

## Flipped/Hybrid and Flexible: Student Success and Redesigning the U.S. History Survey at Texas A&M University

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IN HIS NOW-CLASSIC BOOK, *The Opening of the American Mind: Cannons, Culture, and History* (1996), American cultural historian Lawrence W. Levine offered a penetrating analysis into the role of change in the history of the nation's universities. Levine demonstrated that the great-books approach to a classical education only materialized in the twentieth century. He further contended that observers today would not recognize the curriculum of most universities of the nineteenth century for their emphasis on rote, dead languages and lack of engagement with what today we might call "critical thinking." Most particularly, Levine argued that change in higher learning—what it taught, how it is taught, and why—persists as a constant in America's colleges and universities.<sup>1</sup> His denial of any sacral content in our higher education classrooms seems easy enough to agree on when left as a theoretical point; however, it proves far harder to put into our daily work as historians.

Levine's one constant of change is evident for history units across the nation's colleges and universities, including ours at Texas A&M University. How could we curb enrollment decline and improve student experiences? How do we impart to students the value of studying history and why it should remain an essential part of college curricula in a higher education universe that emphasizes STEM fields? These questions guided our experiment with flipped/hybrid courses, which began as an exercise in prioritizing student-centered learning. We wanted to find ways to make the U.S. history survey as relevant and applicable to students as possible by addressing core curriculum objectives innovatively. Collecting student perception data provided a way to assess whether our methods of improving engagement and promoting student success worked.

Unfortunately, some students may arrive in our higher education classrooms with negative or stale experiences studying history. Some have found history boring. Others have particular (and often tired, if not stereotypical) ideas of what historians look like and what historians do. As a way to address this, a team of volunteer instructors reconceptualized our U.S. history surveys by centering them around students and engaging with their perceptions of historians and studying history. First, we invited these students to consider how they can be (and are) historians, no matter their intended academic pursuits. Encouraging them to see that historians embody a variety of backgrounds and interests, as well as different ways of practicing history, allows students to see themselves in the discipline. For example, before one of our authors became a historian, she taught, performed, and choreographed dance. We remind students that, yes, historians teach history, but they also work in museums, consult on films, and write books, both fiction and nonfiction. They become historical interpreters and journalists; they create art; and they work in politics and business. We strive to broaden our students' understanding of what it means to be a historian—historians pay attention to contexts, connect ideas, and account for the complexities of human action. Historians are everywhere. We are all historians.

Second, being a historian means realizing that everything has a history. This has been noted by many, but perhaps most pointedly by James Grossman, the executive director of the American Historical Association, who wrote, "‘Everything has a history’ means that history is always relevant, perhaps even always essential."<sup>2</sup> For

example, any career path that our students choose has its own history explaining its current state, and learning that history enhances one's ability to thrive in that career. If someone chooses to become an engineer, as many students at Texas A&M University do, there are reasons why the different branches of engineering exist and why they came into being at the time they did. If others choose to become part of the medical profession, it helps them to understand the history of their individual patients, as well as understand the history of the treatment of illnesses. If still others choose to become teachers, history explains the ways that teaching has evolved and why some parts of the United States train teachers and devise public school curriculum so differently.

Third, being a historian means cultivating a broad-based skill set. Dates and names are only part of what we learn from and about history. We also have the opportunity to understand the experiences and decision-making processes of historical actors. In the State of Texas, history is most commonly taught through a series of core curriculum objectives determined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. These objectives include *critical thinking* (creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis/evaluation, and the synthesis of information), *communication* (effectively developing, interpreting, and expressing our ideas through written, oral, aural, and visual modes), *social responsibility* (demonstrating intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in our regional, national, and global communities), and *personal responsibility* (connecting choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making). Perhaps most importantly, being a historian means learning the value of your own voice and your own story and acknowledging the voices and stories of others.<sup>3</sup> As students encounter a wealth of perspectives on United States history based on the intersections and divergences of the many facets of our identities, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and class, we encourage them to think of themselves as historians. History offers students the chance to understand our fellow human beings and the breadth and depth of experiences that shape our existence. A flipped/hybrid course format afforded us the latitude to reframe students' experience with history courses by inviting them to engage with some of the many different interpretations of how to be a historian to demonstrate why history remains an important part of our education.<sup>4</sup>

## Rationale

At Texas A&M University, which is among the nation's largest public universities based on student enrollment, the Department of History (HIST) has had a long-standing symbiotic relationship with the teaching of U.S. history surveys. While learning history has been a part of Texas A&M since its founding in 1876, the Texas State Legislature did not mandate two three-hour units of U.S. history for all bachelor's degrees (currently numbered HIST 105 and HIST 106) until 1955.<sup>5</sup> For over a century, Texas A&M taught the U.S. history surveys in small sections with nothing more than chalkboards and map stands, mostly by tenured or tenure-track faculty. About five decades ago, HIST relocated to the College of Liberal Arts during a period of rapid university growth, necessitating the department to deliver this course sequence to hundreds of students at a time in large lecture halls.<sup>6</sup> The implementation of microphones and projectors accompanied the increasing scale; the shift from small sections to auditorium-sized classes relied on traditional, lecture-style instruction, often characterized as the "sage on the stage" style of teaching.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the creation of M.A. and Ph.D. graduate programs in history provided teaching assistants for help with grading and classroom management. Since then, the department's identity has been bound up in teaching these big surveys. In the hiring process, the ability to handle "the big class" proved as important to some as a candidate's research. HIST took tremendous pride in this mission and its prowess with these big classes. These large surveys also garnered majors. One of our colleagues even published a how-to guidebook for teaching the big survey as proof of our prowess in such courses!<sup>8</sup>

