

S2E03 Transcript

How do podcasts enrich student learning in the History classroom?

Ask a
Historian



Emily Tran: From the University of Wisconsin—Madison, this is *Ask a Historian*. I'm Emily Tran.

Today on the show: How can podcasts enrich student learning in the History classroom? I'll talk to UW-Madison graduate student instructors Jeffrey Guarneri and Maggie Flamingo about why they asked the students in their history courses to make podcasts. We'll listen to some of the great work that those students turned in, and we'll talk about how this approach has changed the way Maggie and Jeff think about teaching.

[MUSIC FADES]

My guests today for this special conversation about teaching and learning history are Maggie Flamingo and Jeffrey Guarneri. They're both PhD candidates in the History Department here at UW-Madison and have each designed and taught their own undergraduate courses. Maggie studies 20th-century American history and Jeff studies 20th-century Japanese history.

Emily Tran: Maggie and Jeff, welcome to *Ask a Historian*. Thanks so much for being with us today.

Maggie Flamingo: Yeah, I'm excited to talk about things.

Jeff Guarneri: Thanks for having us. This is going to be a fun chat.

Emily Tran: So, I've asked you here on the show today to talk about your role as instructors and your work in the classroom. So, this past summer, you both designed and taught a history course for undergraduates here at UW-Madison. Can you tell me about the courses that you taught?

Jeff Guarneri: Oh, sure. So, the course that I taught this past summer—it's my second summer course, my second summer online course, that I was lucky enough to be able to design—but it was on the history of Tokyo from 1868 to 1964, kind of bookended by when Tokyo became named or was named to Tokyo, from the old city of Edo, and 1964, which is the first Tokyo Olympics and sort of marked this major landmark moment in the city's history, as well as the history of Japan.

It was divided up into four modules. Each module dealt with a different period of time, just to give students something to really anchor themselves to. And then throughout, they just produced podcasts for each and every one of those units. So, they got experience doing a series of them.

So, it was in part about the history of Tokyo. And originally, I tried to cleverly time it out with the Tokyo Olympics, which then got postponed to next year, but also as a way of giving them a means of repeating a particular assignment type and sort of working on those skills over the course of the summer.

Emily Tran: All right, and Maggie?

Maggie Flamingo: Yeah. So, my approach is a little different than Jeff's. I think Jeff's is great. The first time I did it—

Jeff Guarneri: Thank you.

Maggie Flamingo: Yeah. That sounds so fun. Like, I can just imagine being a student being like, 'Okay, my next podcast will be better.'

The first time I taught my class was 'Religion and the Culture Wars,' and I made the podcast the end assignment, so it was instead of the big paper. And it was a huge assignment, and the students put a ton of work into it, and they were quite lengthy.

When I removed the course online, it also became a Historian's Craft course, which for us means that they are required to do a research paper. And so, with that new restriction—and they had to do a traditional paper—I changed the podcast to two short podcasts where one, they would be talking about a primary source, and the other they would kind of talk about their project overall. And that's what I did both last summer and this summer with my course.

Emily Tran: This is a bit of a departure from typical History courses, both of your classes and your use of podcasts. In my experience in History class, you just write a lot, and everything that you turn into the professor is an essay or a blog post or some other form of writing.

But what were your teaching goals for the students? What did you want them to take away from this process of making podcasts?

Maggie Flamingo: So, for me, I think it's that history can actually be quite enjoyable. And it is storytelling, like you are trying to create a narrative that an audience is going to take in. I also wanted them to think really deeply about how choices are being made when they consume history. Because I think so many non-History majors who come into the class think history is just a list of facts, like that's still something that is just mind boggling to them that there's always bias. There's always argumentation. There's always perspective. And so, I think that really doing a podcast was a better way of getting them to think through those decisions that really make up the creation of history, if you will.

And they don't do that in papers. Like, papers still just become often an encyclopedic report. And they don't really think through necessarily the argumentation. I mean, some do, of course, some get it and they're great at it, but others don't do they kind of just fly under the radar and pass the class and move on.

So, this seemed to me as far as a teaching goal, a really effective way to get them to think a little bit more deeply about how history is in the world, right? It's not just something that is in the library, or in a book, but they can also— like, they consume it. And it— when they consume it, they need to be critical of it, even if it is just an entertaining podcast or documentary.

