

“Boston Harbor – A Tea-Pot Tonight!”: Teaching the Boston Tea Party through Reading, Re-Enactment, and Research

Julie Anne Sweet
Baylor University

DECEMBER 16, 2023, was the 250th anniversary of an event that has become known as the “Boston Tea Party.” In anticipation, I proposed teaching an upper-level history class during the Fall 2023 semester about that event to allow students to take a closer look at what really happened that night. In addition to the traditional approach of having students read large volumes of material and write a lengthy research paper, we would also stage a costumed interpretation of that event to educate the general public (mostly other undergraduate students, but also faculty, staff, and interested persons from the community) and to allow everyone to experience a taste of “living history.” While our activity merely hinted at what happened in Boston on that fateful night, we were all pleasantly surprised at how well it turned out and how much the audience took away from the production. Most importantly, the students enrolled in the class were able to take part in a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and they came to appreciate that learning history can take different shapes and forms—all while commemorating a pivotal historic event.

Including performance in a history class offers advantages and disadvantages.¹ In terms of advantages, it allows students to engage



Figure 1: History students on the steps of Baylor University's Tidwell Bible Building during the 2023 "Boston/Brazos Tea Party" historical re-enactment. Photograph by Robert Rogers. Courtesy of the History Department, Baylor University/Robert Rogers.

in deep research of a specific historical character in a particular time and place. In my course, after being assigned a real person who participated in the Boston Tea Party, students located any and all material about him, including his age, family status, occupation, political affiliations and opinions, and any other remotely relevant information so they could learn as much about him as possible. They also studied his role in the actual event itself or inferred his activities based on his relationships with other participants and previous political activities. The benefit of all this fact-finding and conclusion-drawing is that it allows students to undertake intense historical research with a focused objective and asks them to use as many sources and databases as they can find to develop the richest, fullest character imaginable.

All these details matter because these students would become those characters and portray them to educate an uninformed audience, not just about the historical persona, but also about the historical event itself. To succeed, students had to become well versed about all

aspects of this incident, as well as convince audience members that they fully personified the characters they were portraying. Moreover, the students needed to understand colonial mannerisms in general to make their characters appear more realistic and believable, which included learning appropriate language, phrases, gestures, and demeanor while eliminating inappropriate and modern ones. By embodying these historical characters, students were able to take part in a unique opportunity to “live” history and experience it in a very nontraditional and memorable way.

This unusual approach presents many challenges, however. The foremost difficulty is convincing everyone to take this technique seriously. Some students saw this production as a chance to goof around with history since they were essentially going to pretend to be someone else—like historical make-believe. The students needed to recognize the seriousness of this historical event, as well as our staging of it, and be aware of all the hard work they would have to put forth for its success. Some faculty and administrators scoffed at the idea and considered the concept of having students develop and become historical characters to be a frivolous activity, not scholarly enough for an upper-level college course. Audience members posed the greatest challenge, since they would have no context for our display and little to no previous exposure to the “living history” genre and, therefore, might not act or react appropriately. Without acceptance of our methodology, the entire program would fail. We could combat these problems by educating others about our intentions through advance publicity in print, on social media, and in person, but we would have to do so at every possible opportunity.

Another obstacle was budget. In order to make this event work at its utmost level, we would need colonial costumes for students to wear so that they could truly embody their characters. Expecting students to provide or purchase that type of clothing was unreasonable, and adapting modern attire to colonial standards also seemed unworkable. Haphazard costumes would only add to the burden of convincing others of the serious nature of our production and of the students’ portrayal of those historical characters. The activity could be done without costumes, especially if other instructors consider undertaking similar projects in the future and do not have the financial resources to purchase or rent them, but it would have better chances of success with actual colonial-style period clothing.²

Yet another concern was the characters themselves. Only white men participated in the Boston Tea Party (so far as we know), while the modern student body includes diverse races, ethnicities, and genders. Students who do not identify as white men would have to be willing to take on that persona, and audience members would have to accept that illusion. Age was also a consideration; the men who destroyed the tea in Boston in 1773 ranged in age from late teens to middle age, while traditional college students on average are twenty years old. Actors often have to assume roles outside their age group, however, so that concern was a minimal one. Asking students to play a character other than their preferred ethnicity and gender, though, could cause problems for those who were not willing to step outside their identity. Thanks to the trend of multi-ethnic casting in big-name stage productions like *Hamilton: An American Musical* and modern theatrical adaptations of the traditional musical *1776*, most people understand and accept this approach; nevertheless, it was an issue to take into consideration, especially in the politically charged climate in which we live today.

Finding these historical characters also posed a problem. Because the destruction of the tea was considered to be a major crime at the time, the identities of participants remained secret for decades. The famous men associated with the crucial historical events leading up to the American Revolution distanced themselves from this activity and did not take an active part in the Boston Tea Party directly. Locating the documentation necessary to provide enough material for students to work with was therefore difficult to do. Research of any kind is always a challenge, however, so rather than seeing this difficulty as an obstacle, it instead offered a unique opportunity to explore that aspect of the historical profession and add the needed scholarly component to what otherwise might look like a facetious endeavor.

I was willing to take these chances and did not allow these hindrances to stop me from taking on this unusual teaching technique. The potential benefits for the students far outweighed the drawbacks. They could learn so much about the Boston Tea Party and about colonial life in general that they otherwise could not find in a traditional history class. I was fortunate to have administrative support from my Department Chair and from the Undergraduate Studies Director of the History Department, as well as financial assistance from the History Department; without

those key ingredients, this course and this event never would have succeeded as well as it did or turned into the sensation that it ultimately became.

Creation

Fortunately, I had assembled a similar class in the past. In Spring 2020, I taught a course on the Boston Massacre Trials to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the so-called Boston Massacre, using the same basic format—lengthy readings of secondary sources and primary documents on the topic, a public performance during which students portrayed individuals who had witnessed this historical event, and a considerable research paper on a topic of the student’s choosing related to the class material—so I had a general rubric to build upon.³ This time, however, the class would focus on another historical event to draw attention to its 250th anniversary: the Boston Tea Party.

Overview of Historical Events

On December 16, 1773, a group of American colonists in disguise boarded three ships docked in Boston harbor—the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*—and destroyed 342 chests of British East India Company tea in protest against the Tea Act of 1773.⁴ This act was one of many that the British Parliament had passed to regulate trade with its American colonies. Within the prior decade, some of those regulatory acts also included taxes to raise revenue, which colonists opposed and protested through various means such as petitions, non-importation (or boycott, to use a more modern term), and intimidation of customs officials. The Tea Act is often misinterpreted as issuing a tax on tea when, in fact, it did no such thing. A tax on tea did exist, but it dated back to the Townshend Acts from 1767, most of which had been repealed in 1770 except for the tax on tea to serve as a symbol of British authority over its colonies. Colonists avoided paying this tax by using smuggled tea from Dutch traders or making tea substitutes. Because the colonists were not buying British tea, the East India Company (EIC)—the premier importer and distributor of tea in the British Empire—was in dire financial straits and faced economic collapse, which would have

On December 16, 1773,
a small band of disguised colonists threw 342 chests of tea
into the Boston Harbor to protest British policies.
This event became known as

THE BOSTON TEA PARTY



This year marks the 250th anniversary of the “Boston Tea Party.”
To commemorate that historic incident, History students will stage a
costumed interpretation of that event called:

THE BRAZOS TEA PARTY

OCT 19
3:30–5 PM

START: Front Tidwell Bible Building

END: Waco Creek Bridge

This event is free and open to the public.
It takes place outdoors and involves a half-mile walk between sites.
Audiences may observe at either end or join the protestors along the way!

 **Baylor University**
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of History

Figure 2: Flyer for the 2023 student performance of “The Brazos Tea Party” at Baylor University, marking the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party.

caused massive fallout for the imperial economy due to the EIC's extensive operations and would have resulted in substantial losses for EIC investors, many of whom were notable politicians. In May 1773, King George III signed into law the Tea Act, by which the EIC obtained exclusive rights to sell tea to the American colonies and designate its own "consignees" to sell that tea. Moreover, the EIC was exempted from any additional taxes in England and the colonies, except the one imposed by the Townshend Acts. Thus, by removing all handlers of tea in the shipping process and most of the taxes on the tea itself, EIC tea became cheaper than any other available tea, including smuggled options. The thinking among the architects of this act was that colonists would purchase the cheaper tea because it was better quality at a lesser cost, and that those additional sales would save the EIC from financial ruin and help it get rid of its excess tea supplies.

This plan made sense on paper, but it did not take into account the colonial mindset when it came to British legislation. Protests by the colonists involved more than economic factors; they also took into account issues such as real representation in imperial government (as opposed to the "virtual" representation by Members of Parliament who knew nothing about and had never been to the colonies) and respect for their rights as English citizens. Moreover, giving exclusive trading rights to the EIC and allowing them to choose their agents in the American colonies eliminated all colonists' involvement in any aspect of the tea trade and therefore infringed upon the colonists' abilities to conduct business. These issues only added to the ones that had already been raised during protests of previous legislation such as the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts. Colonists therefore used the means of protest that they had developed earlier to spread the word about this latest infringement upon their rights and prepared accordingly. Ships bearing EIC tea were turned away from the ports of New York City and Philadelphia—towns that had well-organized protest factions and colonial officials sympathetic to their cause.

