

# WHOSE SHOT?

## THE GENDER AND RACIAL POLITICS OF *HAMILTON*

Topics in American Social and Cultural History

21:512:408:Q1

Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00-5:20pm

Conklin Hall, Room 238

Spring 2019

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Broadway musical *Hamilton* has become a multiplatform phenomenon in a way that is completely unprecedented. Winning every award in the book, its charming creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, has become a hero to many, and a passionate advocate for various causes. But Miranda is, above all, a writer. And so was Alexander Hamilton. So, for this writing-intensive course, we will be studying a musical written about a writer, offering us numerous opportunities to explore how the craft of writing can be learned through studying—and writing about—*Hamilton*. Some of these include explorations of memory, revision, research, selection of evidence, rhetorical and representational choices, and so forth.

At the same time, even some of its biggest fans acknowledge that *Hamilton* is far from perfect. At the end of the day, after all, it is an old-school “Great White Man” story—the kind that used to typify what passed for “history.” In a play about the founding fathers, what role do women and people of color play? How does gender operate in the musical? How does casting black and brown actors affect the racial meaning for the audience? And who, exactly, is that audience?

### GOOGLE CLASSROOM

In addition to the standard Blackboard page provided for this course, you will be using Google Classroom for such things as:

- Accessing assigned readings/videos/links, etc.
- Completing the short writing assignments due each class session
- Submitting written work
- Receiving feedback on homework and other assignments

Please join Google Classroom as soon as possible, because you will need it in order to access the homework assignment for Monday’s class:

1. Visit [www.classroom.google.com](http://www.classroom.google.com)
2. Mouse over the circle in the top right corner of your screen to make sure that you are signed in using your “scarletmail” account from Rutgers (rather than any other Google or gmail account that you may have)
3. When prompted, enter the class code: **isky9il**

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

### 15% Attendance and Participation

- Attendance is required, especially as you will spend a lot of our class time workshopping each other's written work. See full details under "Policies" below.
- Each student is expected to contribute during each class, and engage in group activities. While it is perfectly normal and legitimate to have "peaks and valleys" of participation, total silence and lack of engagement will be taken into account for this portion of the grade. You will receive fair warning from me about any lack of participation on your part.

### 25% Small Writing Assignments

By midnight the night before each class, students are required to post a brief writing exercise related to that class' topic on Google Classroom. These are learning exercises, so it is more important that you submit them on time and clearly make an effort to complete them to the best of your ability, than that you do everything perfectly.

### 10% Field Trip Participation and Reflection Paper

There are two field trips for this course, of which you are required to attend one (if you attend both, you may use the second as an extra credit opportunity – see below). After the field trip (either Tuesday, February 5, 6:30-9:30 in Princeton, NJ; or the first week of April, in Lower Manhattan, date and time TBA), students will write a 2-3 page reflection on the trip, including their observations of the way that history was used, who the audience for the work seems to be, what it felt like, what kinds of questions it raised for you, as well as specific examples of how your experience relates to the class readings and conversations, and, specifically, to *Hamilton*. These reflections are due no later than one week after the field trip.

### 10% Hamilton in the News

At any point that you choose during the semester (up until the last day of class), select a news article (TV/radio clips and podcasts also work) about—or directly related to *Hamilton*, published any time in 2019. If you speak another language, please pick a news item in that language. Summarize the news item, as well as its cultural context (to the best of your ability), and draw explicit connections to what we have been reading/watching.

### 40% Essay: History in *Hamilton* and other Pop Culture

We will write this essay in three stages, over the course of the semester, refining your writing and your ideas as we go. The end product will be a well-researched, properly cited and engaging personal analysis of the meaning of the past in *Hamilton* and in another piece of pop culture of your choice.

### Extra Credit

You can boost your final grade by up to 3% by attending an event or play, or visiting a museum or historic site that is somehow related to *Hamilton*, gender, or race; and then reflecting on the experience, including a description of the event/museum (in terms of content, audience, quality, etc.), at least two pictures you took of the event/exhibit, etc., and discussion of explicit connections to the material we have covered in class. This reflection can take the form of *either*: a well-organized, proofread, spellchecked, properly cited 2-3 page paper; *or* a polished, 5-minute PowerPoint presentation to the class. I will

make note of appropriate events throughout the semester (a few are included here in the syllabus); and you are welcome to email me for approval of any other events or museums that you would like to attend for extra credit.