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, to build on that, I think it's— I totally agree that one of the best things, or one of the goals that I had going into this was really to get students to understand what gets put in, but also what gets left out of any given narrative. They all had the same set of sources to work with, I

didn't have them go out and find it on their own. So, they, in making their podcasts, they had to operate within a fairly strict time limit. And so, they had to make choices about what to include, but what they also had to leave out in order to keep everything within a certain time. So, it that really gave them a hands-on experience with making a lot of those hard editorial choices that don't just go into podcasts, but go into any form of media.

But I think one of the other ways I tried to really enforce that, or reinforce that with them, and just also as a move towards making sure that they were actually collaborating, since it was an online course and peer-to-peer interaction can be difficult, I also tried to reinforce that understanding of editorial choices, and sort of editorial vision by having them listen to each other's podcasts and comment on each other's podcasts, so that not only through producing their own, but also looking at what choices everyone else made and how they tell their stories, they would also have a point of comparison, beyond just what I was telling them.

Emily Tran: Right, so there's generally, whether they're in this class and making their own narratives or coming into contact with narratives about the past or the present in their daily lives, there's, they sort of get a sense that the narratives are always constructed. I really like that.

So, I want to talk now about some of the ways that the podcast format really brings out the analytical and communication skills that we try to build in History class. So, you both brought along some examples of excellent work that your students created this summer. Let's listen to some bits and pieces.

We'll start with Zachary Spangler's podcast. Zachary was a student in Jeff's Japanese history class. And he does something at the beginning and end of his episode that I noticed that all of your students did in their podcasts, Jeff. So, here's how Zachary opens his episode.

Zachary Spangler: During the 1930s and 1940s, Tokyo underwent massive change. If the defining term of the 1920s was 'progressiveness,' the defining phrase for the '30s and '40s was 'nationalist militarism.' During this time of war, the people of Tokyo underwent many changes as a result of governmental action, mass media outlets, and their own desire to change.

For this podcast, I'll be breaking up our time period into pre- and post-total mobilization of the military. The reason is, is that this event played a major role in changing the atmosphere Tokyo.

Emily Tran: And here's how he ends his episode.

Zachary Spangler: In summary, the 1930s and 1940s were characterized by nationalistic militarism that was originally supported by the people but continually lost more and more favor as the war progressed, and more and more losses accumulated. The people living in Tokyo lived in a military-centric culture that eventually led to innumerable losses as the government required more and more contributions from the people of Tokyo. Despite all the support, the residents of Tokyo were ravaged by air raids that left families in ruins and their city in tatters.

Emily Tran: So, I sort of saw this as bookends. Was that something that you gave them guidance on, Jeff?

Jeff Guarneri: Absolutely. And so one of the things that I really tried to reinforce for them was that, especially with history being, as Maggie said, storytelling, I wanted them to have a clear on-ramp and off-ramp for their listener so that no matter who they are—regardless of whether or not they have any experience with the history in question, be it Tokyo or Japan in general, at that time—that they would always be able to get to situate the listener in such a way that they would understand all the contents of the podcast.

But also, so that they would sort of work with work around the sorts of things you have to with any listener. You can't just kind of jump in straightaway and have a like a cold open and expect everybody to follow fully. We're telling very complex stories as historians.

Emily Tran: To me, it was a bit analogous to sort of like the introduction and conclusion of every essay that we ask students to write where they articulate their argument and their key points in the introduction and then the conclu— in the conclusion, they have to sum it all up.

Okay, let's listen now to a portion of Wenrui Cai's podcast. Wenrui does two things here that I like to talk about. So, first, he starts by making an analytical connection to another episode of the podcast that he had turned in previously. And then he goes on to present and interpret two primary sources.

Wenrui Cai: We discussed previously in the podcast that Western ideology and Western-style education heavily influenced the citizens' mind in Tokyo.

As for women, now there are a bunch of women that received a Western-style education and realize that inequality of men and women are still exist in the city of Tokyo. So, they became to challenge the traditional government-sponsored ideology that women should become a wise mother and a good wife. Instead, they claim that women are just as capable as men, and so be treated equally in society in terms of job opportunities and politics.