Such was not the case in Boston. There, Governor Thomas Hutchinson allowed three ships to dock in the harbor while local representatives decided what to do (the fact that two of Hutchinson's sons had been appointed as tea "consignees" also factored into this decision). British law stated that after a ship had docked, it had twenty days to offload its cargo or else it would be seized by British



Figure 3: A 1789 English engraving depicts men in various styles of clothing, with three “disguised as Indians,” hurling chests into the Boston Harbor. *Americans throwing the Cargoes of the Tea Ships into the River, at Boston.* Engraving from W. D. Cooper, *History of North Americas*, 1789. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC4-538, <<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002718863/>>.

authorities. British law also stated that once a ship had entered the harbor, it could not leave until its cargo had been unloaded. Something had to be done about the contents of those three ships, and colonists—both radicals and moderates—made their opinions known at a series of meetings over the next three weeks. By the evening of December 16, the clock had almost run out, and so had the options. Governor Hutchinson refused to let the ships leave Boston without offloading their cargo, and the ship owners refused to disobey his orders and embark on their own. At the conclusion of a meeting of a group of colonists known as the “Body of the People” in the Old South Meeting House, a small band of disguised men led a crowd to Griffin’s Wharf, where the ships were docked. These men divided into three groups, boarded the ships, and destroyed the tea. Organized teams hoisted the heavy chests to the main decks, broke open the wooden, lead-lined chests using hatchets and axes,

and shoveled the loose-leaf yet tightly compacted tea overboard. Almost 93,000 pounds (46 tons) of tea valued at around £9,700 (roughly £1.5 million or \$1.7 million in 2021) went into the water.⁵ After three hours of hard labor, the men returned to their homes and vowed to keep their identities and their role in the demolition of the tea secret from everyone. Townspeople cooperated with this subterfuge, and while many if not most agreed with this destructive act, they all recognized the gravity of these actions.

Not until the 1820s did people begin to discuss this event openly, for various reasons. They wanted to protect the identities of those who had participated, and by that point in time, most of those men had passed away. They also did not want to endorse destruction of property as an acceptable form of protest, which they felt would happen if this event was celebrated or if these men were turned into folk heroes for their actions that night. By the 1820s, fifty years had passed since the United States had won its independence from the British Empire, and commemorations of the American Revolution and the events that led up to it had begun to take place around the country. Participants in the demolition of the tea felt safe enough to discuss their roles in that activity and admitted that they were part of the “tea party.” This phrase evolved from referring to the group—or “party”—of men who committed this act, to referring to the act itself, and the moniker of the “Boston Tea Party” has stuck ever since.

Overview of Class Activity

Our class sought to move beyond this trivial title and recover the “real” history of what happened that night. Close examination of this one historical event—as opposed to looking at all the acts leading up to independence—would give students the opportunity to learn about and engage in the methods that historians use to carry out their craft. This microhistorical approach would allow them to explore multiple aspects of a specific topic in depth while also investigating specific factual questions and discerning larger historical themes. This class would involve thorough study of scholarly books written about the Boston Tea Party, as well as a wide variety of primary documents from participants, observers, and commentators from that time period. Students would then be assigned the names of men who took part in the destruction of the tea that fateful night and



Figure 4: An 1846 American lithograph depicts the men entirely bare-chested and “disguised as Indians.” *The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor*. Lithograph by N. Currier, 1846. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pga-08593, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/91795889/>>.

would find out everything they could about his life before, during, and after that event. They would assume the roles of those characters and portray them before a mixed audience of students, faculty, staff, and general public to present a very loose interpretation of the “tea party” in order to educate the audience about that historical event in an interactive way. Lastly, students in the class would compose a lengthy research paper about a historical topic of interest to them that connected in some way to the Boston Tea Party in general. It was an ambitious task, but one that held much promise and could not be passed up with the 250th anniversary of the actual Boston Tea Party happening that same year.

Preparation

Because I had previously taught a similar course that received much critical acclaim, my proposal to offer another course along those same lines was immediately and enthusiastically approved by

the History Department. In fact, this new course seemed easier to put together because it only involved the History Department and its students—unlike the earlier Boston Massacre Trials course, which was a joint production between the History Department and the Law School.⁶ Moreover, this new course would also serve as a type of “pilot program” for introducing capstone courses into our curriculum. The discussion of creating capstone courses (in which students “cap” their training in the historical discipline by using various research and analytical skills learned in other classes to focus on a precise topic in a small seminar setting) as a requirement for graduating History majors had been going on within our department for years, and the possibility of implementation had recently inched closer to reality.⁷ The increased emphasis on undergraduate research in all disciplines contributed to this discussion, as did Baylor University’s push to attain Research 1 status. Revising an entire curriculum is challenging, however, and in order to provide data to support the inclusion of a capstone course, my class would help ascertain the usefulness of such an undertaking and gauge the student response to the additional workload. My proposal for this unique class also happened to coincide with a new initiative by the College of Arts & Sciences to take more innovative approaches to teaching, which this class most certainly would do because of its performance aspect. Thus, this course would satisfy several administrative objectives and, as a result, received encouraging approval.

Recruiting Students

Getting students to enroll in the course was another matter, however. Enough time had passed that all the students who had participated in the Boston Massacre Trials course had graduated, so while the faculty remembered how successful and enjoyable that experience was, the current students had no idea what we were talking about. Furthermore, this new Boston Tea Party class would require a large volume of work and therefore needed motivated and serious students who were willing to put forth the time and effort necessary to make it a success. While the whole idea of re-enacting the Boston Tea Party seemed like fun and attracted students’ attention, they needed to realize just what all would be expected of them if they chose to enroll. Having the right type of student was essential to the success of this endeavor.

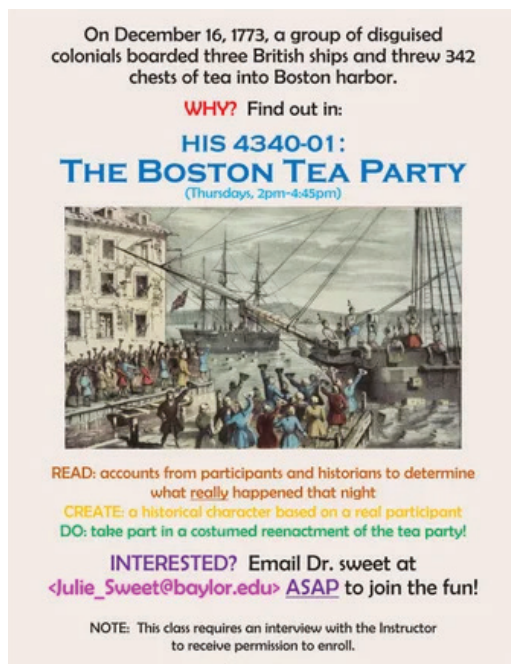


Figure 5: Digital flyer for the History Department's online course brochure.

Making students aware of the course was the first hurdle. I enlisted the support of the undergraduate advisor assigned to all History majors, as well as the History Department's Undergraduate Program Director. When those two individuals met with students during required advising appointments for class registration, they suggested the course to those students whom they felt would appreciate its unique approach and would be willing to do the extra work.⁸ I also took the traditional method of hanging flyers to advertise the course in all classrooms that hosted history classes, and further included that flyer in the History Department's online brochure that promotes each semester's history courses in a technologically savvy way that students really enjoy.⁹ I was fortunate to have taught two sections of my upper-level course on the American Revolution during the Spring 2023 semester (the semester before the one when this course would be offered) with a total of sixty students and made them aware of my special Boston Tea Party course several times. I also visited the two sections

of the “History Workshop” course (more commonly known as “Historiography”) required of all History majors to pitch this unique course and answer any questions that students might have.

Preparing Students

Because my course had such unusual requirements, I needed to meet with students before they enrolled to make sure that they were willing to undertake all the work that would be expected of them. I set up appointments with interested students and went over everything they would have to do in the course and had them sign off on each point, similar to a contract, to confirm that they were aware of what all they were getting themselves into. While most students seemed excited about the possibility of re-enacting this historical event, a few reacted with what only can be described as stage fright and decided not to enroll.¹⁰ However, rather than the public performance, the most daunting aspect of the course for many students was the large research paper and the expectations for it—namely, a unique topic and thesis supported by substantial secondary sources and primary documents. Fortunately, the vast majority of the students planned to apply to graduate school or law school and therefore saw this course as an opportunity to create the writing sample required for those applications, as well as a chance to try out the graduate seminar model upon which this course was based. In the end, I interviewed thirty-four students and had twenty that chose to enroll in the course (eleven simply decided that the course was not for them, usually because of scheduling conflicts or other obligations, and three never got back to me after their initial interview). Almost all of the students that I interviewed were History majors, but there were a few History minors who either expected to attend law school or had taken a class with me and wanted to take another one. The fact that all enrolled students had some sort of history background and interest was vitally important because I could assume that they already understood certain facts and concepts about American history and that they knew how to go about reading, researching, and writing about it. The original number of twenty registered students fell to fifteen, with several deciding not to take the course before it even began for unknown reasons and with two dropping the course after it had started once they began to experience the volume of work expected of them.

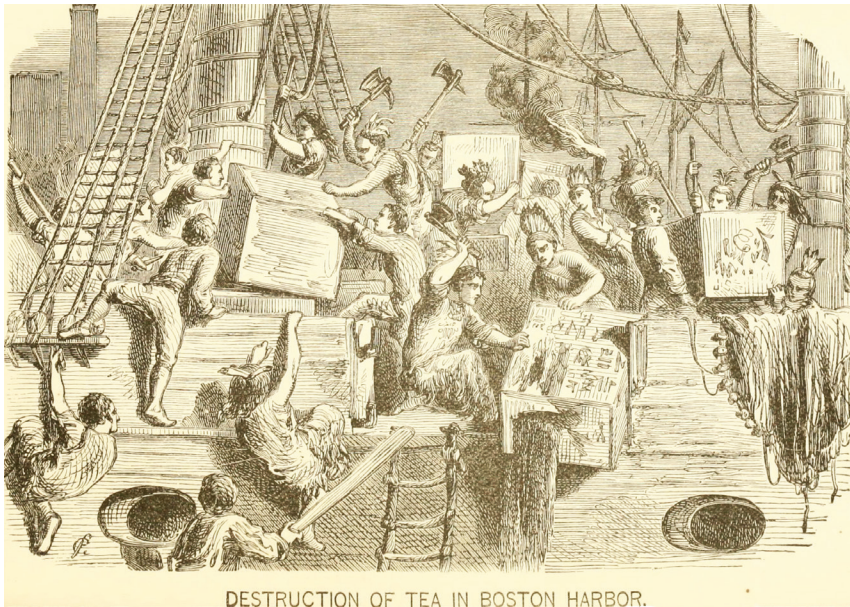


Figure 6: An 1878 American etching depicts the men in various styles of clothing, with approximately half “disguised as Indians.” Etching from James D, McCabe, *Heroes and Statesmen of America*, 1878. Wikimedia Commons, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heroes_and_statesmen_of_America,_a_popular_book_of_American_biography_\(1878\)_-\(14740965176\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heroes_and_statesmen_of_America,_a_popular_book_of_American_biography_(1878)_-(14740965176).jpg)>.