For most of the late twentieth century, as the university grew, the department grew. HIST 105/106 is now embedded in the university's core curriculum, making it institutionally valuable in terms of student success and enrollment. This symbiotic relationship now poses a challenge, however, as the demand for U.S. history surveys has been shrinking with declining enrollments for most of the twenty-first century. This has meant a corresponding decrease in the department's faculty size, the number of its graduate students and majors, and its imprint upon the broader university. The decline stems from several interrelated reasons, most of which are external to the department.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, in the last two decades, the liberalization of transfer credit rules, the rise of dual enrollment programs in the state's public high schools, and the proliferation of Advanced Placement (AP) credit have meant that, while the university in the last two decades has grown astronomically, fewer and fewer of its undergraduates are taking history courses on its campus. Between 2000 and 2022, Texas A&M grew by approximately 70% (44,026 to 74,829), while total enrollment in both halves of the U.S. history survey dropped approximately 31% (9,321 to 6,469).<sup>10</sup>

Some faculty, when confronted with such alarming numbers, deflect that this is not "our fault." This defensiveness offers little comfort, and ultimately proves a hindrance to a more affirmative response. Regardless of its causes, this enrollment decline remains "our problem." With guidance from pedagogical experts from the College of Liberal Arts and Texas A&M's Center for Teaching Excellence, as well as a generous curricular provost-level Enhancing the Design of Gateway Experiences (EDGE) grant from the Office of Student Success, we devised an innovative approach to these U.S. surveys, grounding our efforts in cross-campus collaboration and improving student learning. Since the early 1980s, there has been a growing awareness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and active learning due to the rise of teaching and learning centers and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Texas A&M's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), established in 1983, has contributed to formally establishing and promoting a university tradition of teaching excellence. The CTE promotes synergy as a centrally located hub for Texas A&M, which not only benefits faculty and students, but also drives academic growth and innovation in higher education. Such efforts have been recognized by the Provost's Office, resulting in CTE partnering with EDGE grant recipients to assist with the group's curricular, pedagogical, and scholarship considerations. At the outset of their EDGE grant work, the lead author was already well-versed and passionate about implementing UDL and active learning into her course design. Pairing a CTE consultant with the EDGE grant team strengthened the scalability of these pedagogical interventions, as well the scholarship efforts to collect student perception data. Here, we offer an overview of our approach, data used to assess our progress, and reflections on our experience.

## Approach

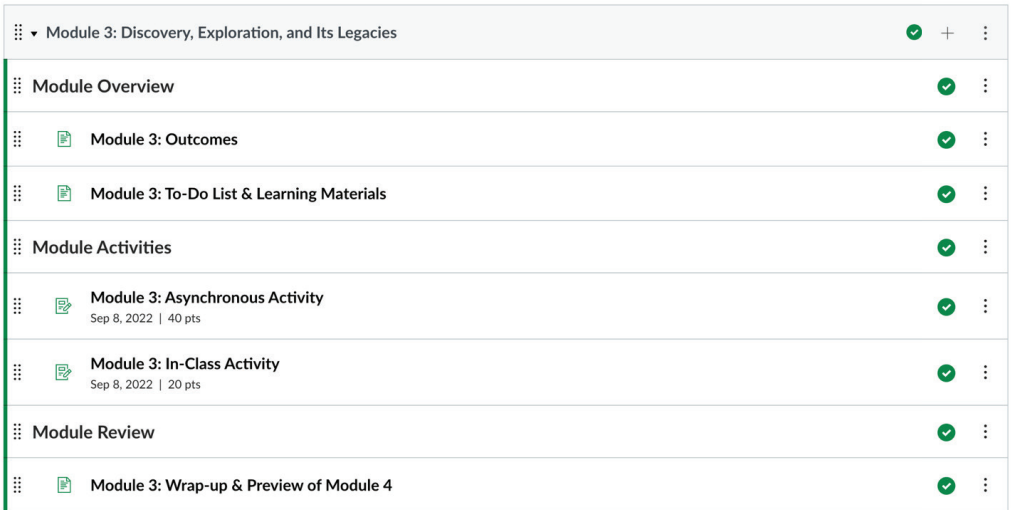
An external team that reviewed our department in 2018 encouraged us to reconsider our approach to the U.S. history survey. In the summer of 2020, department leadership obtained a small internal grant to experiment with online classes, and during the fall of 2020, one instructor experimented with flipped/hybrid courses. These efforts provided the foundation for working with university administration to secure EDGE funding in the spring of 2021. Through the summer of 2021, the team—Carlos Kevin Blanton (Department Head, History), Jessica Erin Ray [Herzogenrath] (Instructional Assistant Professor, History), Verity McInnis (Instructional Associate Professor, History), Shweta Kailani (Senior Instructional Designer, College of Liberal Arts), Samantha Shields (Instructional Consultant, Center for Teaching Excellence), and Kaitlyn Ross (Ph.D. Candidate, History)—met weekly to work through the redesign of HIST 105, Texas A&M’s first half of the U.S. history survey.<sup>11</sup> The fully redesigned HIST 105 debuted in Fall 2021; HIST 106, the second half of the U.S. history sequence, premiered in Fall 2022.

Our redesign of the U.S. history surveys took a comprehensive, holistic approach to improving the course experience for all participants, including faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students (see **Appendix A** for course and student learning outcomes). The course redesigns, with their aligned activities and assessments, were motivated in part by Andrew K. Koch’s 2017 essay, “Many Thousands Failed: A Wakeup Call to History Educators,” and informed by research on flipped and hybrid learning models, active learning instructional strategies, and student-centered pedagogies similar to the American Historical Association’s History Gateways Initiative.<sup>12</sup> Texas A&M’s student success initiative also informed our redesign process, leading us to incorporate early alerts, open education resources (OER), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Instructors use early alerts to flag students struggling to complete work and/or attend class, which initiates an institutional support infrastructure aimed at guiding the student toward course success. Using OER in courses minimizes the obstacle of cost of textbooks for students. Finally, by implementing UDL principles—multiple options for engagement, representation, and action and

expression—we strove to create a more approachable, applicable, and engaging course for a greater number of students.<sup>13</sup>

Although not a new pedagogical approach in higher education, flipped/hybrid learning was novel in our department. We use “flipped” to denote the offloading of lectures to podcasts and videos that students review outside of class meetings and the focusing of our class time on collaborative student work, microlectures (setting the stage for an activity), discussion, and the opportunity for instructors to give immediate feedback.<sup>14</sup> Our conceptualization of “hybrid” deviates somewhat from the iteration that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic, in part because organizing our experiment began before the pandemic. For us, “hybrid” means that the course meets synchronously in person once a week, and students complete all other work asynchronously. Therefore, when we use “flipped/hybrid,” we mean the combination of these two elements.