For example, Hiratsuka Raichō is one of the pioneer women's rights activists at that period of time, and she founded *Bluestocking*, which is one of the most influential feminist journals at that time. In her own journal, she wrote, "Now, what is the true liberation that I'm seeking? It is none other than to provide an opportunity for women to develop fully their hidden talent and hidden abilities. We must remove all barriers that stand in the way of human development, whether they be external oppression or lack of knowledge."

As those female activists continued to promote gender equality in Tokyo, they actually managed to improve the women's equality in terms of job opportunities in Tokyo. We could find the evidence from Kawabata's fiction, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, where he described the male character encountered a group of women construction worker went across the street and act like men. This thing reflected that the women can took the job like construction workers, which are considered exclusive to men. In the past, this could be a great evidence showing that women were treated more equally at that period of time, due to the movement of women's liberation.

Emily Tran: So, how did you help students incorporate primary sources into their podcast?

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, this is something that, the way it was delivered on varied from student to student. But I think Wenrui is a very successful example of this, where he used it not only to really explain the context and content of that week's materials, but also use it as a bridge to previous weeks as well.

But I think one of the things that I really enjoyed about this, and about a number of my students' podcasts, was that I was very pleasantly surprised at how deep of a dive they did on a lot of the primary documents. It was very impressive. And they didn't just mention them, cursorily and just throw a straight quote in there. They actually used it to unpack some very deep and profound historical issues and processes. I mean, the that sort of good wife, wise mother concept that Wenrui mentioned, it was a major lodestar of a lot of social debates in Japan at the time. And he manages to very nimbly integrate that concept into his narrative, but also then bring in some of the most powerful supporting primary documentary evidence to make that point.

Maggie Flamingo: I found that in my podcasts too, Jeff, that because students are talking about primary sources, they're less likely to just kind of pull a quote and then just use the quote and move on, as they do in a lot of their research papers, because they feel like, 'Hey, I have to talk about this, I really do need to know the context of this document, I need to integrate it into my larger narrative.' And so, I found, especially with some of the students who aren't really gifted writers, that this was a better way to get them to dive into the primary sources.

Emily Tran: Because they can't sort of hide behind— there's like no way to just throw it in and walk away, right? If you put it in, you have to definitely talk about it.

Maggie Flamingo: Right. 'I checked that mark, I put in my primary source and moving on.' That's kind of what happens in some papers, right? When you have a primary source requirement, they just find the one or two quotes, and they put it in there, and then they move on.

And they couldn't do that when they're talking about a primary source, like focused podcast. And I just thought that it's really effective.

It's the equivalent of kind of having a student talk to you about their sources, right, and any instructor knows that you're talking to the student, they're going to have to dig a little deeper. And so, this kind of naturally gets them to do that.

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, and I think that that note about talking is really one of the key things here, is that you're really having to actually verbally and orally articulate what they're saying. You can tell when you say something if it sounds weird. When you write something you often can't tell if it's strange or underdeveloped or odd until you go back and re-read it. And that's, I think one of the key differences here, and one of the things that sort of leads student— students towards that much more, much more natural integration of these things is the sources is that they want it to sound natural, and so they pay attention to making it sound natural in a way that doesn't always happen in a first draft of an essay, per se.

Emily Tran: So, so far, we've discussed the sort of key storytelling and analytical tools that students used to make really compelling historical arguments and in the audio format, but I also noticed when

I list— when I was listening to this work, that a lot of your students went above and beyond in order to bring their podcast to life.

[CHORAL MUSIC FADES IN]

Jacob Taylor: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the *History 201 Podcast*. I'm your host Jake Taylor and I'm here today to talk to you about an exciting document from Dr. and Reverend John Ryan, a theologian and professor who worked with the American Eugenics Society in the late 1920s, and Leon Whitney, who was a biologist and executive secretary of the Committee on Cooperation with Clergymen.

Emily Tran: So, that was the beginning of Jacob Taylor's podcast for your class, Maggie. And when I listened to that there was a big smile on my face.

Maggie Flamingo: Yeah, it was so funny because he felt the need to like, explain himself, like in a private, like in a comment, just like—

[LAUGHTER]

Maggie Flamingo: —'So the reason I'm using this is because I'm talking about Catholics.'

