial choices for the characters in the musical. This connection between the archives and the stage is further explored in the final chapter of this section.

“Reclaiming the Narrative: *Hamilton* as a Repertory Archive” by Kaitlin Tonti investigates the absence of women in archival records and the efforts made by historians to flesh out the experiences of women during this period. Tonti describes how women have often been the preservers of historical records while remaining curiously absent from these archives that they helped assemble. Although acknowledging the dearth of women’s voices in archival records, she notes the opportunities that are present. These include collections that house papers of women like “The Schuyler Sisters,” and how the interest in all things Hamilton has led to more individuals seeking out the

primary sources for their own consumption. Furthermore, she uncovers how the popularity of women like “Angelica, Eliza, and Peggy” has expanded to more women in early American history. Several historical institutions, like the Gilder Lehrman Institute, has harnessed such recognition in their most recent public programs. Tonti notes that while such endeavors are laudable, these privileged experiences should not represent the lives of all women during this period. Indeed, she argues that the musical itself has become a “repertory archive” due to the sheer cultural force and the position it inhabits.

These chapters represent a few of the opportunities present from coupling research in the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Early National period with *Hamilton*. With interest in this period still high and conversations around race, slavery, Founding Fathers, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution still incredibly relevant, more research will indeed continue to unravel, challenge and build upon the themes present in *Hamilton*. Some of these emerging scholars might be sitting in college and university classrooms, taking courses that focus on this period and using *Hamilton* as a departure or focal point in the course. Whereas Ivy’s chapter in the first section introduced pedagogical themes, the final three chapters, in “What is a Legacy”, present interesting ways in which *Hamilton* has inspired teaching, the creation of courses, and the restructuring of existing courses.

Shira Lurie’s detailing of her first-year seminar in “Who Tells Which Story? Teaching *Hamilton*, History, and Memory” lays the foundation for this section. Rather than using *Hamilton* as a starting point, like many others, including the Gilder Lehrman Institute, have done, Lurie instead focuses on historical representation and memory. Like Goldmann and Medlin, Lurie’s contribution invites readers to question how we remember the past as she challenges her students to view history not as written in stone and unchangeable, but as something that can be contested, questioned, and reinterpreted. Initially shocked to sacrilege *Hamilton*, these students slowly grew more comfortable with the notion of examining the themes in this musical with a more analytical gaze. Like patriotism itself, they learn that one can love something and still find fault with it and desire for circumstances to be different. Furthermore, these students are encouraged to think critically about the creation of national myths and engage in themes that emerge in the musical. These include the topics of “Founders Chic”, race, gender, slavery, and contemporary history. Lurie’s students leave this class with a more nuanced view of this transitional period through these interrogations. Such engagements allow these burgeoning scholars to feel more confident in their skills as historians and to question other strongly-held beliefs. This approach in the classroom allows students of history to participate in a first-year seminar that introduces them to historical themes that will provide a

foundation for future courses. Whereas Lurie's approach focuses on historical memory and myth-making, the next method employs a collaborative technique for first-year literature students.

“In the [class]room where it happens’: *Hamilton* Rewrites the American Literature Course” brings together two scholars from the University of Puget Sound who created an introductory course on Early American Literature. Katherine L. Curtis and Alison Tracy Hale's joint efforts resulted in an innovative course that allows these sophomores at this liberal arts college to be seduced into eighteenth-century texts through their interest in *Hamilton*. Designing this course around the life of Alexander Hamilton, they structure the texts through familiar works like Chernow's biography and include primary sources. Some of these are more well-known through the musical, like the “Reynolds Pamphlet,” others are mentioned in passing on the stage, such as the *Federalist Papers*. By viewing the facsimiles of the documents, rather than transcriptions, students begin to flirt with historical research. The assignments challenge students to engage critically while getting creative as well. Following this baptism into texts corresponding with the musical, students feel confident in the course conclusion with engaging with more contemporary criticisms.

These innovative courses demonstrate how scholars are applying distinctive approaches, and students are presented with challenges that transcend the disciplines in which they are studying. Students leave with skills that will benefit them in a variety of majors and future careers. These examples show how the liberal arts are evolving and inspiring students to question beloved beliefs and equip students with tools that will render them more civically engaged and informed.

Julie Richter challenges us to step into many of the extant spaces that Hamilton traversed. Many of the popular locations showcased in the musical are still accessible to the general public, and Richter invites the reader to both visit and critically examine these places through the lens of a traveler and historian. Although not always faithful to the original eighteenth-century structures, Richter unfolds sites that will be familiar to those who are acquainted with the musical. This allows avid fans, scholars, and interested enthusiasts to engage with eighteenth-century architecture, material culture, and historical sites. This engagement encourages an intersection of historical inquiry and pop culture.

The epilogue examines the relationship between the Walt Disney Company and the acquisition of the streaming rights for *Hamilton* on Disney+. While at first the musical might seem at odds with the other streaming opportunities on this family-friendly application, however, the history of Walt Disney and his affection for certain portrayals of early American history reveals this to be a

choice that is not out of character for Disney. Particularly in a year with scant new material due to production halts surrounding COVID-19, this procurement added fresh material and a patriotic offering for quarantined streamers.

These chapters demonstrate the diverse responses that *Hamilton* has inspired in the half decade since its debut. With a renewed public interest in eighteenth-century American history, these scholars have built upon both the success and the inquiry that this popular historically-based, yet not entirely historically-accurate stage production has encouraged. The future of stage productions and the aftermath of the criticisms that have emerged surrounding *Hamilton* are still in flux, however, the opportunities for engagement with early American history remain fresh and relevant as ever.

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A graduate of Smith College and William & Mary, **Julie Richter** has always enjoyed visiting museums and historic sites to see places where people lived and to learn about material objects that they owned and used. After working in the Historical and Architectural Research Departments at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, she began to teach classes for the National Institute of American History & Democracy, a cooperative program between Colonial Williamsburg and William & Mary that focuses on Material Culture and Public History. Richter's classes focus on American History, Women's History, Public History, and the ways in which historic sites and landscapes shaped the ways in which peoples lived their lives and key events in American History. Currently, Richter is the Director of the National Institute of American History & Democracy and a Lecturer in the Harrison Ruffin Tyler Department of History at William & Mary.

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