As part of our course redesigns, we reduced the number of weekly class meetings from two or three days to a single seventy-five-minute meeting and deliberately limited class sizes to fifty students. During the remaining weekly course hours, students reviewed assigned materials independently via pre-recorded video lectures, assigned readings, or other multimedia resources. Then, in-person class time focused on interactive and collaborative activities that encourage students to deepen their understanding by applying their knowledge, receiving immediate feedback from the instructor and their peers.<sup>15</sup> The in-class application-level activities included a variety of formats, from individual reflections to small-group activities.<sup>16</sup> In recognition of the value of in-person knowledge transfer, we reserved about fifteen minutes of each class session for a mini-lecture that emphasized key concepts anchored in the week’s defined learning outcomes. Our decision to retain some in-class lecturing was informed by the 2021 meta-analysis by Carrie Bredow et al., which found that partially flipped courses that included some lecturing led to the greatest student learning gains.<sup>17</sup> Course redesign work also involved composing weekly module outcomes, identifying related materials, creating support activities and assessments, and developing rubrics aligned with both institutional student learning outcomes and state core curriculum objectives. Based on the literature, rubrics effectively provide students with feedback and help set clear, consistent expectations and standards for students.<sup>18</sup> Rubrics played



**Figure 1:** Screenshot of Canvas Weekly Organization for Module 3

a critical role in making our flipped/hybrid course more accessible to our diverse student population by removing room for assumptions and setting those clear expectations.

We designed all course content for Canvas, the university’s learning management system (LMS). The weekly Canvas modules clearly list all the activities under a posted to-do list, making it transparent and seamless for students to find what they need to succeed without feeling overwhelmed by a complex interface. **Figure 1** depicts a screenshot from Canvas for HIST 105’s Module 3, showcasing the easy navigation and consistent set-up for the weekly modules.

During the course of the coronavirus pandemic, we had returned to teaching fully in person without mask mandates or vaccine requirements by Fall 2021. Although much of the flipped/hybrid development happened between 2020 and 2022, the ways in which the pandemic experience impacted students at Texas A&M varied from other geographical locations and institutions. Some instructors, for instance, taught a dynamic “hyflex” format in Fall 2020, where students could choose to attend either in-person or virtually, and change their mode of participation each class meeting. However, most of the flipped/hybrid sections discussed here occurred in fully in-person contexts.

Modality	n	Overall DFWQ	URM DFWQ	First Gen DFWQ	<\$60K DFWQ
Flipped-Hybrid Sections	814	3.70%	4.37%	4.53%	6.77%
Non-Flipped Hybrid Sections	5620	13.64%	17.15%	28.31%	20.20%

**Figure 2:** Comparison of Combined D, F, W, Q-Drop Rates

## Student Learning Assessment Data and Analysis

Four salient assessment outcomes informed our data collection. These assessment outcomes applied to both U.S. history surveys (HIST 105 and HIST 106), therefore allowing us to approach assessment with one comprehensive course-sequence plan, curating the same data from both courses. The first assessment outcome gauged the alignment of the instructor’s intent with the students’ experience. The second assessment outcome uncovered whether students’ perceptions of skill building aligned with the course’s learning outcomes. The third and fourth assessment outcomes focused more on course improvement by understanding the students’ perception of the individual course learning opportunities offered and by obtaining actionable student reflection data for future course revision. We collected data from the following four sources: 1) Student D, F, W, Q-Drop rates; 2) End-of-semester student course evaluations; 3) A pre- and post-course student perception survey; and 4) A mid-semester student journal entry. We will address each source in detail.<sup>19</sup>

### *Flipped/Hybrid Data Analysis: D, F, W, Q-Drop Rates*

Programs awarded an EDGE grant are asked to implement course-level interventions focused on boosting student learning, thus resulting in a lowering of a course’s D, F, W, Q-Drop rates. The D, F, W, Q-Drop rates were gathered for: 1) all students (overall); 2) underrepresented minority students (URM); 3) first-generation students (first gen); and 4) students whose annual household income is less than \$60,000 (<\$60K). The D, F, W, Q-Drop rates data from across the four semesters—Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022—were combined for comparison (**Figure 2**).<sup>20</sup> Sections

implementing the flipped/hybrid approach showed significantly lower D, F, W, Q-Drop rates than those departmental sections not implementing the flipped/hybrid approach.

*Flipped/Hybrid Data Analysis: End-of-Semester Student Course Evaluation*

As part of an institutional continuous course improvement effort, Texas A&M's end-of-semester student course evaluations ask students to self-report on ten distinct questions focused on course design and course engagement. The HIST 105 and HIST 106 course instructors who taught with the EDGE grant-funded flipped/hybrid approach made it part of their semesterly course improvement and refinement process to analyze their individual student course evaluation data. This data consistently informed the course adjustments made, particularly for Question 6 ("In this course, I learned to critically evaluate diverse ideas and perspectives") and Question 7 ("Feedback in this course helped me learn").<sup>21</sup> These two questions had consistently large standard deviations, causing the instructors to consider appropriate course refinements in response to the student course evaluation feedback. Question 9 ("The instructor's teaching methods contributed to my learning") spoke to the flipped/hybrid approach, and had a mean score with a relatively low standard deviation, consistently close to the highest point value possible. This provided the EDGE grant-funded instructors continued support and validation for the flipped/hybrid approach.