And I was like, 'Oh, I know.' Like, it was so wonderful that he used it because it's such a serious topic that he discusses, Catholicism and eugenics. So, it just kind of was able to give some levity to a podcast that was actually quite serious through the rest of it. So yeah, I thought it was great that he did that.

Emily Tran: Another one of your students, Maggie, brought secondary sources and background knowledge into her podcast episode in a really creative way. Kelley Schlise started her podcast like this.

[MUSIC]

Kelley Schlise: Welcome back to the *Culture Wars History Podcast*.

Last week, we had historian David M. Kennedy on to discuss his book, *Birth control in America: The career of Margaret Sanger*, and he gave us a broad overview of the history of the American birth control movement in the early 20th century.

In this week's episode, we are getting a little bit more specific. And we're going to discuss an article written by Margaret Sanger herself in 1919. And then I'm going to talk about how this article connects to my current research project and back to Kennedy's book.

Emily Tran: And partway through, she did a quick recap of eugenics like this.

Kelley Schlise: Now, even before the birth control movement was in full swing, we had the eugenics movement, which we discussed a few weeks ago on this podcast. And if you recall, the eugenicists were very interested in improving the quality of the race and in making sure that it was only the Americans with the best genes that were reproducing.

The eugenics movement was very popular, it had a lot of prestige. And Margaret Sanger wanted that same prestige for the birth control movement. So, she decided to align her cause birth control with eugenics. And one of the first ways that she did sell publicly was to write this article that we're focusing on today.

Maggie Flamingo: Yeah, and the really great thing about this is that this was her first podcast. Like, she completely made that up, that she had talked about David Kennedy before, and that she had talked about the Eugenics Society before and the context. Like, that was just her way of like creating this sort of fictive, 'This is my normal podcast and I do this all the time.'

And that's one of the things I've noticed with students: they're able to have a little bit more freedom to do that with a podcast where they're in some ways able to offload some of the context and say, 'Hey, you should know this from my previous podcast.' But it's also a way for them to zero in really closely on the context that is absolutely necessary for their subject.

So, what I love about how what Kelley did was that she brings in, in her primary source analysis—which was the point of that podcast—both the historical context and the secondary source that she had used, giving credit where credit is due without making that the point of her podcast. She's still focused on that primary source in her own analysis. So, this was really just a great example of how students can flourish using the podcasts.

Emily Tran: I'm going to play two clips now from Ayaka Thorson's project for Jeff's class, and you'll hear a fade in between the clips.

Ayaka Thorson: I'm your host Ayaka and in today's podcast, we will be talking about Tokyo from 1931 to 1945, an era in the city that experienced a conservative backlash of military imperialism and nationalism, that starkly contrasted the creative liberties of the 1920s.

[MILITARY MARCH INTERLUDE]

Ayaka Thorson: In the book *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization*, the authors argue that the wave of the Jazz Age during the liberating Taishō period was completely banished by the hands of the Showa era, as power shifted from political parties to the civilian bureaucrats and the military. . . .

. . . This era was a dark time for Tokyo especially toward the end of World War II. Following a series of attacks, on March 1945, the United States ordered the firebombing of Tokyo which killed a fourth of million residents raised three quarters of a million homes and leaving three million homeless. On September 2nd, 1945, the Japanese emperor's voice was heard over the radio for the first time in ages, sending a ripple of silence throughout the nation.

[ARCHIVAL AUDIO IN JAPANESE]

Ayaka Thorson:
He had declared the loss of the war.

Emily Tran: I was really impressed by the production. Did you give them guidance on this, or was this something that Ayaka came up with on her own?

Jeff Guarneri: So yeah, this actually— similarly to with Maggie students, one of the interesting things about a lot of the students in my class was that I actually did not ask them to do intro music. It's something I think is certainly a valuable part of podcasting; it's very often an essential part. But I left it out because it was a short course only four weeks, there are already a lot of moving parts, I thought, 'I don't want to introduce that extra layer of uncertainty in there and throw another thing at them.' But sure enough, they just, on their own, a number of them found intro music and things like that.

But Ayaka, she went above and beyond here. It's— You— The clip you hear first is a military march that would have been played at the time. And the end clip she has is the Emperor of Japan announcing the surrender of Japan in August 1945. So, it's just these really deep dives, and just so incredibly relevant pieces of audio that she found entirely unprompted by me and not only found but integrated perfectly into her narrative. It was just, this is one of the things that just boggled my mind when I saw it. I was just, it's one of those moments that made me think, 'Yes, this was a good idea.'