## POLICIES

*Academic Integrity* All assignments submitted for this class must be your own original work, and information derived from other sources—whether or not you quote it directly—must be cited appropriately. All instances of plagiarism and cheating will be investigated fully, in accordance with the Rutgers Policy of Academic Integrity (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>).

*Accommodations* If you require accommodations to meet course requirements, please inform me as early in the semester as possible. If you do not already have a Letter of Accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services to obtain one (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/>).

*Attendance* Students are expected to make every effort to attend class regularly. Excused absences are defined by the course catalog as: “illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions.”

In order for an absence to count as excused, you must:

1. Provide written documentation, ideally emailed to me as an attachment (a photograph of your note taken with your phone is ideal).
2. Complete the assignments (readings, etc) for the missed class, as well as the homework questions on Google Classroom.

After any absence—excused or unexcused—students are encouraged to meet with me during office hours (or make an appointment), to review the readings and homework questions, and get caught up on the material covered in the missed class.

For each unexcused absence beyond three, your FINAL GRADE will drop by 5%. **Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences cannot earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.**

*Communication* Unless it is a truly urgent matter, please do not approach me with questions or concerns prior to the start of class, during the time I need to set up. I may have time after class to talk, but by far the best way to communicate with me outside of class is to come to office hours—or, if you are unable to come at those times, email me to set up an appointment. Prior to emailing me with a question related to the course, please check the syllabus and Google Classroom to make sure that it is not already answered there. **I will respond to emails within 24 hours, so please plan ahead if you have a time-sensitive question related to an assignment.**

*Electronics Policy* I encourage the use of laptops and tablets in class for the purposes of accessing the readings, taking notes, and collaborating on group work. Beyond that, you are all adults and can make your own choices. I do encourage you to be considerate of those around you: taking the time to silence your cellphones, and refraining from texting, checking email, social media, etc, during class will reduce distractions for your fellow students.

*Field Trip* Because, sadly, it is impossible for us to attend *Hamilton* on Broadway, it is important that we gain some exposure to other contexts in which that time period is interpreted to the

public. For this reason, you are required to attend ONE of the two field trips in this course. If you are truly unable to join the rest of the class on the day of a field trip, you must make-up the visit within one week so that you do not fall too far behind the rest of the class. As soon as you know that you cannot join the scheduled time, please inform me, so that I can help you procure the necessary tickets at a time when you can go.

*Written Work* All written work must be submitted both in hardcopy in class AND on Google Classroom, unless otherwise specified. I prefer basic 12-point font with one-inch margins. Page and/or word limits must be adhered to – if you’ve written too much, it is important to learn how to edit your work down to the appropriate size. Late work will be penalized an automatic ½ letter grade reduction for each day (i.e., the maximum grade that can be earned on a paper that is turned in the day after it is due is an A, the following day an A-, etc.), unless an official excuse is provided.

## LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

There are two required textbooks for this course (and one optional one), which can be purchased at the campus bookstore and on Amazon:

1. Jeremy McCarter and Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton: The Revolution* (London: Little, Brown, 2016).
2. Millie Taylor and Dominic Symonds, *Studying Musical Theatre: Theory and Practice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
3. (OPTIONAL: we will be reading a few chapters from this in class): Renee C. Romano and Claire Bond Potter, eds, *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical is Restaging America’s Past* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018).

There are also four albums that you will need to have access to (many of these are on streaming services you may already subscribe to):

1. “Hamilton: An American Musical,” Original Broadway Cast Recording, 2015
2. “The Hamilton Mixtape,” various artists, 2016
3. “In the Heights,” Original Broadway Cast Recording, 2008
4. “Miss You Like Hell” Original Cast Recording, 2018

All other required materials will be posted on Google Classroom or distributed in class.

Please budget approximately \$40 to cover the fieldtrip (including roundtrip transportation from campus).

Bring your readings and a *physical* notebook in which to take notes with you to every class

You will also be asked to bring laptops/tablets from time to time

Please Note: The specific instructions of the writing assignments due every class session, which will be based on the cultural texts we have read, listened to, or watched for that day, will be distributed on Google Classroom, which is also where you will submit your work (unless otherwise instructed).

Wednesday, January 23

What is *Hamilton*? What are Gender and Racial Politics?