*Flipped/Hybrid Data Analysis: Pre-Course and Post-Course Student Perception Survey*

The U.S. history survey sections taught using the flipped/hybrid approach conducted pre-course surveys (**Appendix B**) and post-course surveys (**Appendix C**) to collect student perception data regarding students' attitudes towards learning history and their experience taking history courses. Both of our surveys, derived from the American Institute's pre-survey and post-survey, included twenty-two Likert-type questions, each using a five-point Likert scale, with answer choices ranging from "1—Strongly Disagree" to "5—Strongly Agree."<sup>22</sup>

Survey administration began in Fall 2020, prior to EDGE grant funding, and continued over five fifteen-week semesters, ending in Fall 2022. Over this five-semester period, the pre- and post-surveys were administered in twenty-two different HIST course sections—sixteen HIST 105 sections and six HIST 106 sections. Of the twenty-two sections, eighteen sections had two different faculty as the instructors-of-record and four sections had two different graduate assistants as instructors-of-record. To minimize pressure on students to participate in the survey research, a non-instructor research team member attended class to conduct the initial research participation invitation, as well as all survey administration, without the instructor-of-record present. We administered the pre-survey first thing on the course's first day of class, before students interacted with the course instructor. The post-survey, administered in class during the twelfth week, prior to Texas A&M's Q-Drop deadline date, allowed researchers to hear from the maximum number of students possible.

Survey response data was collected, organized, screened, and read both to secure the integrity of the data set and to gain an overall sense of the data, including cleaning and screening the raw survey data for missing values. Entries with missing data were deleted from the data set and not used for analysis. The researchers combined the five semesters of pre-survey responses ( $n = 1209$ ) and five semesters of post-survey responses ( $n = 922$ ) for analysis. We used the statistical software program SPSS to conduct individual t-tests to determine if significant differences existed between each of the survey question's combined pre- and combined post- score. Of the twenty-two Likert-type questions, twenty-one had a combined post-mean score statistically significantly different from the combined pre-mean score (see **Figure 3**). Two questions had a lower combined post-mean score than pre-mean score: Question 3 (“Doing well in a history class is mostly a matter of memorizing facts and dates”) and Question 4 (“Historians should come to the same conclusion when examining evidence from the past”). These responses align with the survey developer's findings related to “expert shift” in historical thinking and indicate a favorable outcome for these two HIST courses.<sup>23</sup>

Levine's one constant—of imparting to students why history should remain an essential part of their curriculum and how their curriculum has evolved over time—grounded our course planning and assessment, which we operationalized as engagement, relevancy, and applicability.

Question Topic	Combined Pre- (n = 1209)		Combined Post- (n = 922)		<i>Mean Diff.</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1. Enjoy Studying	3.11	1.09	3.63	1.12	.52	<.001
2. Engaged Me	2.92	1.19	4.16	.97	1.24	<.001
3. Memorize Facts	3.59	1.09	2.69	1.15	-.91	<.001
4. Historians - Same Conclusions from the Past	2.40	.99	2.35	1.07	-.05	.31
5. Understand - Readings	3.05	1.15	3.49	1.06	.44	<.001
6. Understand - Videos	4.17	.86	4.32	.74	.15	<.001
7. Understand - Listening	3.82	.99	4.16	.82	.34	<.001
8. Good at - Analyzing Complex Evidence	3.01	1.02	3.57	.99	.55	<.001
9. Good at - Analyzing Historical Arguments	3.00	1.04	3.63	.99	.63	<.001
10. Relevant to Who I Am	2.55	1.09	3.50	1.09	.96	<.001
11. Relevant to Understanding How I Fit into the Larger Society	2.97	1.12	3.81	1.01	.84	<.001
12. Helped Me Understand Current Events	3.65	1.00	3.94	1.07	.28	<.001
13. Helped Me Improve the Skills I Need for Success in School	2.93	1.13	3.91	1.03	.98	<.001
14. Helped Me Improve the Skills I Need for Success in My Future Career	2.61	1.14	3.71	1.14	1.10	<.001
15. Learn - Lecture	3.18	1.13	3.52	1.14	.34	<.001
16. Work - Team	3.15	1.19	3.45	1.23	.29	<.001
17. Learn - Classmates	3.94	.94	4.26	.87	.32	<.001
18. Learn - Discussion	3.59	1.13	4.10	.96	.51	<.001
19. Critical Thinking Skills	4.05	.88	4.33	.76	.28	<.001
20. Communication Skills	3.97	.95	4.25	.83	.28	<.001
21. Social Responsibility	4.07	.87	4.31	.76	.24	<.001
22. Personal Responsibility	4.30	.75	4.40	.70	.10	.002

**Figure 3:** Comparison of Each Survey Question on Combined Pre- and Combined Post-Course Survey Mean Scores

While we found all the survey response data meaningful, six of the twenty-two questions most aligned with this purpose and provided validation for our work. We looked at each question's combined pre- and combined post-score mean difference and statistical significance as indicators of success. All six salient questions had an almost full Likert point or more in mean difference, from which we concluded that our work had the impact we had set out to achieve.

Most notably, two of the six salient questions from the survey's Beliefs about History question set demonstrated that students changed their perceptions regarding how we study history. First, responses to Question 2 ("This history class engaged me and changed the way I feel about studying history") had a combined pre-mean score of 2.92 and a post-mean score of 4.16, showing a significant mean difference of 1.24 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Student Likert responses shifted from a pre-mean response of "2-Disagree" to a post-mean response of "4-Agree." For Question 3 ("Doing well in a history class is mostly a matter of memorizing facts and dates"), a combined pre-mean score of 3.59 and a post-mean score of 2.69 conveyed a significant mean difference of -0.91 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Student Likert responses went from a pre-mean response of "3-Neither Agree nor Disagree" to a post-mean response of "2-Disagree." Both questions' significant pre-/post- difference led our team to conclude that students felt engaged by their flipped/hybrid course experience and revised their beliefs about studying history.

The remaining four of the six salient questions, from the survey's Personal Relevance question set, illuminated how students arrived at new understandings of how studying history could impact their futures. All the questions in this section asked students to evaluate the relevance of studying history to their lives. Questions 10, 11, 13, and 14 all went from a pre-mean to post-mean difference of about one Likert point (see **Figure 3**). These four questions' significant pre-/post- difference led our team to conclude that students' flipped/hybrid course experience had shifted their perceptions on learning history's relevance and applicability in both school and future career success.

