COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we will explore the life and times of Alexander Hamilton—both the man and the musical. Easily among the most polarizing figures of a famously polarized generation, Hamilton was a Caribbean-born immigrant who became an American revolutionary, a “bastard brat” who became Treasury Secretary, a man who helped to lead thirteen of Britain’s American colonies in a violent independence war only to advocate a financial plan and a foreign policy that presented Britain as a role model. If Hamilton helped to revolutionize his country, meanwhile, Lin Manuel Miranda’s musical has revolutionized the genre of the Broadway musical and become a national sensation. Why has it captured so many people’s imaginations? Where does the show diverge from the history, and what does that say about our memory and use of the past? What might it teach us about early America—and about ourselves?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: As part of this course, students will:
• Learn about Alexander Hamilton’s life and times: the tumultuous world of revolutionary and early national America
• Identify where and why the musical diverges from the history
• Consider the Hamilton musical’s contemporary cultural resonance and how it relates to such themes as race, immigration, and current politics
• Ponder the difference between history, art, and memory
• Engage in reasoned and respectful discussion and construct thoughtful, evidence-based arguments from course readings and lectures

AREA OF CONCENTRATION: Americas

TEACHING METHOD: Lectures, Discussion Sections

EVALUATION METHOD: Class participation, writing assignments and/or projects

GRADING BASIS: Student Option

TENTATIVE READING LIST:
Ron Chernow, Alexander Hamilton: A Life (optional)
Lin Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, Hamilton: The Revolution
Course packet