Emily Tran: Do students ever go above and beyond in this way in written assignments?

Maggie Flamingo: Hmm, it's a good question. Nothing pops into my mind immediately. I've had a couple of really beautiful essays, of course, and I've had that happen with an annotated bibliography once, where I was just shocked at the level of care a student took with the amount of sources that they found and the creative approach to sources.

But the— no, nothing like with the podcasts, and what Jeff's podcasts, I mean, his students, what they really demonstrate is that it allows a sort of creativity that I think writing used to allow for a lot of people. But as society has kind of shifted away from the written word, it's really a struggle, I think, for a lot of students to find creativity in written work. So, this is an outlet for that creativity that I think a lot of students really crave, and they don't know how to exhibit it in essays.

And so like, I think that's sad. I love the written word, and I want to encourage the written word, but I also love the fact that podcasts give me that insight into the creativity of my students that I just don't see with their essays.

Emily Tran: Some students also injected humor into their work by way of pop culture references. Let's listen to another clip from Zachary Spangler's podcast episode. He's discussing the waning years of World War II, when the Japanese government, which was increasingly desperate to win the war, they enacted total mobilization. Zachary references, if you listen closely, a meme from the movie *Shrek* to make his point.

Zachary Spangler: As the war continued, Japan began experiencing defeat after defeat, which led to the residents of Tokyo becoming reluctant to continue the war effort. The government on the other hand would not stand down, which led to the formation of the phrase "shattered jewels."

The government was willing to make as many sacrifices as needed. In a true Farquaad fashion, "Many of you may die, but it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make." This perspective led to the residents of Tokyo having to live in extreme conditions, as the warfront was encroaching closer and closer to the capital city.

Emily Tran: So, I have to admit that when I heard this, I thought it had like the makings of a meme, but I wasn't sure what it was. And I had to look it up. But when I looked it up, it made me laugh.

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, no. And it was it was one of those things, right? I missed it on the first listen. But then actually, Emily, you pointed out to me and then I just—the moment I finally heard it, I just kind of sat back and smiled in my chair and thought, 'Never did I think that a quote from *Shrek* would perfectly encapsulate Japanese history in the 1940s.'

Without minimizing it, without really without downplaying the severity of all the different crises and the cost in human lives at the time, Zack actually did a very excellent job of using humor to illustrate that point very well, and the kinds of thinking that went into creating that loss. So, I thought it was just very it was incredibly well-placed. And it was just it's so subtle that you, you miss it if you blink, but it's I think it's a really good example of how humor can be used in still very serious settings.

Maggie Flamingo: And I think it's also a way of relating tone and perspective as well.

Like, a student who wants to, like, enjoy themselves in their work, it's hard for them to inject that well into an essay. They certainly can, I've had some very great sarcastic comments and essays, and I always, I always adore them.

But one thing I've noticed in the podcast, and particularly when I let them do partner work—the first time I did this, I let them work with a partner—was that their personalities and kind of their reaction to history also became more clear. Like, there was a little bit more of that, like— I had one student who was a really strong feminist, and she just kept reacting to some of the things in the past and was like, 'Oh, my goodness, I can't handle this.' And then her, her partner would kind of talk her down a little bit and contextualize for her. And it was this really great back and forth in their podcast, that allowed different perspectives to be a part of their analysis and their personalities, and the tone came through. And it was just fun.

And I think this also kind of makes that clear that like, students are truly enjoying this. So, it's a part of a process that I—it's not that they don't enjoy writing essays, but I think fewer of them enjoy writing essays.

Emily Tran So, the final example that I want to play actually really displays this kind of personality that students really inject into the podcast. So, this is from Hannah Robiolio. I think Hannah's work here really shows that sort of personality and the sense of dynamism that students can bring into their podcasts.

[MUSIC]

Hannah Robiolio: You are tuning into *HMH Podcast*, the place where Hannah, yours truly, Meets History.

Hey, everyone, welcome back. It's been a long journey filled with historical research and discovery. But guys and gals, we're nearing the end of my history research project about the Catholic response to the 1980s AIDS crisis. And boy, am I excited to share my findings with you. So, while we explored just one historical source last time, today, I'm going to share my own historical analysis and the overall supporting evidence I found.