### *Flipped/Hybrid Data Analysis: Mid-Semester Journal Entry*

A mid-point check-in journal entry assignment provided another data set that our team used for both course improvement and

understanding student perceptions regarding the flipped/hybrid approach. All flipped/hybrid sections required students to complete regular writing assignments, and our HIST 105 instructor team formatted a mid-semester journal entry to solicit course-specific student feedback. The journal entry prompt read as follows: “Please let me know of anything in our class you believe we should: 1. Improve, 2. Start doing, 3. Keep doing.” Of the 260 unique entries coded during analysis, the most common “Improve” response requested more time for in-class activities ( $n = 47$ ). The most common “Start doing” response recommended keeping the same groups all semester ( $n = 13$ ). The most common “Keep doing” response asked for a continuation of class discussions and in-class activities ( $n = 124$ ). We also analyzed the Improve-Start-Keep journal entry data set for mindset themes. Three prevalent mindset themes emerged: “Enjoy learning, working in class” ( $n = 95$ ); “Effective learning, not just memorization” ( $n = 40$ ); and “Engaged in class/material” ( $n = 36$ ).

Several students provided written comments in support of their beliefs about how the course improved their learning outcomes, often highlighting the inclusivity promoted by the flipped/hybrid approach. For example, one student who took the course in Spring 2022 responded:

Your way of teaching makes it easier and quicker for me to understand the topics we discussed, especially as English isn't my first language. I'm really grateful for your constructive feedback because not only does it motivate me but it also encourages me to always improve myself. The learning environment is really fun and very open-minded which facilitates the learning process for me.<sup>24</sup>

Another student from that same semester (in which nearly 200 students enrolled in flipped/hybrid sections of HIST 105) emphasized the ways they took responsibility for their learning:

I think this teaching style has impacted me a lot this semester. I find it very effective how we engage with every content we are learning in this course. Most of the time, the professor teaches in a lecture-style while we just listen for an hour and take notes, however, in this class, every person participates, and while we understand the general concept of what is being taught, we as students are responsible for communicating as a class with the professor and our groups in deep diving into what we are learning and working to learn together as a group rather than the information just being thrown at us.<sup>25</sup>

The data collected underpinned our process to constantly reflect, review, and re-work the course to further improve the student experience. Despite group work challenges, student survey responses overwhelmingly indicated increased appreciation of issues from different perspectives, broadened understanding of historical issues, acknowledgement of how cooperation facilitated learning, enjoyment in attending class and undertaking team activities, and expressions of gratitude for the opportunity to build collegial friendships. We also used the qualitative feedback from the mid-point journal entry and end-of-course evaluations to adjust course elements, such as pacing of the content presentations and activity formats.

### **Instructor Reflection: Jessica Erin Ray [Herzogenrath]**

In Fall 2020, nothing about teaching proved easy. We only filled classrooms to one-third of their capacity to support pandemic policies of social distancing, used differently colored dot stickers to designate where students could sit to promote cleanliness, and wore masks while teaching and learning. As I strode across the stage of the Bush School's 600-seat auditorium to face about seventy-five students in front of me, over one hundred students populated the screen behind me, joining us via Zoom. The pilot of our flipped/hybrid sections of HIST 105 and 106 began that semester, despite our pandemic conditions not being ideal for embarking on a new model focused on group work and discussion. By the end of that semester, I had fully committed to the flipped/hybrid approach; however, I understood the resistance undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty feel when faced with its implementation. Teaching the flipped/hybrid requires additional vulnerability, advance preparation, improvisation, and practice. I most appreciate witnessing students take charge of their learning during in-class activities, even though I need to step back as they practice "doing history" with me as their guide. Additionally, I enjoy the fact that instructors can adapt the structure to fit their teaching strengths and areas of expertise without reinventing the entire course. For example, I like creating new class activities based on cultural touchstones; others may prefer emphasizing geography and maps.

## Graduate Student Reflection: Kaitlyn Ross

While beneficial for undergraduate students, reinvigorating Texas A&M's U.S. history survey courses using a flipped/hybrid approach also benefits the graduate students serving as teaching assistants by providing opportunities to prepare history Ph.D. students for different teaching models and distinguish their skills for the job market. Before the EDGE grant-supported course redesign, Department of History graduate students primarily supported the large survey courses; their main duties consisted of the more traditional tasks of grading papers, taking attendance, proctoring exams/quizzes, holding office hours and review sessions, and lecturing once or twice a semester. Texas A&M's Ph.D. students are encouraged to bolster this graduate school experience with professional development programs hosted within the department, at our campus Center for Teaching Excellence, and through professional societies. After three to four years in assistantship roles, Ph.D. candidates can apply for a graduate lecturer position to lead their own history survey sections. However, the leap between assisting and lecturing often proves a struggle for many students who are unprepared for the rigor of designing, leading, and administering their own courses.

The flipped/hybrid approach gives graduate students a more active role in the classroom and an opportunity to see all the work that goes into course creation and implementation. Dr. Jessica Erin Ray [Herzogenrath] recruited me to assist with the EDGE grant work during the 2021-2022 school year. Together, we created a two-semester pedagogical training sequence in which I assisted with two flipped/hybrid HIST 105 sections in Fall 2021, grading asynchronous assessments and helping manage synchronous in-class activities. Over the course of the semester, we employed many co-teaching strategies, providing undergraduate students more individualized instruction and the chance for me to engage with the learning materials and student learning process, especially during class sessions. When class time is dedicated to active learning, there are no passive instructors. In Spring 2022, I instructed two fifty-student flipped/hybrid sections. Ray provided me with the course shell (including all content), assessments, and weekly outlines for the in-class activities. Each week, she and I met to discuss the next week's class, brainstorm if anything needed to be changed

for the in-class activity, troubleshoot any problems we observed, and discuss different content presentation strategies. The weekly outlines provided a jumping-off point for running the seventy-five-minute class, offering me the flexibility to experiment with various teaching methods and to put my own stamp on the course. Scaling up our graduate mentorship approach could be accomplished by having one faculty member lead a team of graduate assistants, with the added benefit of creating weekly peer-to-peer teaching feedback. Ultimately, I quickly gained invaluable teaching experience with classroom management, lesson planning, confidence in instructing, student communication, workload time management, and other skills necessary to be a successful instructor under an experienced faculty member's mentorship.