Course Structure

Before the course commenced, I had work of my own to complete. While I had a general idea of how the course would be organized, I needed to formalize that arrangement and accumulate all the assigned readings (see **Appendix A** for the course syllabus). The first third of the course would involve reading secondary sources about the colonial situation just prior to the Boston Tea Party and about the event itself, as well as studying primary documents from persons who claimed to be there, famous historical figures associated with the event, and media coverage of the incident. Secondary materials were easy to find; there are countless textbooks that provide good overviews of imperial relations between Great Britain and its American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s, and there are a few books dedicated just to the topic of the Boston Tea Party,

although only two had enough detail and included enough serious scholarship for me to be able to use.¹¹ Locating primary documents, on the other hand, was a challenge. As mentioned above, since participation in the Boston Tea Party was a major crime and those who took part in the destruction of the tea and those who observed that criminal activity were sworn to secrecy, documents chronicling what happened that night are few and far between. There is no collection of those sources; instead, I had to find and collect them myself. Oftentimes, those sources consisted of a few sentences or a paragraph or two from persons unknown to history. Relying on the famous men who led colonial protests also posed problems, since they distanced themselves from this event and made sure not to be anywhere near Griffin's Wharf that night in order to have "plausible deniability," as it is known today. A few sources commented about what had happened after the fact, but none got their hands dirty (literally). They did, however, participate in the public discussions of what to do with the tea once the ships arrived in Boston harbor, so I could use those materials along with the notes and minutes from the meetings of the "Body of the People" at the Old South Meeting House—each of which have been published in historical journals.¹² A skilled librarian taught me to use a database to access early American newspapers, and that turned into a separate exercise for students to do. Finding appropriate and relevant materials for this class was challenging, and putting them together in an organized fashion was up to me to do on my own.

The middle third of the course would be devoted to developing and portraying historical characters who took part in the destruction of the tea that night. Each student would be assigned a man who claimed to have been there, and would then have to research anything and everything that they could find about him so they could become that character. I therefore had to produce a list of these men, and there had to be enough basic information about them so students had somewhere to start. Because these students were going to portray these characters in front of an audience, I set aside class periods and acquired reading materials to cover topics such as public speaking and historical re-enacting to enable them to interact with the audience while staying true to their character and the time period.¹³ They were also going to perform in colonial clothing, so I contacted the costume rental company that I had used previously



Figure 7: An 1888 American etching depicts the men entirely bare-chested and “disguised as Indians.” Etching from Henry C. Watson, *The Boston Tea Party*, 1888. Wikimedia Commons, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Boston_tea_party_\(1888\)_ \(14801659253\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Boston_tea_party_(1888)_ (14801659253).jpg)>.

and furnished them with details about the type of clothing needed, as well as the students' measurements (which they provided during the first week of classes).¹⁴ I also reserved a day for dress rehearsal so the students would have a chance to try out their colonial clothes and get accustomed to them, as well as a day for the re-enactment itself, which would take place during class time so as not to interfere with students' schedules. This portion of the course would conclude with a period to "debrief" or go over what all we had accomplished, as well as evaluate what worked and what did not during the event.

The last third of the course involved the research paper. Rather than gathering as a group, students would set up individual appointments with me to go over their topic, their plan of action, and their timeline for completion. Since each student had a different level of familiarity with conducting research and composing a large paper, I would be able to work with them one-on-one and coach them accordingly. Moreover, with no additional reading assignments or class meetings, students could use that time to work on their research papers, and I could use the time usually devoted to class preparation to answering questions and reviewing outlines and drafts. Students would submit their final products on the last day of class, bringing the course to its conclusion and fulfilling its original goal—namely, providing a "capstone" to their experience as a History student.

In addition to providing a syllabus listing the course requirements and the topics for each class period, I created a Canvas page that included modules for each class period where students could access the excerpts that I had located and scanned for them to read. Reading assignments varied in length; those from secondary sources like textbooks usually included about ten to fifteen chapters, while those that involved primary documents were shorter in length yet greater in variety and difficulty. Students also had to complete smaller writing assignments such as a book review, a character sketch, and an "after-action report" in addition to the large research paper to help them engage with the material more directly and to give me something with which to hold them accountable and measure their progress. I had all of those components ready to go two weeks before the semester began so that students were well aware of what all was expected of them for the entirety of this class and could get started on the voluminous readings.



Figure 8: A 1904 mural from the State House in Boston depicts the men entirely “disguised as Indians,” many wearing more elaborate headwear. Postcard featuring a photograph of a mural by Robert Reid, 1904. Wikimedia Commons, <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Boston_Tea_Party,_State_House_Mural,_Boston,_Mass_\(NYPL_b12647398-73818\).tiff](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Boston_Tea_Party,_State_House_Mural,_Boston,_Mass_(NYPL_b12647398-73818).tiff)>.

Implementation

Historical Sources

While this course featured some unusual components, the first five weeks followed a traditional seminar format where students completed a large amount of reading that we discussed at length and in depth.¹⁵ We began with an overview of the imperial situation so we could understand the context of the events that were about to happen, as well as the reactions to them. It was important to get

students to remember the time period and be aware of the political, social, economic, and cultural constraints that existed at that time and in the colonies so they could appreciate why colonists felt and reacted the ways that they did. Moreover, since these students would eventually be portraying some of those colonists, all of this material served as deep background for how those men would act and why. We then spent a class period on the so-called Boston Tea Party itself, and students read the most recent academic book on the topic and wrote a book review on it. They also read most of a very scholarly and well-researched yet older and out-of-print book to serve as a compare-and-contrast of different writing and research styles, as well as to offer another perspective on the event itself. I was impressed with how students closely read both books and were quick to question each author's assumptions and agendas on both general and specific points. The class felt and operated like a graduate seminar that day, and students engaged in discussion vigorously and seriously.

We then moved into primary documents and spent a day looking at many individual accounts of persons who claimed to have taken part or witnessed the destruction of the tea. By closely examining what these men claimed to have done, we were able to understand what most likely happened that night and debunk certain historical myths. Firstly, while the title "Boston Tea Party" connotes a frivolous free-for-all, the actual activity that occurred that night was anything but. Townspeople had met several times for almost three weeks trying to reach some sort of compromise when it came to dealing with the three ships carrying East India Company tea that were docked in Boston harbor. They offered several possible peaceful solutions, none of which British officials accepted as alternatives to offloading the tea. They also considered more radical options such as burning the ships. Instead, they chose to destroy the tea, not by fire, but by throwing it into the harbor. The men who took part in the destruction of the tea were well organized into three crews (one for each ship) with specific jobs to do, and they were all sworn to secrecy afterwards and maintained that secrecy for decades. All of these facts fly in the face of the trivial title of a "tea party."

Perhaps the most popular myth surrounding the Boston Tea Party is that the colonists "dressed like Indians." Almost all illustrations portraying the Boston Tea Party have bare-chested men bedecked

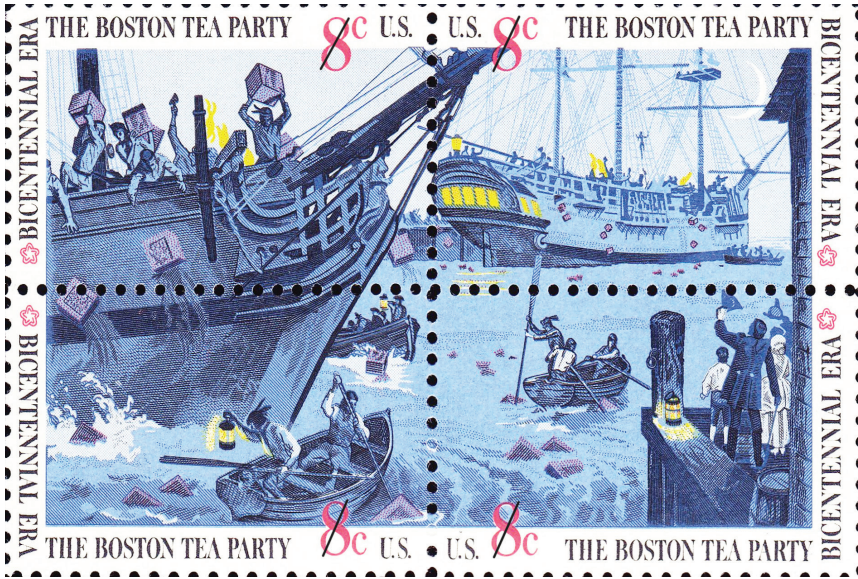


Figure 9: A 1973 postage stamp depicts the men almost exclusively “disguised as Indians.” Postage stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service, 1973. Wikimedia Commons, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Boston_Tea_Party-1973_issue-3c.jpg> (image modified).

with face paint, headbands, and feathers, when—according to the primary accounts—that was not the case. Instead, some participants smudged their faces with charcoal, ash, and soot to disguise their faces and shrouded themselves in blankets to cover any identifiable clothing that they may have been wearing. Many sources made no comment at all about any sort of disguise and therefore probably did not have had one. A few recollected that they “gave the appearance of Indians” but provided no details about what “the appearance” included. Individuals asked afterwards about what had happened that night maintained the façade that the act had been carried out by Indians, although no one seriously believed that. Nor was anyone trying to scapegoat the Indians and lay the blame on them. As a class, we came to conclude that the “Indian” designation was more of generic term to refer to those participants that became misinterpreted over time. It turned into a case of “when forced to pick between truth and legend, print the legend,” and the idea of colonists dressed like Indians has stuck ever since.¹⁶

On that same day, we also looked at colonial newspapers. Rather than providing students with those materials, though, I had them access the Early American Newspapers database, choose one Boston newspaper from the six being published at the time, and look through the weekly issues for November 1773, December 1773, and January 1774 to find out what they printed about the tea problem and how they covered the destruction of the tea. Students really enjoyed this assignment because of its investigative element, but also because of the material that they found. They were surprised to see how biased the reporting was and to realize that not everyone was in favor of this destructive act. They also liked finding other references to tea, such as suggestions for tea substitutes and the sale and use of all the various items needed to serve tea. They got distracted by other news items in the newspapers, such as poetry, obituaries, letters to the editor, advertisements, and more. I could have spent an entire class period just on colonial newspapers if I had known that the students were going to take such an interest in them.¹⁷

Historical Characters

Our last “traditional” class day focused on the famous men, or “Founding Fathers,” who were associated with the Boston Tea Party and other colonial protests, and we delved into what they thought about this event. We looked specifically at writings by John Hancock, John Adams, Josiah Quincy, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Hutchinson, and we were surprised to see how little these men wrote about the destruction of the tea.¹⁸ It made us realize that while the Boston Tea Party is considered to be “a big deal” in the general narrative of American history nowadays, that was not necessarily the case at the time. Moreover, since these men did not specifically participate in the event, they had little direct knowledge about it. It also occurred early in their historical careers, which allowed students to see a different side of these legendary characters before they took part in the activities for which they were more famous. By reading these men’s actual writings, students had the opportunity to see exactly what they thought about this event. They were most surprised by Samuel Adams, who is often portrayed as an impulsive fanatical hothead when, in actuality, he was very thoughtful in his decisions and erudite in his writings.