In my own research paper, I argued that, quote, the theological approach by the Catholic hierarchy was dogmatic and divisive. But the Catholic grassroots approach, which is more pastoral and pragmatic, was unifying. This approach, unlike the theological one, allowed those employing it to develop and negotiate a space within the church where compassion replaced condemnation as the overruling message.

I realized that can be a mouthful, and there's a lot to digest here. So, let's break it down first by viewing what other scholars have had to say about the Catholic response to AIDS.

Emily Tran: Tell us more about Hannah, Maggie.

Maggie Flamingo: So, stellar student. Her work was always so fascinating because she is not a historian, she doesn't come in from that background. She's a STEM student. She's actually in medical school now. So, this was one of those times when I had a medical student take my class, which is actually kind of often now because medical schools are requiring a written coursework that is non-science related. So, I get a lot of students who are like, 'I'm just taking this from my med school application,' which is really a weird thing to have in your class as a historian.

But it worked extraordinarily well, because Hannah was able to find something that she really was invested in, right? She did her research on the AIDS crisis and Catholic reactions to it, which fit in perfectly with our theme of religion and the culture wars. And she just threw herself into the assignment.

And one of the things later on in the podcast is you can actually hear an ambulance in the background because she was working and she had to record the end of her podcast, because it's a summer class, and you don't have that much time. And so, it really did also allow her to work where she was at.

And I, I hadn't really thought a lot about how podcasts were able to do that as well. But it was certainly a more flexible assignment for students as well, because they can edit things and they can, you know, record here, record there, get this part finished. And you can do that with essays as well, of course, but it just was, it allowed her to shine. And I really, I just loved how she put that podcast together.

Emily Tran: So, as instructors, how does the grading experience for podcasts compared to essays? It sounds like it might be a little more fun.

Maggie Flamingo: Oh, it's just extraordinarily more fun. Like, it's almost worth it to do podcasts just because of that. That's not the only reason, of course. But grading these is not just because it entertains you, but because again, it really shows you your student's potential.

Because the worst podcasts are still, it's still a student talking about history. Whereas the worst essay is you scratching your head saying, 'I don't understand what they're saying.' And so, I think that it allows even students who aren't doing really well to do a bit better and make them perhaps a little less frustrating as an instructor to grade because you can really see where the weaknesses are very clearly in their podcast.

But yet you also are connected more to their humanity, which that's particularly relevant because these are, this was an online class, and so for me to connect to the students' humanity mattered a great deal, because oftentimes, they were just the annoying people in my computer, rather than my students who I really liked, who sat in front of me every day. And so that's another reason that it made it easier to grade made me more understanding of what their point was what they were trying to do.

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, no, I agree wholeheartedly with that, sort of giving more humanity to the students' assignment, especially because it's, when it's just words on a page, we don't hear their voice, we don't hear much of who they are. And this really helps us to stay connected as instructors to our students in a way that we don't often get to in say, large lectures or in purely virtual formats, like the vast majority of us are operating it right now. So, I think it's really invaluable in that regard. And it just ends up being a lot easier to work our way through.

Emily Tran: So, all of this sounds amazing. We heard the students' work. It's really interesting. The students are engaged and enthusiastic, they're having fun. They're learning material, and how to effectively communicate their knowledge. The assignments are even enjoyable to grade.

So, for teachers who want to implement the podcast assignment or some form of a podcast assignment in their classrooms, what are some key things that you think they need to think about?

Maggie Flamingo: Well, first of all, it's not something to add after your class has started. I think it's so key to make it a part of the course because scaffolding to it is really important, right? You want to have things built around this so that students don't feel like this is an added-on thing that they don't have any guidance to do, because it might be a little bit intimidating for some students.

I haven't seen that reaction very often. Usually, they're like, 'Oh, okay, I can record something, that'll be fine.' But I think having that really specific idea of how you're going to incorporate their use of sources, how they're going to show that they've actually done the research and things like that, having that thought out before you say, 'Hey, your end result is going to be a podcast,' is wise.

Jeff Guarneri: Yeah, I think there are two big things that I would point to in terms of how one incorporates this into the course, echoing wholeheartedly everything Maggie just said.