This type of graduate student training requires investment by both faculty and graduate students to succeed; both may need to reconceptualize their roles beyond traditional teaching assistantships. Graduate students may need to shift their workload expectations from grading many submissions a few times a semester to weekly grading, reviewing materials, and preparing in-class lessons. Faculty may find themselves stepping back from the classroom to allow graduate students room to grow, focusing instead on course materials, structure, and mentorship. Our model's success looked clear to me. Not only did I become more comfortable as an instructor, but, as the data collected bears out, students reported similar experiences in both our sections, validating the course design's strength. Furthermore, I received the 2022 Fasken Graduate Student Teaching Award from Texas A&M, which recognized my work on the course. Since I began working with the flipped/hybrid approach, other graduate students have participated with these courses and found similar teaching experience improvements.<sup>26</sup> The flipped/hybrid classroom prepares the history department's Ph.D. students to handle the demands of leading classes, to develop their own teaching style, and to build confidence both in and beyond the classroom.

## Conclusions

By many measures, the flipped/hybrid experiment in Texas A&M University's Department of History has proven a success. The faculty involved appreciate the model's flexibility while maintaining

a structure that benefits a wide range of students. Participating graduate students have gained valuable experience designing and delivering course materials with close mentorship. Undergraduate students walk away with greater confidence in their ability to think critically and communicate about history. Additionally, the team's work has garnered awards for some of the EDGE grant team members and parlayed itself into an invitation from the Texas Higher Education Board's Digital Design for Student Success (D2S2) initiative to create Open Education Resources for the first half of the U.S. history survey.<sup>27</sup>

We set out to ask students to consider what it means to be a historian and why history remains an essential part of our curriculum. With the guidance of their instructors, we found that students learn how to locate and explain contextual information and understand what we may learn from primary sources, as well as their limitations. Students cultivate a skill set that moves them towards a better understanding of people's experiences and why they make the choices they do, primarily through the four core curriculum objective areas of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and personal responsibility.

By studying history, students learn the value of their voices, as well as those of others, both past and present. By studying history, they may realize the power of their voices to shape the world around them, finding information and interpreting it with a critical eye in ways that will serve them no matter their degree plan and career path. We ask that our students (and all of us) remember that history is not just the past; nor is it only knowing when something happened or even why, but also through whom and how. History happens when we question the past, experience the present, and create the future. We are history, and teaching history matters. In our experience, using the flipped/hybrid model engages students to call on the content and skills that they have learned and encourages them to continue to practice history by seeking it everywhere and sharing their stories so that historians of the future have a more complete understanding of the past.<sup>28</sup>

Based on our survey data analysis, we have concluded that students who completed the flipped/hybrid U.S. history surveys learned the value of studying history more effectively than in our more traditionally designed history surveys. Our experiment has

opened our eyes to the power of centering student experience and the results speak for themselves: lower D, F, W, Q-Drop rates and improved student perceptions of the relevance of history in their careers and lives. This supports our theory that the flipped/hybrid approach offers a very promising approach to reinvigorating the U.S. history survey. Embracing Levine's assertion that change proves the only constant, the flipped/hybrid history classes at Texas A&M University have succeeded in imparting exactly why studying history remains important.

## Notes

1. Lawrence W. Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Cannons, Culture, and History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996).
2. American Historical Association, "About the AHA and Membership," accessed April 2, 2024, <<https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership>>; James R. Grossman, "Everything Has a History," *Perspectives on History* 53, no. 9 (December 2015), <<https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/everything-has-a-history-december-2015/>>.
3. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Texas Core Curriculum" (April 2018), <<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/elements-of-the-texas-core-curriculum/>>.
4. The Introduction text comes from Jessica Ray Herzogenrath, Troy Bickham, and Kaitlyn Ross, "HIST 1301 United States History I," August 19, 2022, <<https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/3691>>. Also see the course lecture video, Jessica Herzogenrath, "HIST 1301—Course Introduction, Dr. Jessica Ray Herzogenrath," November 21, 2022, video, 5:39, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOT9if9FSzA>>.
5. The State of Texas common numbering system identifies these courses as 1301 (the first half of U.S. History) and 1302 (the second half of U.S. History), which Texas A&M University labels as HIST 105 and HIST 106 due to continued use of a legacy numbering system.
6. The Department of History had been part of the College of Arts and Sciences until 1968 with the emergence of the College of Liberal Arts. Then, in the fall of 2022, the Colleges of Geosciences, Liberal Arts, and Sciences merged to form another iteration of the College of Arts & Sciences.
7. For more on the concept of "sage on the stage," see Alison King, "From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side," *College Teaching* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 30-35.
8. David Vaught, *Teaching the Big Class: Advice from a History Colleague* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2010).
9. The trends at Texas A&M University also mirror broader conditions for history and the humanities more generally. See Colleen Flaherty, "The Vanishing History Major," *Inside Higher Ed*, November 26, 2018, <<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/11/27/new-analysis-history-major-data-says-field-new-low-can-it-be-saved>>; Robert B. Townsend, "Data Show a Decline in History Majors," *Perspectives on History* 51, no. 4 (April 2013), <<https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/data-show-a-decline-in-history-majors-april-2013/>>; Robert B. Townsend, "Decline in History Majors Continues, Departments Respond," *Perspectives on History* 55, no. 6 (September 2017), <<https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/decline-in-history-majors-continues-departments-respond-september-2017/>>; Jordan Friedman, "Study: More Students are Enrolling in Online Courses," *U.S. News and World Report*, January 11, 2018.
10. Office of Academic & Business Performance Analytics, DARS, Texas A&M University, "Historical Enrollment, Texas A&M University," accessed

April 29, 2024, <[https://dars.tamu.edu/Data-and-Reports/Student/files/Overall\\_Enrollment\\_Historical.aspx](https://dars.tamu.edu/Data-and-Reports/Student/files/Overall_Enrollment_Historical.aspx)>.