Hutchinson's comments were particularly interesting because few students and historians consider the vital role he played in this event since he was on the opposing side. Hutchinson could have averted the entire standoff by forbidding the ships to dock in the first place like in New York City and Philadelphia or by authorizing their departure after their arrival but before they offloaded their cargo. Instead, he deliberately chose not to consider either option. After the destruction of the tea, Hutchinson looked to lay blame on anyone but himself and expressed distaste and disgust for those colonial radicals—a very different perspective from that traditionally found in most history books.

I also used this day to introduce students to the genre of biography and had them read four short excerpts from recent biographies about Samuel Adams to show how different authors have different perspectives and opinions about the same man, despite using the same documents.¹⁹ Students really liked this assignment as well and had fun choosing their “favorite” version and comparing and contrasting the four biographies. A secondary purpose to this assignment was to get students to start thinking about biography as a form of writing since they would soon be composing their own versions based on their designated historical characters.

We ended that day with students finding out which character they would be portraying. I had gotten to know them during those first four weeks of classes and tried to assign characters that each student could connect with in some way, such as with their political and professional interests or their personality. One important qualification that we had to take into account, however, was that only men participated in public affairs in colonial times; therefore, all students regardless of gender affiliation had to portray men, but none expressed any concerns with that issue. Students were very excited to receive their characters and get busy finding information about them. Most of these historical figures, however, were unknown except for an occasional reference in a secondary source or in a primary document that was usually authored by someone else and was therefore a secondhand account. None of these characters left behind any documentation of their own, which only added to the difficulties. Instead, students had to be creative and make various assumptions about these men based on their occupations and political affiliations, and work from there.

Students greatly enjoyed the scavenger hunt to find obscure facts about their characters and the freedom to use some poetic license when it came to filling in the blanks about their individual. The assignment was less serious than a formal research paper, and more personal because the students knew that they would ultimately have to embody their characters. Each student composed an “eyewitness account,” which was a combination of character sketch that described the man’s background and witness testimony that told what he did that night. Most students put forth much time and effort in creating very detailed characters, while a few only provided the basic facts. This varied response is typical of students in all classes, though, and was to be expected.

Performance Preparation

While students learned about their characters, our class pivoted to the performance section. There was a day devoted to public speaking, which included lengthy excerpts from self-help books about that topic, and we spent that class period doing various vocal exercises as well as playing some improvisation games, mostly to teach students to think on their feet and get used to speaking in front of a group. They also began to consider themselves as a team or as a “company” (to use a theater term) and worked together to help each other overcome nervousness. Another day was set aside for historical re-enacting. One student had extensive experience with this form of presentation from a summer job with the National Park Service, and I had worked for Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum, while in graduate school. I also found a helpful source that discussed not just developing a historical character, but also portraying him accurately, and I located some short articles about colonial vocabulary and mannerisms that I expected students to integrate into their performances. We spent that class period “in character,” learning about each other and our various political opinions and activities, practicing various colonial mannerisms to make portrayals more “real,” and continuing work on how to interact together as a unit with the extra challenge of a specific historical context.

Our next class period was for dress rehearsal, during which students received their costumes and further developed their characters with this additional element. This day was particularly awkward for



Figure 10: The Class of 1773 – Photo of student historical re-enactors taken during dress rehearsal. The Baylor University History Department used this group picture on the front steps of Tidwell Bible Building, where “The Brazos Tea Party” would begin, as advertising for the event. Courtesy of the History Department, Baylor University.

female students who were unaccustomed to certain pieces of male clothing, but in the end, the colonial costumes helped all students become more in tune with the time period. The costuming company provided shirts, breeches, waistcoats, and coats, while students had to supply white stockings and black or brown shoes. The students also had to agree to not wear excessive jewelry and makeup and to tie long hair back in a low ponytail like men would have done in colonial times. We decided not to smudge our faces like the original colonists had done because we feared that the meaning would be misinterpreted and we did not want to damage the rental costumes.²⁰ We did more interactive activities to improve our characters and performance, and spent some time “playing” in our colonial clothes to get comfortable in them. Students were allowed to take pictures and videos and to post them on personal and departmental social media accounts to serve as advertising and to allow them to have their moment. It was fun to watch college students play “dress up,” but when it came time to be serious, they stayed true to their characters. During all three of these class periods, we spent a significant amount of time outside to allow students to practice voice projection so that the audience could hear what we were discussing and doing. Moreover, students needed to get used to standing outside in the middle of the afternoon for a long period of time so that they would be prepared to do so on the day of the event itself.

During these weeks of character preparation, I was busy figuring out where this event would take place. Baylor University sits along the Brazos River, so it had always been assumed that we would throw tea into the Brazos. The event even took on the nickname of “The Brazos Tea Party” to distinguish it from its Boston counterpart. How exactly that scenario would happen was up to me. I knew that we would start on the steps of Tidwell Bible Building because it houses the History Department and most of our history classes (including this one). Once the costumed students decided to destroy the tea, they would lead a procession to the designated site where the destruction of the tea would occur. After visiting several locations on campus, I decided to use a smaller bridge over a tributary of the Brazos River known as Waco Creek to serve as our final destination. The bridge would stand in as a substitute for both Griffin’s Wharf and the ships that held the tea; costumed students would “board” the bridge, break open the tea chests, and pour the contents over the side

of the bridge and into the creek. This smaller bridge allowed for a more intimate experience for both students and audience members compared to other larger bridges that spanned the Brazos River. Moreover, the route that the procession would take between the building and the bridge was entirely on campus and therefore did not require crossing any wide or busy streets. Instead, we would keep mostly to sidewalks or parking lots. As an added bonus, the distance between these two locations just happened to be the same as the distance between the Old South Meeting House, where the original colonists had convened to discuss the tea situation, and Griffin's Wharf, where the ships were docked. I contacted the campus police department and parking services about this event, and neither saw any problems with it nor the need for any of their staff to be involved.

I also needed to create the "tea chests" and figure out what exactly would be in them. Historical tea chests measured 20" by 20" by 30", were made of wood and lined with lead to prevent loose tea from leaking out and moisture from leaking in, and weighed 360 pounds. The tea chests on board the *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor*, and *Beaver* were most likely half-sized, but were still substantial in terms of construction and weight. For our "tea chests," I used 100 extra-small packing boxes from Home Depot because they were the closest in size to the actual half-size tea chest. I slit each box down the side, turned it inside out to get rid of any modern markings, assembled the box with brown packing tape, spray painted each box with three shades of brown to make it look like wood, and affixed the symbol of the East India Company to the side. For possible contents for our "tea chests," I contacted one of the Waco city councilmembers (who happened to be a former History major and Baylor graduate), and he asked both the Water Department and Public Utilities what substance could be safely dumped into the river without causing any damage to the environment. As it turned out, there is no such substance. According to the Clean Water Act of 1972, it is illegal to discharge any pollutant into a public waterway.²¹ Instead, my students would have to pretend to pour the contents of the empty "tea chests" over the side of the bridge, and the audience would have to use its imagination to visualize what was happening. On the day of the actual performance, these "tea chests" would be stacked to one side of the bridge, and costumed students would break them

open and mimic dumping out the contents. They would simply tear the “tea chests” open rather than using axes and hatchets like the original colonists, since such tools would not be necessary on cardboard boxes and having students carry those tools openly across campus would have attracted the wrong sort of attention. All of these accommodations were “cheats” that we were going to have to make to pull off this event; they made it less realistic, but they had to be done.

Production

On the day of performance, we were fortunate to have good weather, with sunshine and temperatures in the low 80s.²² There was a south wind at about 15-20 mph, which is fairly typical of this region of the country, so we had to make sure that the “tea chests” did not blow away while they were stacked on the bridge before the event and that costumed students kept tight hold while destroying them so that they did not fall into the water below. Our event was scheduled for 3:30 p.m., when most students were out of classes so that they could come watch the event, but that late afternoon hour also meant that the temperature would be at its warmest, especially for the students in layers of colonial costume. We had had similar weather conditions during the previous class periods that had been held outside, so that they knew what to expect, but we still had to be prepared in case of emergency and had water available at the start and end points of the event. I also told students that they could opt out of wearing their heavy colonial coats, but only two chose to do so.

We gathered at our usual class time of 2:00 p.m., donned our costumes, and went over the sequence of events for the performance, as well as worked out some of the last-minute details of who would do and say what and when. While most of the performance would be improvised and involve individual conversations with audience members, we thought that we should have some basic idea of how the first section of the event (which would represent the the “Body of the People” meeting when they came to the decision to destroy the tea) would play out and make sure that all political positions were represented. We also divided into three crews, just like the original colonists did, so that not everyone was on the bridge destroying

“tea chests” at the same time to prolong the event, to let all the characters be seen by the audience, and to allow those who were not on the bridge to explain to the audience what was happening and provide context. At 3:15 p.m., we headed outside to the front of the building where our event would take place to catch students as they were exiting their afternoon classes and begin interacting with audience members as they arrived.

