



FELLOWSHIP REPORT

WSSC Teaching & Learning
Technology Fellow, 2024–2025
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Table of Contents

- The Project
- Project Objectives
- Methodology
- Course Info
- Results
- Analysis
- Conclusion



The Project

The goal of my fellowship project was to create podcasts of all material in my online history courses to allow students an alternate method of engaging with course lectures. Current lectures provide audio, but in shorter segments with a longer total listen time for the entire lecture. The podcasts are designed to be more succinct, with one file that can be sped up, downloaded, or rewound to specific points. It could also be an inspiration of another way to include material for the history project that is required of each student in the course.



Project Objectives



Increase completion rate of lectures by offering a second alternative to traditional lectures via a podcast version of the lecture.



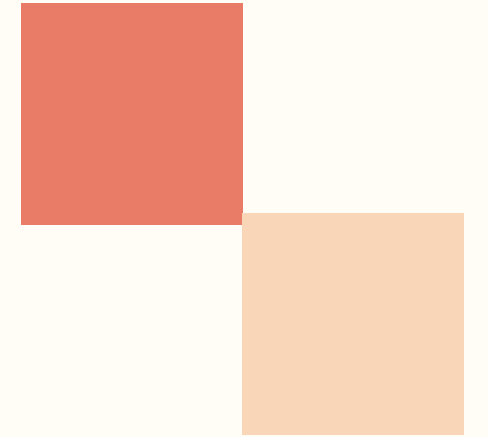
Increase engagement in the course by offering an avenue for auditory learners to engage and possibly model on project submissions.



Provide a more convenient way for students to listen to material by allowing them to download and listen to entire lectures rather than navigate through a longer lecture one section at a time.



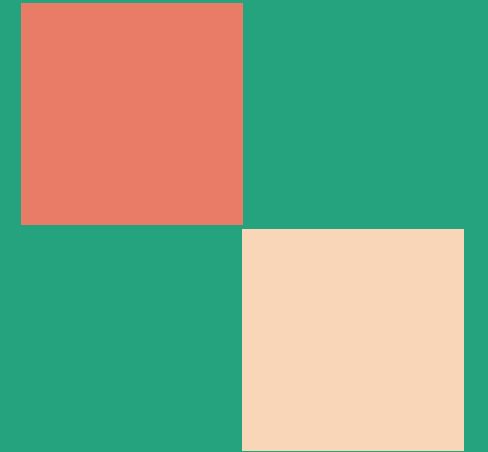
Methodology



The number of students walking around with headphones has grown exponentially, yet many seem to find less time to engage in class material. The podcasts were recorded for each lecture topic in a succinct format that lessened the total time it took to review a lecture topic. The goal was to have each audio version 30 minutes or less, but some longer topics took between 40–45 minutes. The time for traditional lectures varied between 45–60 minutes. The audio files were recorded with Audacity and then uploaded as MP3 files into eLearn, which automatically generated closed captions for each audio lecture.



Course Info:



Fall 2024: Early US History:

- 19 total lectures
- 28 enrolled students
- Course statistics collected at the end of the term
- Survey administered to students including questions on audio lectures

Spring 2025: Modern US History:

- 21 total lectures
- 29 enrolled students
- Course statistics collected at the end of the term
- Survey administered to students including questions on audio lectures

While the courses differed in the fall and spring, it was a sequence class, and some of the students enrolled in the fall section took the spring second half of the sequence as well as other new students.