11. The titles listed reflect positions at the time the EDGE grant began; however, the process and its impact have supported career advancement for many of the participants. For instance, Jessica Erin Ray [Herzogenrath] is now an Instructional Associate Professor and also Associate Director of the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, and Samantha Shields is the Assistant Director of Curriculum Development in Texas A&M's Center for Teaching Excellence.

12. Andrew K. Koch, "Many Thousands Failed: A Wakeup Call to History Educators," *Perspectives on History* 55, no. 5 (May 2017), <<https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/may-2017/many-thousands-failed-a-wakeup-call-to-history-educators>>; American Historical Association, History Gateways, accessed June 12, 2023, <<https://www.historians.org/historygateways>>; Friedman, "More Students are Enrolling in Online Courses."

13. J. Patrick McCarthy and Liam Anderson, "Active Learning Techniques versus Traditional Teaching Styles: Two Experiments from History and Political Science," *Innovative Higher Education* 24, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 290-294; Sarah L. Eddy and Kelly A. Hogan, "Getting Under the Hood: How and for Whom Does Increasing Course Structure Work?" *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 13, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 460; John C. Savagian, "Toward a Coherent Curriculum: Teaching and Learning History at Alverno College," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (March 2009): 1114.

14. For the definition of the flipped classroom that we followed and implementation strategies, see Judy E. Gaughan, "The Flipped Classroom in World History," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 2 (February 2014): 221-244. For additional implementation strategies, see Tanya Evans, "Enhancing Student Engagement through Flipping: A Case Study in Australian History," *The History Teacher* 51, no. 4 (August 2018): 611-638.

15. Jesús Sergio Artal-Sevil, Ana Felicitas Gargallo Castel, and Marta Sofia Valero Gracia, "Flipped Teaching and Interactive Tools. A Multidisciplinary Innovation Experience in Higher Education," Sixth International Conference on Higher Education Advances, June 2020, 103-112, <<https://doi.org/10.4995/HEAd20.2020.10990>>.

16. For examples of the kinds of activities used, see Herzogenrath, Bickham, and Ross, "HIST 1301 United States History I" at <<https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/3691>>.

17. Carrie A. Bredow, Patricia V. Roehling, Alexandra J. Knorp, and Andrea M. Sweet, "To Flip or Not to Flip? A Meta-Analysis of the Efficacy of Flipped Learning in Higher Education," *Review of Educational Research* 91, no. 6 (December 2021): 878-918, <<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543211019122>>.

18. See Kenneth Wolf and Ellen Stevens, "The Role of Rubrics in Advancing and Assessing Student Learning," *The Journal of Effective Teaching* 7, no. 1 (2007): 3-14.

19. D, F, W, Q-drop rates indicate the number of students earning letter grades of "D" or "F," as well as those students who Q-dropped the course ("Q—dropped without penalty" on their transcript) and those who withdrew ("W") from all their

courses in that given semester. Lendol Calder and Tracy Steffes, “Measuring College Learning in History,” Social Science Research Council White Paper, May 2016, 41.

20. These were the most current data available at the time of submission.

21. Please note, feedback can be either informal (e.g., in-class discussion, chat boards, think-pair-share, office hour discussions, help sessions) or formal (e.g., written or clinical assessments, review of exams, peer reviews, clicker questions).

22. We modeled our survey on the one used by Bridget Ford et al., “Beyond Big Data: Teaching Introductory U.S. History in the Age of Student Success,” *The Journal of American History* 106, no. 4 (March 2020): 1004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaz679>>.

23. Ford et al., “Beyond Big Data.”

24. HIST 105-508 & 150-510 Midterm Check-in, Spring 2022, Texas A&M University.

25. HIST 105 Midterm Check-in, Spring 2022, Texas A&M University.

26. We thank Texas A&M Department of History graduate students Tanner Ogle and Sarah Vegerano for their participation in and contributions to the flipped/hybrid approach.

27. To access the Open Educational Resources (OER) available for the first half of the U.S. History survey, visit the overview for HIST 1301 United States History I at <<https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/3691/overview>>.

28. The Conclusion text comes from Herzogenrath, Bickham, and Ross, “HIST 1301 United States History I,” <<https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/3691>>. Also see the course lecture video, Jessica Herzogenrath, “HIST 1301—Course Conclusion: Looking Forward with History, Dr. Jessica Ray Herzogenrath,” December 12, 2022, video, 3:40, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQuF2Wf245s>>.

## Appendix A: Learning Outcomes

The core curriculum courses are underpinned by a set of learning outcomes and objectives as follows:

### Course Learning Outcomes

#### *Core Objectives for American History Foundational Component Area*

1. Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information)
2. Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication)
3. Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities)
4. Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making)

### Student Learning Outcomes

#### *During the semester, students will:*

1. Enhance their ability to ask questions of, accurately evaluate, and effectively synthesize primary and secondary historical writings.
2. Develop the ability to effectively express their own ideas in written and oral form.
3. Expand their knowledge of the historical and social contexts that created diversity in past and present human cultures.
4. Apply knowledge about the human condition—in the past and present—to their personal lives and studies.

## Appendix B: Pre-Course Survey Questions

### **Beliefs about History and History Classes**

1. I enjoy studying history.
2. The history classes I have taken in the past have engaged me and changed the way I feel about studying history.
3. Doing well in a history class is mostly a matter of memorizing facts and dates.
4. Historians should come to the same conclusions when examining evidence from the past.
5. I am able to understand history from history readings such as textbooks and/or documents.
6. I am able to understand history by watching videos about history and/or videos of historical events.
7. I am able to understand history by listening to others discuss history and/or listening to historical accounts.
8. I am good at analyzing complex evidence from the past.
9. I am good at analyzing historical arguments.

### **Personal Relevance**

10. The history classes I have taken in the past have been relevant to who I am.
11. The history classes I have taken in the past have been relevant to understanding how I fit into the larger society.
12. The history classes I have taken in the past have helped me understand current events.
13. The history classes I have taken in the past have helped improve the skills I need for success in school.
14. The history classes I have taken in the past have helped me improve the skills I need for success in my future career.

### **Academic Strategies and Skills**

15. Listening to a lecture is an effective way for me to learn.
16. I work best on a team rather than by myself.
17. I believe I can learn from my classmates.
18. Class discussions are an effective way for me to learn.
19. I believe I have critical thinking skills (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information).
20. I believe I have communication skills (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication).