Because there were so few people in the area at that moment, costumed students broke into small groups and began discussing colonial politics and drawing audience members into their conversations. Several jumped straight into the issue at hand and asked each other’s and attendees’ opinions about the allegedly oppressive British policies that had been imposed upon the colonies. As more people began to arrive, costumed students introduced themselves and worked in certain details about their occupations and their political views while informing newcomers about what was happening. One student went so far as to share some of the finer points of his trade as a shoemaker, thus educating his listeners about that craft, and he even managed to persuade them to consider apprenticing in that profession. The few history professors in attendance also asked pointed questions of the costumed students about their personas and their opinions on “current” events, which gave them the opportunity to share and expound upon those details. Once audience members caught on to the general idea of how these interactions should operate, conversations became much easier and covered many different subjects, while staying within our time period and maintaining focus on the matter under discussion.

While the costumed students mingled with the growing crowd, student workers from the History Department distributed programs that gave some context to the event about to unfold and provided directions between the two locations (see **Appendix B** for partial program). Reporters and photographers from the campus and local newspapers and television stations also interviewed the costumed students, who stayed in character despite the modern distractions. The audience quickly grew and overtook the entire area between the front of the building and the street, with the crowd including mostly students, but also some faculty and administrators, as well as interested individuals from the community. (I found out afterwards that four students had their parents in attendance, with one student’s

father coming all the way from St. Louis to see it.) Costumed students continued to work their way through the crowd and broke off into pairs or individuals so they could speak to as many audience members as possible. They maintained their colonial stance for the most part, unless they found it more appropriate to answer in modern terms depending on the circumstance.

Just after 3:30 p.m., we moved the crowd close to the front of the building so that we could stand on the steps in order to be seen and heard by the audience, which had grown to over 200 people. I began with a brief introduction covering some general announcements and setting the stage (pun intended) for why these colonists had gathered today and were so outraged about having ships laden with tea docked in the harbor. The costumed students then argued among themselves about this issue and proposed various possible options for what to do with the tea. More moderate colonists wanted to wait and see what the governor would do or negotiate further with the ship owners and convince them to leave the port without offloading their tea to avoid a confrontation. More radical colonists suggested destroying the ships or the tea by fire or some other means. They discussed the merits of these different options and then asked various members of the audience for their opinions. Most observers favored destruction, and some even advocated violence against anyone associated with the tea, including ship owners and captains. The general consensus, however, was for the tea to be destroyed in some way.

After allowing this debate to go on for about fifteen minutes, I brought forth a letter from Governor Thomas Hutchinson with three quotations that three costumed students read aloud. The first stated that his decision must stay within the bounds of the law, the second denied departure to the three ships in the harbor, and the third denounced the assembly as “unlawful” and threatened that if they continued to meet, it would be “at your utmost peril.”²³ This news served as the signal for the costumed colonists to call out, “Boston Harbor – a tea-pot tonight!” and “Hurrah for Griffin’s Wharf!” just like the original colonists, and to herd the audience to the bridge where the “tea chests” were being stored. I led the crowd with a tall wooden pole topped with a red knit “liberty cap” to mimic a “liberty pole” and to help guide the audience on our journey, while costumed students wandered through the crowd to discuss what was happening, give directions, and answer questions.

Because the crowd was so large, costumed students engaged in individual conversations, which gave them another opportunity to share information about their characters. By this point, everyone understood the technique that we were using and were willing to play along and ask specific questions. Many discussed the debate that had just happened and speculated about what was to come. In addition to carrying on these smaller conversations, costumed students interspersed themselves among the crowd to watch out for stragglers and stay aware of the surroundings. We also gained followers along the way from curious students wondering what was happening, so costumed students needed to explain the situation to these newcomers and summarize the event so far. As it turned out, the crowd was too big to stay confined to a small sidewalk alongside a short street during one section of the procession, so we ended up having to occupy the whole street for that one block. One costumed student realized the problem and stood in the only intersection along the route to stop any incoming vehicles while the procession passed by. Fortunately, there was very little traffic because of the late hour and its location in the middle of campus, but it still posed an unanticipated safety hazard.

As we approached the bridge, the first crew of costumed students came to the front, while the rest of us tried to steer the crowd to the left side to watch the destruction of the “tea chests” from the sidewalk rather than joining the crew on the bridge. This maneuver proved to be very difficult because of the size of the crowd, but other costumed students stepped forward to direct people. Once the action began on the bridge, the audience realized where they needed to be in order to watch what was happening. However, the first crew emptied the “tea chests” on the wrong side of the bridge, which made it impossible to see them and caused further confusion. The situation sorted itself out fairly quickly, but it did cause a moment of panic for those of us involved in the production.

The destruction of the tea looked impressive, even if the “tea chests” were fake and there was nothing inside them. The costumed students did their best to act like they were breaking open real tea chests and pouring tea into the harbor like their characters would have done 250 years ago, and some really performed their parts well. Audience members watching from close by understood what was happening and were willing to play along. Costumed students

mingled with the audience before and after the destruction of the “tea chests” to explain what was happening, as well as answer questions (including why the boxes were empty). A few people even asked for more historical context about the actual Boston Tea Party and about what happened afterwards as punishment for this crime. I concluded the event with a few final remarks, and costumed students posed for pictures, answered more questions, and conducted a few interviews before returning to Tidwell, changing their clothes, and resuming their modern lives. The whole performance took just over an hour, including the discussions with audience members before the event formally began and the discussions after it had officially ended.

Resumption

Even though the re-enactment was over, the class itself was not. In class that following week, we mostly discussed what worked and what did not work during the event, and we shared stories about the audience members that we had encountered and about each other’s performances. Everyone agreed that it was an overwhelming success. The Waco and campus press published frontpage stories as well as short television reports the next day, and they included many pictures and interviews with students.²⁴ Social media accounts from the History Department and the College of Arts & Sciences also shared numerous posts from the event.²⁵ Students talked about it for weeks afterwards informally and always expressed positive comments.

Students enrolled in the class really enjoyed engaging with individual audience members while in character throughout the entire event and appreciated this unique way to teach and do history. A few mentioned the initial challenges that they faced when starting a conversation with audience members who did not understand that they were portraying a colonial character, but as more people arrived and participated, everyone caught on to the act.²⁶ Playing off a fellow costumed student usually helped draw in audience members, as well as put themselves at ease.²⁷ All students were impressed with the seriousness of the audience members in terms of the questions that they asked and their behavior throughout the entire event. Everyone seemed willing to play along, and most got very involved with what all was happening.²⁸ One student mentioned how she enjoyed the latitude that being in character gave her to speak freely and openly

on political matters and make rather outrageous comments that she would not in real life. Several students also noted that “you can get away with a lot when you are in costume” and shared that they found it easier to approach strangers while in costume and character. As the instructor, I noticed how they took for granted all the hard work that they had done in the previous weeks to learn all the background information about the Boston Tea Party and about their characters and how they had really made that history their own.²⁹ They all did a fabulous job—better than I ever could have imagined.

We were amazed at the size of the crowd; none of us could have predicted that more than 200 people would show up. We were also surprised that most of them took part in the procession from Tidwell to the bridge, and none of us expected to pick up more followers along the way. The large audience posed problems when it came to being heard by the entire group during the discussion on the front steps of Tidwell; we had practiced voice projection, but not on such a large scale. It also caused concern with crowd control during the actual procession itself. We were very lucky that nothing went wrong and no one got hurt or had any troubles along the way. Looking back, I should have worked more closely with campus police to secure the entire procession route, regardless of audience size, in the interest of the safety of everyone involved.

We were also supposed to discuss the issue of commemoration during this class period—namely, why certain events are memorialized, how they are celebrated, and how those celebrations have changed over time—but students were no longer interested in analyzing historical performances or processions.³⁰ As one student stated in class, “I feel like this has become more like a theater class than a history class.” Instead, we talked about the upcoming research paper, which would occupy the last third of the course, and set up individual appointments for the following week. Final papers would be due four weeks from that date, and rather than have us continue meeting as a group, students would use that time to work on those projects at their own pace. Since each student was at a different level of experience when it came to undertaking a large research paper like this one, it made sense to take a more one-on-one approach for the rest of the semester. Everyone was sad to see our group sessions come to an end, and that last gathering felt more like a fond reflection than a formal class meeting.

When students came to my office for those individual appointments, they had to have the topic that they wanted to research, a plan of how to conduct that research, and a timeline for completion. A few students had already approached me with possible topics earlier in the semester, but most had not. Everyone came prepared to these appointments with the required elements, and most had viable and interesting topics that they proposed to pursue. A few were too broad and tried to cover a long period of time or a substantial issue, but we trimmed them down to a more manageable size. Most students had a general idea of how they would go about their research; many planned to begin with sources used in class and expand their investigation from there. Most also set specific deadlines for when they would complete that research and provide me with outlines and drafts of the paper, and those who developed these precise goals had very ambitious expectations for themselves. Many asked if we could continue to meet once a week in order to stay accountable to their plans of action. While a few expressed concerns over the required length of the paper and the depth of research that they would need to conduct, everyone seemed optimistic about their proposals and no one felt that they could not do the work.

Unsurprisingly, very few students followed through on their impressive plans and timelines. Only four students came to see me in weeks after those initial meetings, and of those four, just one involved several lengthy and serious discussions about his topic. Three students e-mailed me with questions during that time as well. A half-dozen or so sent me rough drafts of their papers—partial and complete—for review in the days before the due date. The rest of them followed a typical route of starting out with much enthusiasm that quickly dwindled in the face of the volume of work that had to be accomplished, as well as distractions from other classes, responsibilities, and obligations. They knew what needed to be done, though, and that I was available to them should they need assistance, and I let them work at their own pace, whatever that turned out to be.