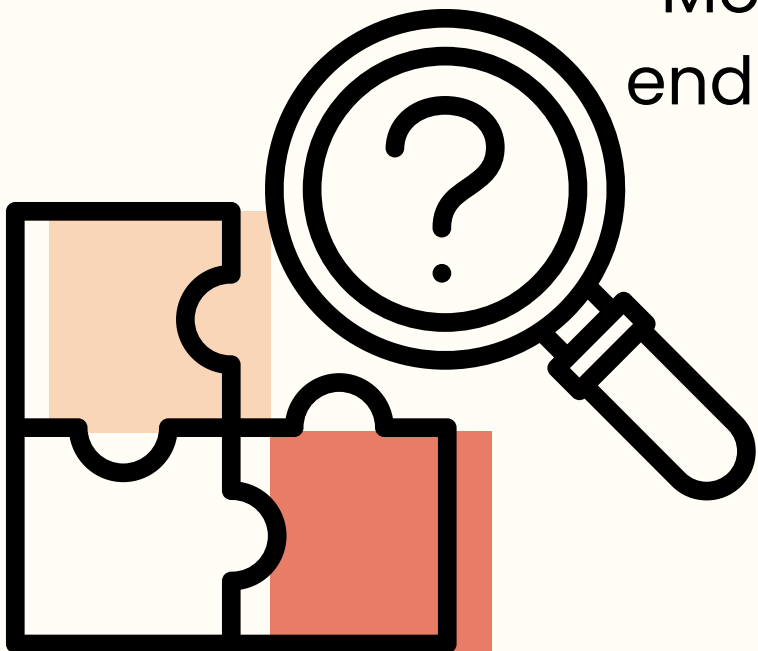
Results



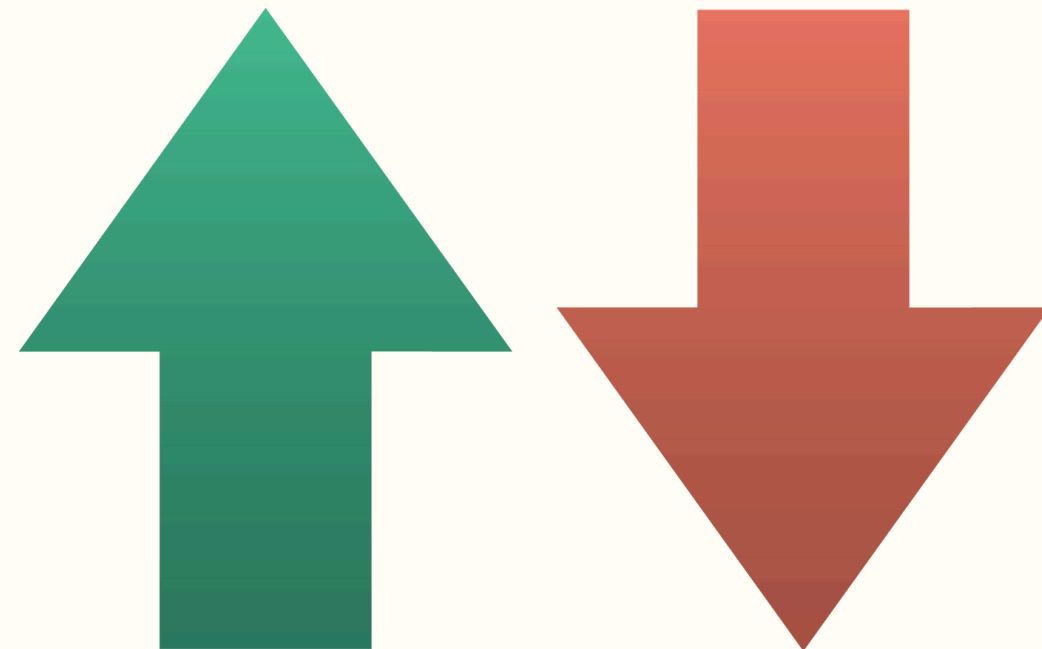
- Total listening/viewing rate for Early US History rose from 64% to 70% from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024
- The statistics for Early US History showed a more even distribution in growth, with the number of lectures with more than 80% of students viewing or listening to more than doubling, and the number of lectures with less than 60% engagement dropping from 10 to 4.
- Total listening/viewing rate for Modern US History fell from 51% to 50% from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025. Distribution of lectures with student engagement remained the same.
- End of course survey from both Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 show that more than half of respondents listened to audio lectures.
- A majority of respondents reported the audio lectures were a good alternative to viewing the lecture material
- Half of the survey respondents recommended keeping the audio lectures in the course.
- Students commented that the audio lectures were a good way to reinforce material.

Analysis

Overall, the statistics are a little disappointing. I had hoped for significant gains in the number of students who engage in the lecture material, and the numbers did not support this. It appears that the students who were engaging were using both the traditional lecture format and the audio format to reinforce their learning and review. The spring numbers are worse than fall statistics. It could be because of lower enrollment, school fatigue, acclimation to my teaching style and feeling lecture material not necessary, or any number of reasons. It could also be course specific, as overall Early US History seems to have more engagement over the comparative years than Modern US History. The overall low numbers of engagement, even with the end-of-course-survey speak to a trend that will not be reversed with a one-solution quick-fix.



Conclusion



While the numbers did not support the hope for increased engagement, I take an Edison-style approach. There were some wins in reaching students. Although overall the engagement was not as high as hoped, I discovered that simply including audio would not reach every student. I plan to keep the audio lectures in the courses, as some who did use them reported that they helped greatly. One student said they “learned more about my learning style. I confirmed that I am an audio learner...I listened to the audio files sometimes multiple times in my commute.” Another student stated “Listening to the audio lectures...helped me become a better online learner,” while another wrote that “listening to the audio helped me retain a lot.” Helping these students was worth the time and effort put into recording the audio and pushes me to continue to devise new ways to engage students in online courses.



Thank You



Suzanne Stephens. Professor of History