Monday, January 28

Getting to Know *Hamilton*

- Listen to the entire Original Broadway Cast Recording of *Hamilton*

Wednesday, January 30

Identity and *Hamilton*

- Rebecca Martinez, "Mi tierra, my testimony: a #HamilTestimonio"
- Beverly Tatum, "The Complexity of Identity: 'Who Am I?'"
- Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"

Monday, February 4

*Hamilton*'s Historiography

- Delman, "How Lin-Manuel Miranda Shapes History," *The Atlantic*
- Donatella Galella, "Racializing the American Revolution Review of the Broadway Musical *Hamilton*"

Tuesday, February 5

**Field Trip: "The Niceties" at the McCarter Theater in Princeton (arrive by 6:30pm)**

Wednesday, February 6

Slavery in Pop Culture

- Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, Debbie Reese, Kathleen T. Horning, "Much Ado About A Fine Dessert: The Cultural Politics of Representing Slavery in Children's Literature"
- Selected reviews and interviews related to "The Niceties"

Extra Credit Opportunity: "Reclaiming Black Newark" 2:30-3:50pm, Essex Room in Robeson

Monday, February 11

Making *Hamilton*

- Watch PBS documentary on *Hamilton*
- Selections from *Studying Musical Theatre*, Part I

Wednesday, February 13

#Hamilfans

- Selections from *Studying Musical Theatre*, Part I
- Selected hashtags on social media

Saturday, February 16

Extra Credit Opportunity: Marion Thompson Wright (MTW) Lecture Series, "The Erotic as Power: Sexuality and the Black Experience," Robeson, Essex Room, 9:30am-3:30pm (you need only attend and write/present on either the first half, or the second half – before or after the lunch break) Robeson, Essex Room, 9:30am

Monday, February 18

#Hamiltome, Part 1

- *Hamilton: The Revolution, Act One*

Wednesday, February 20

#Hamiltome, Part 2

- *Hamilton: The Revolution, Act One*

Monday, February 25

Paper Part 1 due: submit in class

Wednesday, February 27

Theorizing Gender

- Selections from *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*

Extra Credit Opportunity: "Black Women Writing Black Histories: Uncovering and Narrating the Enslaved Past," Robeson, Essex Room, 6-8pm

Monday, March 4

Gender and Representation in Pop Culture

- Selections from *Studying Musical Theatre*
- Catherine Allgor, "'Remember . . . I'm Your Man': Masculinity, Marriage and Gender in *Hamilton*"

Wednesday, March 6

Use of historical sources

- Alexander Hamilton, "Reynold's Pamphlet"
- Selections from *The Federalist Papers*
- Selected songs from *Hamilton* and *Hamilton Mixtape*

Monday, March 11

Theorizing Race

- Selections from *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*
- *Studying Musical Theatre, Chapter 5*

Wednesday, March 13

Blackface Minstrelsy as Context for *Hamilton*

- James McMaster, "Why *Hamilton* is Not the Revolution You Think It Is"
- Selections from Greg Tate, ed. *Everything But the Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture*
- Gene Demby, "Watching A Brown *Hamilton* With A White Audience"

**SPRING BREAK (no class, March 18 & 20)**

Monday, March 25

The Book Behind *Hamilton*

- Selections from Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*

*Wednesday, March 27*

Historians Critique Chernow...and He Responds

- William Hogeland, "From Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton* to *Hamilton: An American Musical*"
- "'Hamilton' and History: Are They In Synch?" *New York Times*

*Monday, April 1*

Paper Parts 1 and 2 due

*Wednesday, April 3*

#Ham4Ham

- "Ham4Ham: Taking *Hamilton* to the Streets" by Trevor Boffone
- Watch some examples from online compendium

*Monday, April 8*

Remixing Hamilton

- Listen to "The Hamilton Mixtape"

*Wednesday, April 10*

*Hamilton* and Slavery

- Leslie M. Harris, "The Greatest city in the World?: Slavery in New York in the Age of Hamilton"
- Lyra D. Monteiro, "Race-Conscious Casting and the Erasure of the Black Past in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*"

*Monday, April 15*

Before there was *Hamilton*

- Listen to "In the Heights"

*Wednesday, April 17*

Alternatives to *Hamilton*

- Listen to "Miss You Like Hell"

*Monday, April 22*

20<sup>th</sup> Century Plays about Slavery – before *Hamilton*

- Readings TBA

*Wednesday, April 24*

Contemporary Plays about Slavery

- Readings TBA

*Monday, April 29*

*Hamilton* in the classroom

- Readings TBA

*Wednesday, May 1*

*Hamilton and Politics*

- Lin-Manuel Miranda, "Give Puerto Rico the Chance to Thrive," *New York Times*
- Selected additional materials

[Extra Credit Opportunity]: Dates TBD: "The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda" by Ishmael Reed, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York City

*Monday, May 6*

Paper Part 3 due

*Monday, May 13*

Final Essay Due