Research topics varied depending on the students' interests. A few chose topics related to their future career choices. For instance, a Journalism major decided to look into how the different newspapers in Boston covered the Tea Act protests, while a Political Science student investigated the "tea party movement" of the early twenty-first century and compared it to the original protests over tea. An

aspiring future high school teacher examined textbook coverage of the Boston Tea Party in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to see how it had changed over time. Others picked more specific questions, such as Paul Revere's role in the Boston Tea Party, while still others took on broader topics, such as women's activities during the tea protests, reactions to the tea destruction in Boston from other cities such as Philadelphia and New York City, and the role of taverns in organizing and communicating protest activities. Some had to be counseled several times to narrow their topics or to not lose sight of the subject of our class—the Boston Tea Party—but most stayed on target.

While the re-enactment performances were stellar, research papers failed to meet my high expectations. I was looking for something similar to a scholarly article, with in-depth research in primary documents with occasional reference to secondary sources and any relevant existing studies relating to their topic. I also wanted thorough analysis of all resources centered around a specific original thesis of their own devising. Instead, I mostly received overly brief and simplistic narratives that rehashed previous literature. Few exceeded the minimal twenty-page requirement, and several fell short of it. Few also undertook the depth of research that I had expected; most simply located a couple of secondary sources and used only those, rather than tracking down a large variety of texts delving into the many diverse primary documents written in that time period. That handful of students who did engage in that intense research had much more to work with when composing their papers and created more sophisticated final products, both in terms of developing an original thesis and providing evidence to narrate and support that thesis. Those papers epitomized what this class was truly about—thorough exploration of one specific historical event resulting in a serious scholarly research project—but most just wrote an ordinary paper that could have been submitted in any advanced history class for an average grade.

Evaluation

Reflecting on this class provides some important lessons about teaching in general, but also about adding a performance aspect to a history course and about offering such an unusual and specific topic

in a semester-long college setting. First and foremost, prior planning is absolutely necessary for all aspects of this type of course. I began framing and doing research on the various topics that I planned to cover in this class a year in advance to make sure it was even feasible in the first place. I used that material to obtain permission from the Department Chair and the Undergraduate Studies Director to offer the class and get it added to the general Schedule of Classes for the university, and they along with the history advisor helped me advertise and explain the class to interested students. Because there were so few texts available that covered the topics that I wanted to cover, and in the way that I wanted to cover them, I had to find and collect all the chapters and excerpts myself. I relied heavily upon our Interlibrary Loan service for both secondary works and primary documents. I made sure to have all readings materials for the semester available for the students before the semester began so that they knew exactly how much work would be required of them so there were no surprises later in the semester. Students were expected to have read all those materials closely and carefully so they could discuss them in our small seminar, and I wanted to give them as much advance notice as I could. Creating a new class is always challenging, but this one was especially so because of its unique topic and approach.

Recruiting students to take a specialized class with such high demands also posed a challenge. On the surface, a class about the Boston Tea Party that included a costumed re-enactment seems like fun, but in reality, it was a lot of work. Meeting with and interviewing students before they even enrolled in the class made them aware of these high expectations so that only truly dedicated students took part. Having a highly motivated and deeply committed group willing to work together as a team and put forth the effort to do all the reading, remember all the facts and details, create and portray characters, put on a staged performance, and write a lengthy research paper was essential to our success. I was fortunate to have that special group, and I could not have asked for a better company. Planning ahead for who would be in the class, however, was an essential component to its success.

Having cooperative office staff to assist in every step was also a crucial factor.³¹ I made many unusual requests when it came to staging this event. For instance, while I imagined and constructed

the “tea chests” that we would use for the event, the office staff had to order all the materials that I needed, provide a place to store the 100 assembled “tea chests” before the event took place, and transport them to and from the event site on that day. While I handled the details with regards to costumes, I needed their help to reserve an empty office to serve as a “costume shop” for storage and to recruit someone to check the costumes in and out when students used them. I also relied on office staff to help create, print, and distribute the posters to advertise the event and the programs for the audience, and I asked them to utilize the History Department’s social media accounts before, during, and after the event to attract an audience and to showcase the event itself. These requests were all above and beyond the usual tasks that office staff do for academic departments, and their willingness to do them was an important part of this class.

Obtaining funds for costumes and props was another challenge. Because the History Department had financed those items for my previous class on the Boston Massacre Trials, I mistakenly assumed that it would do so again this time. With different administrators in charge and new fiscal policies in place, I faced bureaucratic hurdles that I had not before. Once the class was up and running, it was too late to apply for internal grants or external funding, but the new Department Chair was willing to accept my expenses with the expectation that I would follow official procedures next time. Regardless, I should have worked out a budget that accounted for both costume rental and “tea chest” supplies, for my personal knowledge and as a courtesy notice for my supervisor.

Planning the re-enactment required me to scout various locations on campus and work with other units outside of academia. Once I had chosen all the places that I wanted to use, I should have done much more preparation on several fronts. I should have walked the students along the route between the two staging sites so that they knew ahead of time exactly where they were going, and I could have asked for their feedback about any problems that they could foresee happening along the way. I should have anticipated how to deal with different size audiences; I had hoped to have around thirty to fifty people attend and therefore had no idea how to handle the 200+ that showed up. While having a crowd of that size was exciting, it also posed technical difficulties in terms of acoustics when trying to hear conversations among costumed students, and it caused safety

concerns during the procession between sites. I should have met with campus police in person to discuss at length what exactly I was planning to do so that they too could offer suggestions about how to handle various scenarios. In particular, I should have made sure that campus police officers were present throughout the route, especially at the various open intersections, to direct traffic. In the end, the event was an overwhelming success and nothing went wrong, but that was more luck than advanced planning.

I also could have done a better job preparing the students for the performance. I relied too much on student improvisation throughout the event when I should have assigned specific roles and clarified certain expectations in terms of content and execution. I had a general idea of how I thought the event would unfold and what I wanted us to accomplish with it, but I should have organized it better. Many students concurred with me in their “after-action reports” and during the class session after the performance, and while they agreed that the event was a success, they really wanted more direction and often felt confused while the event was going on.³² Moreover, several mentioned that not having a script, especially during the group interactions on the steps of Tidwell, was a missed opportunity to educate the audience on the true facts and nuances of the Boston Tea Party. I should have taken a more involved role as a director instead of giving them so much freedom to play it out as they saw fit. I also should have had students share their “eyewitness accounts” about their characters with each other. That material would have provided additional information that the students could have used throughout the performance and solidified their unity as a focused company. Ultimately, the event went well and accomplished its objectives, but it could have gone better and had more structure.

Students also needed more direction when it came to their research papers. I should have realized that most students would not follow through with their elaborate and detailed plans for accomplishing their research and assembling their papers. I should have required them continue meeting with me throughout the weeks between their individual appointments and the final due date. Some students stayed on top of their projects and either met with me regularly or sent me outlines and drafts throughout the writing process, but most did not. I relied too much on individual initiative when I should have remembered that they were undergraduate students who had

never undertaken such a large research paper before, and therefore needed regular guidance to stay on track and create much more nuanced and sophisticated final products. I also should have spent a class period preparing students about the depth and volume of research that I expected, as well as showing them how to go about that research and providing more thorough guidelines about my expectations. Additionally, I should have introduced the research paper earlier in the semester and followed up on it more often. By waiting until those final weeks, students had to accomplish a large volume of research and writing in a short amount of time. I should have set certain benchmarks throughout the semester so that students would have been forced to dedicate more time and effort to their research papers and would have created more sophisticated results. These lessons will serve me and my colleagues well as we consider offering more courses that include a significant research component and adding a capstone course to the requirements for a History major.

In the end, this class was an overwhelming success on all fronts. Students thoroughly enjoyed studying one topic in depth from various perspectives and discussing it in a small seminar setting with other highly motivated and interested students. They also loved the performance aspect of the class. Not only was it highly unusual, it also gave them the opportunity to showcase all that they had learned in a unique way. While impossible to measure, they learned so much about so many aspects of colonial history, as well as about research techniques to uncover that history that they could not with a more traditional approach. They were less enthusiastic about the research paper, but understood its purpose and created acceptable though not exemplary results.

In the days and weeks after the event, everyone—students, faculty, staff, administrators—asked what I plan to do next.³³ With more 250th anniversaries coming up, there are many possibilities to offer similar classes. While the Boston Tea Party class was a tremendous amount of work, it was incredibly rewarding for everyone involved, especially the students who participated. This educational experience was a once-in-a-lifetime activity that they will remember for years to come.³⁴ The fact that so many people from various backgrounds wanted to know “what’s next” demonstrates not just the popularity of these types of academic activities, but also the interest and desire to learn in this unusual manner. As teachers of all levels

brainstorm how to reach their students with new and innovative approaches, they should consider adding a performance component to invigorate student learning in a unique way and change up the traditional classroom setting. This class still retained its academic integrity because of all the required reading, along with the research paper and other written assignments, but its additional performance component made it special and more interesting and attractive to students who took the class and to those who observed the event itself.³⁵ Admittedly, this class was able to occur because of the support it received from students and administration, but even on a smaller scale, it could work if teachers were willing to put forth the extra effort necessary to make it happen.

Notes

1. Studies about using re-enactment in the classroom include Darrin Cox and Simon Bauer-Leffler, "The Efficacy of Living History in an Educational Setting," *The History Teacher* 56, no. 2 (February 2023): 267-289; Mark L. Daniels, "A Living History Classroom Using Re-Enactment to Enhance Learning," *Social Education* 74, no. 3 (May-June 2010): 135-136; Rachel Mattson, "Theater of the Assessed: Drama-Based Pedagogies in the History Classroom," *Radical History Review* 102 (Fall 2008): 99-110; Ronald Vaughan Morris, *History and Imagination: Reenactments for Elementary Social Studies* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2012); Anthony Pattiz, "Teaching History as the Reenactment of Past Experience," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 15-31; Philip Taylor, *The Drama Classroom: Action, Reflection, Transformation* (London, United Kingdom: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000); David Thelen, "Learning from the Past: Individual Experience and Re-Enactment," *Indiana Magazine of History* 99, no. 2 (June 2003): 155-165.

2. My back-up plan was to have students dress alike in plain attire with a white shirt, dark or khaki pants, and black or brown shoes. That way, they would stand out from the crowd while looking like each other and being part of a team.