21. I believe I have an understanding of my own social responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities).
22. I believe I have an understanding of my own personal responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making).

**Open-Ended, Free-Response Questions**

23. Besides a passing grade, what do you hope to gain from this course?
24. What do you think your biggest challenge will be in this class?
25. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

## Appendix C: Post-Course Survey Questions

### **Beliefs about History and History Classes**

1. I enjoy studying history.
2. This history class engaged me and changed the way I feel about studying history.
3. Doing well in a history class is mostly a matter of memorizing facts and dates.
4. Historians should come to the same conclusions when examining evidence from the past.
5. I am able to understand history from history readings such as textbooks and/or documents.
6. I am able to understand history by watching videos about history and/or videos of historical events.
7. I am able to understand history by listening to others discuss history and/or listening to historical accounts.
8. I am good at analyzing complex evidence from the past.
9. I am good at analyzing historical arguments.

### **Personal Relevance**

10. This history class was relevant to who I am.
11. This history class was relevant to understanding how I fit into the larger society.
12. This history class helped me understand current events.
13. This history class helped improve the skills I need for success in school.
14. This history class helped me improve the skills I need for success in my future career.

### **Academic Strategies and Skills**

15. Listening to a lecture is an effective way for me to learn.
16. I work best on a team rather than by myself.
17. I believe I can learn from my classmates.
18. Class discussions are an effective way for me to learn.
19. I believe I have critical thinking skills (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information).
20. I believe I have communication skills (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication).
21. I believe I have an understanding of my own social responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability

to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities) and am more prepared to become involved in community or political affairs.

22. I believe I have an understanding of my own personal responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making).

**Open-Ended, Free-Response Questions**

23. Besides a passing grade, what do you think you gained from this course?
24. What do you think your biggest challenge was in this class?
25. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

## Appendix D: In-Person Meeting Teaching Document

### HIST 105, Module 10: Elections of the 1820s

#### Logistics (5-10 minutes)

- Peer Reviews Due
- Asynchronous Activity 10 Due
- Will discuss Assessment 3 in a couple of weeks

#### Warm-Up (10-15 minutes)

- Recap of Module 9
  - Circulation of ideas
  - Growth of infrastructure
- Have you run for an elected position (student government, clubs/organizations—high school included!)? Think about how you campaigned.
- Give an example of a candidate’s campaign slogan/approach to gain support (local, student election). [*Assign specific areas if needed based on section.*]

#### Mini Lecture (10-15 minutes)

- Connect with Module 9’s emphasis on infrastructure
  - Frontier as distinct section – comprises much of Andrew Jackson’s following
  - Circulation of ideas/allegiances
- Andrew Jackson as connecting American Revolution with new era of U.S. that arises in 19th century
- Andrew Jackson (AJ)
  - First president not from a political family
  - Parents were poor Scots Irish immigrants
  - Extended family fought in guerilla warfare of American Revolutionary War
    - AJ was captured (around 13 years old?)
  - Known for temper and propensity for brawling
  - Known for toughness – called “Old Hickory”
  - War hero
    - Credited with winning Battle of New Orleans in War of 1812
    - Sometimes ignored orders that he did not like
    - Viewed self as a sort of savior – fashioned as one to rescue poor from wealthy

- For
  - Lower taxes
  - Decreased government spending
  - Paying off federal debt
  - Promoting equality (limited)
  - Removing Native Americans from all states
- Immigration
  - After War of 1812 ended (1815), immigration increased with largest influx from 1845-1854
    - 2.4 million (14.5% of total population 1845)
    - 1860 – U.S. population 31 million (1 of 8 foreign-born)
  - 3 largest groups of immigrants
    - Irish – 1.6 million
    - German – 1.2 million
    - British – 588,000
  - Irish
    - Ireland in early 19th century suffering from severe economic depression, exacerbated in 1845 by a blight of potato rot – killed 1 million Irish peasants
    - Arrivals fairly evenly divided by sex, though not usually in families
    - Worked primarily in urban industry – textile mills for the women and construction for men (RRs and canals)
    - Few went South because of pervasiveness of enslaved labor
    - Anti-Irish sentiment rampant – many native-born Americans feared becoming a Catholic nation and therefore an arm of the Pope
    - Tensions high between Irish and African Americans, especially because often competing for jobs
  - Germans
    - Many arrivals were professionals – doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers
    - Some were political refugees (failed revolution in 1848)
    - Tended to settle in rural areas – TX, for example
    - More often emigrated as families; 14% returned to Germany
  - Influx of immigrants led to sentiments of nativism – anti-foreigner and usually also anti-Catholic
- Election of 1828
  - Highly contested election in 1824 between John Quincy Adams (JQA, son of John Adams) and Andrew Jackson, in which JQA emerged the victor via a “corrupt bargain” with Henry Clay

- 1828 offered a rematch
- Was an ugly, mudslinging campaign
  - AJ was accused of living as an adulterer with his wife (they had thought her divorce was final)
  - AJ portrayed as a killer and hot-tempered madman because he had made his fame in frontier brawls and duels
  - JQA accused of living off public treasury and being a gambler for buying a chess set and billiards table for the White House
- Most, though, saw AJ as a war hero; southern planters liked him because he was also a planter, slaveholder, and lawyer; seen as the champion of the common man because not seen as aristocratic
- The broadening of white male suffrage encouraged votes cast for AJ
  - Property requirements increasingly done away with; taxpayers could vote
  - Means that appealing to the masses more important
  - AJ embodied the ideal of a more democratic political landscape and wins easily
- U.S. in 1828 – 24 states, about 13 million people

**In-Class Activity (25-30 minutes)**

See HIST 1301 United States History I, Activity: Module 9 (With Technology)  
 – Early Nineteenth Century Elections at <<https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courseware/lesson/4024/overview>> for full details.

**Share Out/Wrap-Up (5-10 minutes)**

*[If time, have students discuss their responses in groups and ask if anyone would like to share.]*