The first of them is that you are teaching students, most students, how to do something new. And as a result, you have to dedicate more time in the class to actually sitting down and training them in how to do it instead of just assuming they will go off and do it on their own, or that they will come into this knowing enough to get off the ground on their own. So, it really forces you to fundamentally rethink the structure of the course and the rhythm of the course. But also, you have to sacrifice some content for it.

The second point I would raise is that—and this is the thing that might seem like a bitter pill to swallow, but it's actually one of the most liberating things about doing this—is that it's great, actually, when you end up cutting a few bits of content away and you're not trying to cram everything in, because that really makes you—or at least it's made me—think very hard about what I want my students to come out of this class with, by focusing on making sure that they're trained in those skills in a way that we can't with essays where we can safely assume that they have some training and writing essays.

It's forced me to take stock of what I find most important my class. And to sort of share a bit of wisdom I was given early on in my teaching career: If I'm to look back at any given week and think, 'What's the one thing I want my students to remember 10 years from now,' what is that thing going to be? And it's given me a much clearer idea of what those individual things are and making sure that I distill things to those most important takeaways, whether it be the skill set itself or the content that they're applying in service of developing that skill set.

So, it's really, I think it's rearranged my priorities pedagogically in ways that I think I've been very rewarding for me personally and in many ways, just liberating.

Emily Tran: How about you, Maggie? Did the podcast assignment kind of change the way that you teach history?

Maggie Flamingo: Um, well, that's a good question.

I think one of the things that it has really ingrained in me as a teacher is that I don't give my students enough credit. Because when I get their essays or when I get like, you know, multiple choice question exams—which I rarely do—I have a tendency to only see the mistakes that they make. And it really does, in a way, make me feel like, 'Oh, I failed them. They're not really learning things.' And that's true. They aren't learning many of the things that I want.

But with podcasts, they can really take the helm and show you what their interests are, and what they really did learn, which is often not what you would ask in an essay question or prompt. And so, they're able to steer their own learning and kind of have that independent exploration in a lot of ways. Just with their creative asides, or the 'Hey, I found this interesting,' you know, kind of comments that I think has really enlivened me, as an instructor, in the sense that I just feel a better connection.

Like I said, it just connects you to the humanity of your students and makes teaching more engaging than I think it sometimes is.

Emily Tran: So, when we started this conversation, you talked about how you wanted to bring in podcasts as a way to engage students in history who might not be History majors, who are coming from all over the university. Did you find that students were responsive to this assignment?

Maggie Flamingo: I mean, my students have always been really positive about it. They've really dived in in a way that they haven't with other assignments. They got more creative; they were willing to interview people in a way that they don't often for regular essays. They were thinking out of the box a little bit with this assignment. So, I saw a level of engagement with the podcast that I'm not used to seeing with the traditional essay.

Jeff Guarneri: I found that there was the sort of pull-quotes you can only dream of coming in the student self-evaluations at the end.

So, one of them was something along the lines of 'I, at the end of the semester, every essay written up just sort of tossed over my shoulder. But this has given me something that I'm actually going to think about, and I'm going to remember down the line.'

And another student was talking about how, you know, 'I'm never, I'm probably never going to do a podcast again. But I, in my line of work that I want to go into, I need to do much more public speaking, I need to be able to tell a story and create a narrative and marshal evidence in support of that. And I now know how to do that because of this class.'

It was something that again, it like so many things in this, this course, it really just blew me away, how they how much they engaged with it at the very least by the end.

So, for instructors or for students, it might seem like podcasts are this scary new thing that is just a huge production to get into and everything like that. But it's not. It's surprisingly easy to learn. It's something that's very accessible, from a pedagogical standpoint, it's accessible to the students. And I strongly encourage anybody who's listening to this, if they're thinking about doing podcasts or video essays or anything like that and they want to do that in their classes: Absolutely. Give it a try. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Emily Tran: Maggie and Jeff, thank you so much for both talking with me today and for sharing your students' work with us.

Jeff Guarneri: Thank you.

Maggie Flamingo: Thank you.

[MUSIC]

Emily Tran: Do you have an idea for an episode of the podcast? Send your questions for historian to outreach@history.wisc.edu.

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Until next time, thanks for listening.