3. For details about the Boston Massacre Trials course, see Julie Anne Sweet, "Making History Come Alive: The Boston Massacre Trials," *The History Teacher* 54, no. 3 (May 2021): 509-538.

4. The following information about the Boston Tea Party is mostly drawn from Benjamin L. Carp's *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University

Press, 1964) is an older yet well-researched book that we also used in this class. Harlow Giles Unger's *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011) takes a more popular and generalized approach to this event and therefore was not as useful as the other two. Wesley S. Griswold's *The Night the Revolution Began: The Boston Tea Party, 1773* (Brattleboro, VT: The Stephen Greene Press, 1972) consists mostly of excerpts from primary documents and lacked the narrative flow necessary for a good overview of this event.

5. Figures derived from Wikipedia, "Boston Tea Party," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_Tea_Party#Destruction_of_the_tea>.

6. Sweet, "Making History Come Alive."

7. For a general overview of what a "capstone course" is and does, see Robert C. Hauhart and Jon E. Grahe, *Designing and Teaching Undergraduate Capstone Courses* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015).

8. The College of Arts & Sciences Advisement (CASA) oversees all undergraduate advising, and History majors are assigned to one individual who counsels them on what courses to take in the upcoming semester. The Undergraduate Program Director offers additional advice based on more frequent interactions with those students and better knowledge of their academic records, their scholarly interests, and their career aspirations.

9. Baylor University, Department of History, "Fall 2023 History Courses," digital brochure available at <https://issuu.com/baylorhistorydepartment/docs/fall_2023_brochure_03.01.23>.

10. While I did inform students about this public performance portion of the course, I did not ask for or require any previous theater or public speaking experience, although many shared those personal details during our interview. If I use this methodology again in the future, I will inquire about those matters to make sure that I assemble a workable cohort of students, but I cannot insist on them since these courses would be for History credit, not Theater Arts.

11. See note 4 above.

12. For the notes taken at the meetings at the Old South Meeting House in November and December 1773, see L. F. S. Upton, ed., "Proceedings of Ye Body Respecting the Tea," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 1965): 287-300. For the minutes of those meetings, see "Minutes of the Tea Meetings, 1773," in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. 20* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1884), 10-17.

13. The two books on public speaking from which I used several chapters were Alyson Connolly, *Public Speaking Skills For Dummies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2018) and LearningExpress, *Public Speaking Success in 20 Minutes a Day* (New York: LearningExpress, 2010). On historical re-enacting, see Stacy F. Roth, *Past Into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

14. Many thanks to Jae Cox at Norcostco for all her assistance with acquiring, altering, and shipping these costumes.

15. In the course evaluations conducted after the conclusion of the class, one student wrote, "So so so so so much reading but I felt so knowledgeable."

16. Tony Wilson's variation of the famous quote from the 1962 film, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."

17. David Copeland's *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers* offers similar exercises and brings together many newspaper excerpts focused on a wide variety of early American issues. See David A. Copeland, ed., *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers: Primary Documents on Events of the Period* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).

18. The excerpts came from collected print sources such as Paul D. Brandes, *John Hancock's Life and Speeches: A Personalized Vision of the American Revolution, 1763-1793* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1996), 117-120; L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, Volume 2: Diary, 1771-1781* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 85-87; Daniel R. Coquillette and Neil Longley York, eds., *Portrait of a Patriot: The Major Political and Legal Papers of Josiah Quincy Junior, Volume 6: Correspondence and Published Political Writings* (Boston, MA: University of Virginia Press for The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2014), 143-144; Harry Alonzo Cushing, ed., *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Volume 3: 1773-1777* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 67-79; Peter Orlando Hutchinson, ed., *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.* (London, United Kingdom: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883), 94-98, 100-101, 107-108, 112-117, 138-139.

19. The four biographies were John K. Alexander, *Samuel Adams: The Life of an American Revolutionary* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2011), 155-164; Mark Puls, *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 13-17, 140-147; Stacy Schiff, *The Revolutionary: Samuel Adams* (Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, 2023), 229-250; Ira Stoll, *Samuel Adams: A Life* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 112-116.

20. Because the original colonists used burned charcoal and coal dust to cover their faces, it may have resembled "blackface" rather than face paint, and we did not want audience members to get the wrong idea. Since not all accounts mentioned the use of Indian disguises that night, we decided to tell that version of history and teach audience members how that myth came about and was passed down through the years. Boston chose to follow the same path for similar reasons during its full-scale re-enactment on December 16, 2023; see Paul Singer, "Boston Tea Party Looks Back on the 'Indians' who Stormed the Boats 250 Years Ago," *GBH News*, December 14, 2023, <<https://www.wgbh.org/news/local/2023-12-14/boston-tea-party-looks-back-on-the-indians-who-stormed-the-boats-250-years-ago>>.

21. "Clean Water Act (CWA)," Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, <<https://www.boem.gov/environment/environmental-assessment/clean-water-act-cwa>>.

22. I had devised a "rain plan" with a different procession route and final destination, but was grateful that I did not have to implement it since it would not have been nearly as effective. I also considered using an indoor location if necessary, but, thankfully, I did not need to explore the option further because it would have involved working with several more divisions within the university that may not have been so cooperative.

23. Quotations from Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011), 165.

24. For the *Waco Tribune-Herald* article, see the October 19, 2023 article at <https://wacotrib.com/news/local/education/baylor-history-students-reenact-boston-tea-party-250-years-later/article_a209f3da-6ed1-11ee-aa36-afd028ffbbdb.html>. For its YouTube video of the event, see <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iU1VthJw7Q>>. For the *Baylor Lariat* (campus newspaper) article, see <<https://baylorlariat.com/2023/10/20/no-re-creation-without-representation-boston-tea-party-gets-brazos-twist/>>. For the *Lariat TV News* story, see <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PNc2MXJZtI>>.

25. Christian Clark, the Social Media Coordinator for the College of Arts & Sciences, documented both the Boston Tea Party class and the Brazos Tea Party event in an October 2023 series called “Cart Chronicles.” Episode 1 covers the class (available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zltcilgeB0>>), while Episode 2 showcases the event (available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgRvGasHnmM>>). Both episodes feature interviews with students enrolled in the class about their experiences.

26. One student commented on how difficult it was for her to convince her family members and sorority sisters of the historical role that she was playing. Specifically, they wanted to exclaim over her, hug her, and take selfies—all behaviors not done in 1773. However, she quickly schooled them on the way that they should engage with her and they eventually went along with it.

27. One student mentioned in his After-Action Report, “It can feel daunting to just start talking to strangers, so I would start a conversation with a classmate and then grab audience members near us to give us their opinion. This tactic worked extremely well, and you could tell that the audience members became more and more comfortable as the conversation continued.”

28. One student noted in her After-Action Report, “People were surprisingly respectful and open to the event. Everyone ‘played along.’” Another mentioned, “Involvement was one of the major strengths that we had during this event. Not only did we have many people show up, but we also had people who were willing to interact with us.”

29. In their After-Action Reports, students were instructed to tell me what all they did during the event, and many described in detail their conversations with audience members and their use of material that they had learned in class to answer questions. One student pointed out, “[T]he audience inquired about us as colonial people, providing a chance for us as a team to flex our research muscles by giving facts about our lives and occupations.” Another noted, “It was exciting to see all of our hard work in the classroom and thorough research pay off, as we were able to stay in character and context while arguing with each other and engaging the crowd.” Another concurred, stating, “The in-depth learning through the months before the event proved to be very helpful in allowing us to not only step into the role we were given, but also to more than adequately explain the more specific details of the Boston Tea Party to...the audience.” Another commented simply, “all the research we did was not in vain.”

30. About the evolution of the “Boston Tea Party” and its commemorations, see Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 85-91, 99-120, 132-165, 180-194.

31. Many thanks to the History Department’s Office Manager Dianne Reyes and its Administrative Associate Tasha Rich for all their help with every aspect of this production.

32. One student suggested in her After-Action Report, “I am someone that loves direction and a written script prior to the event could have been a great resource for some preplanned responses. That...can be something someone else uses in future courses just like this one.” Another recommended that I create “a guide...that guided what each performer should hope to achieve....[M]aybe there would have been more in-depth discussions if we had more pointed objectives.”

33. In the course evaluations, one student wrote, “Do this again. It does not matter what subject you are covering. Students need an opportunity to experience something like this at least once during their college career.” Another commented, “I hope Dr. Sweet has the opportunity to lead more classes like this in the future!”

34. In her After-Action Report, one student commented, “it was a memorable experience and something I will look back fondly at as I think of my senior year at Baylor.” Another noted, “It was an amazing...and a once-in-a-lifetime educational experience that I will always remember and love.” Yet another mentioned that she was “incredibly grateful that I got to take part in this event.”

35. Perhaps the best comment on this issue comes from the course evaluations, where one student wrote, “I really gained an appreciation for the meshing of public history and academic history. Oftentimes these fields feel like they work in opposition of one another, but in this class I got to be both professional in my research, but educational in my performance.” As for remarks in After-Actions Reports, one student noted, “As for looking at the....teaching of the event, I think this was a splendid way of doing so. These historical events happened in real life not just in a textbook and by portraying this it shows the reality of it.” Another concurred, stating, “we made the event seem real to the audience members. I always tried to emphasize the realness of the event whenever I spoke to someone.” On a different note, another student mentioned that several audience members asked her about the class itself, and she believed that it got more people interested in history because “events like this help us cater to different types of people... [and] it helped us excite a new demographic about history.” Yet another wrote, “it is classes like this one that capture the essence of what it means to learn about history and love the knowledge one can gain from diving into the past.”

Appendix A: Course Syllabus

History 4340-01: The Boston Tea Party (Fall 2023)

CLASS MEETINGS: R 2:00pm-4:45pm Tidwell 101

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Jules Sweet
Office: Tidwell 104.16
Email: Julie_Sweet@baylor.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays, 12:30pm-3:30pm and by appointment

INTRODUCTION:

You are traveling into a new dimension – one that combines history and theater, secondary reading and original research – to create a truly transformational education experience. Your next stop – Boston, 1773.

OBJECTIVES:

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, students will engage in extensive research about the setting of Boston in 1773, the incident that occurred on 16 December of that year, the immediate aftermath of that event, and the historical significance of the entire episode.

Students will stage a historical interpretation of the “tea party” to be performed in colonial costume (to be provided) on 19 October 2023 for an audience consisting of fellow History students and the Baylor community (location TBA). Furthermore, students will write several small papers exploring the various characters and issues involved in this event, both to learn about and apply historical methodology as well as prepare their characters for their performance, and they will put together a lengthy research paper (20-25 pages) using secondary and primary sources on a topic of their choosing to practice the historian’s craft.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (Yale University Press, 2010)

NOTE: All other reading assignments will be provided on Canvas. Students are welcome to purchase these additional materials, but are not required to.

REQUIRED WORK:

NOTE: For each of these assignments, there is a separate file on Canvas that provides more detailed explanations about exactly what they entail. There are also

files that cover writing-style expectations (“Handy Tips & Helpful Hints for Good Writing”) as well as submission procedures (“How To Submit Written Work”). You must follow all of these instructions carefully to receive credit for your work.

WEEKLY READING DUE:

For each class period, there is a section entitled “Reading Due” that you must read before class because it serves as the basis for the topic under discussion for that day. These readings consist of both excerpts from relevant secondary literature and primary documents from the time period, and they average around 200 pages per week. (Note: that number is an “average,” meaning that some assignments are longer than others.) All of these readings, except for the one required text listed above, are available on Canvas. You are expected to have read these items carefully and thoroughly and to come to class prepared for in-depth discussion about them.

BOOK REVIEW:

For the third day of class, you will write a book review on Benjamin Carp’s *Defiance of the Patriots*. Book reviews briefly summarize and critically analyze a text in terms of its contents and its academic merit. Your review should be no more than 1000 words in length and is worth 10% of your final grade.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT:

To prepare for your role as a participant in and witness to the “Boston Tea Party,” you will write an “eyewitness account” where you describe what you saw to the best of your recollection. You will be assigned a character, and you will develop that character through in-depth secondary and primary research in order to assemble as much detail as possible about his life and his participation in this event. Your final product is worth 20% of your final grade.

PERFORMANCE:

On Thursday, October 19, we will present a live, unscripted performance of the “tea party” that occurred on the night of 16 December 1773 for fellow History students and the Baylor community. Your participation is a necessary and vital ingredient to the success of this event, which is why we will spend several class days getting ready for it. Your preparation, participation, and performance on this day is worth 15% of your final grade.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT:

An “after-action report” is an assessment of what worked and what did not about your performance and the event in general. It is an opportunity to step back and evaluate what happened, both good and bad, as well as a chance to digest what you learned from this experience. Your final product is worth 10% of your final grade.

RESEARCH PAPER:

The other crucial ingredient to this class is the research paper, based on both primary and secondary research that you have accumulated over the course of the semester. It is your opportunity to create a 20- to 25-page original work similar to professional scholarly articles written by historians with a specific agenda or thesis. You will come up with a topic over the course of the first half of the semester and assemble the necessary data to write it during the month of November. You will meet one-on-one with your professor often to discuss topics and drafts of this project, which is worth 30% of your final grade.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSION:

For each class, you will bring a written list of discussion questions or topics about the reading material due that day to answer any questions, to clarify any ambiguities, to facilitate conversation, and to help your colleagues make sense of the reading. You will not need to submit your list, but you are expected to have one. Your in-class discussion of that day's materials is worth 15% of your final grade.

ATTENDANCE:

Do NOT miss class. Attendance is mandatory, and you will lose FIVE points off of your final grade for each class that you miss. If you have a medical issue or are participating in a university-sponsored event, I must have an excuse in writing from your doctor or professor explaining your absence. There is no possible way to make up the work that you will miss while absent, and because this class relies so heavily on group participation, it is imperative that you attend every scheduled class day. If you miss the performance day, you will also lose the "performance" aspect of your grade because you MUST be there and you have been made aware of that fact and that date many times far in advance.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Book Review:	10%
Eyewitness Account:	20%
Performance:	15%
After-Action Report	10%
Final Research Paper:	30%
<u>In-Class Discussion:</u>	<u>15%</u>
TOTAL:	100%

GRADING SCALE:

A = 100-93	B+ = 89-87	C+ = 79-77	D+ = 69-67	F = 59-0
A- = 92-90	B = 86-83	C = 76-73	D = 66-63	
	B- = 82-80	C- = 72-70	D- = 62-60	

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Thursday, August 24

Topic: Setting the Stage, or, A Crash Course in Colonial America

Reading Due: Chapters from textbooks about Colonial America

Thursday, August 31

Topic: The Imperial Crisis (1765-1773)

Reading Due: Chapters from textbooks about the American Revolution

Thursday, September 7

Topic: What Happened?: Historians' Versions of the Event

Reading Due: Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots* – ENTIRE
Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, ch. 1-8 & pp. 256-260
• NOTE: this item is available on Canvas

Writing Due: Book Review on Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*

Thursday, September 14

Topic: What “Really” Happened?: Primary Accounts of the Event

Reading Due: Assorted Primary Documents from 1773-1774

Thursday, September 21

Topic: Who's Who? The Men Behind The Myths

Reading Due: Excerpts from books about important men who participated in this event & chapters from historians' biographies about them AND primary documents written by them reflecting on this event

Thursday, September 28

Topic: Public Speaking

Reading Due: Chapters from textbooks about Public Speaking

Thursday, October 5

Topic: Historical Re-enacting

Reading Due: Chapters from books about Historical Re-enacting

Writing Due: Eyewitness Account

Thursday, October 12

Topic: Getting Ready for the Big Day (a.k.a. Dress Rehearsal)

Thursday, October 19 - PERFORMANCE

- Instructions:
- Arrive in Tidwell **before 2pm** to prepare for performance.
 - Engage with audience members before, during, & after event.
 - Assemble on the steps of Tidwell to begin.
 - Lead “protesters” to location of “tea party” (TBA).
 - Return as a group to Tidwell for debrief.

Thursday, October 26

Topic: Issues of Historical Memory & Commemoration

Reading Due: Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, Part Two
Assorted Primary Documents from 1774
Excerpts about Historical Commemoration

Writing Due: After-Action Report

Thursday, November 2

Topic: How To Write Historical Research Papers

Work Due: Sign Ups for One-on-One Meetings with Professor about Research Papers

- You **MUST** make an appointment to meet in person with your professor and come prepared with a topic and plan for research & writing (at minimum)

Thursday, November 9 Research & Writing

Thursday, November 16 Research & Writing

Thursday, November 23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Thursday, November 30 LAST DAY to submit **RESEARCH PAPER**

Appendix B: Partial Program

THE BOSTON/BRAZOS TEA PARTY

October 19, 2023

3:30-5:00pm

Tidwell Bible Building & Waco Creek Bridge

Marking the 250th Anniversary of the Boston Tea Party

THE BACKGROUND

On 28 November 1773, the first of three ships carrying 300+ chests of East India Company tea arrived in the port of Boston. The ship owners had twenty days to offload their cargo or else it would be seized by British authorities.

In an act of protest against the Tea Act, colonists refused to let the tea be offloaded and demanded that the ships return to England. During the next two weeks, colonists attempted to negotiate with the ship owners for the peaceful withdrawal of those three ships. Doing so, however, would violate British law and result in seizure of the ships and forfeiture of their contents.

On 16 December 1773 – the day before the deadline to offload the tea – colonists met with the ship captain yet again to resolve this impasse.

Our event today is a historical interpretation of what happened at the conclusion of that meeting to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the real Boston Tea Party that will occur later this year.

*This event is brought to you by the Department of History
and performed by students in
HIS 4340.01: The Boston Tea Party*

ORDER OF PROGRAM

Introduction

Meeting of the “Body of the People”

Procession to Waco Creek Bridge

Destruction of the Tea

Concluding Remarks

CAST LIST

Narrator:

Dr. Julie Anne Sweet
Professor of History and Director of Military Studies

Tea Destroyers:

Nathaniel Barber
James Brewer
Benjamin Burton
Thomas Chase
Charles Conner
Benjamin Edes
Ebenezer Mackintosh
Thomas Melvill
Joseph Payson
Lendall Pitts
Edward Proctor
Henry Purkitt
Dr. Elisha Story
James Swann
Thomas Urann

Played By:

Sloane Austin
Logan Colpo
Lily Dickenson
Fiorella Contreras
Natalie Fakhiravari
George Schroeder
Christian Glowe
Dominic Vecino
Nyillie Aguilar
Michael Ermis
Gabe Creech
Sophia Tejeda
Madelyn Treat
Danny Dunn
Rachel Medina

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROCESSION TO WACO CREEK BRIDGE

- Event begins on front steps of Tidwell Bible Building.
- Tea Destroyers will escort audience to Waco Creek Bridge.
 - Walk three blocks down Speight Avenue
 - Cross S 3rd Street
 - Walk through parking lot to front of McLane Student Life Center (SLC) & Baylor Sciences Building (BSB)
 - Follow “stream” between SLC & BSB to Waco Creek Bridge
- Audience will watch from BSB sidewalks.
 - ONLY Tea Destroyers are permitted on Waco Creek Bridge

PUBLIC NOTICES

- Turn off all electronic devices.
- It is a half-mile walk from Tidwell Bible Building to Waco Creek Bridge.
- Use caution when crossing streets and processing through parking lots.
- Cast members will be available beforehand and afterwards to interact with the audience.



NATIONAL HISTORY DAY'S 2025 CONTEST THEME IS **RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN HISTORY**



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE THEME

Visit nhd.org/theme to watch the 2025 theme video and download the theme book to help your students consider the implications of rights **and** responsibilities in history.



ENCOURAGE TOPICS & CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

Students can study local, national, or even international histories of rights and responsibilities. Will they choose to present their research as an exhibit, website, documentary, paper, or performance?



AID IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Provide students with online resources and consider field trips to local libraries and archives to collect sources. Ensure students place their topic into historical context and formulate a strong historical argument.

NHD.ORG/THEME