Reflection of HIST 5010 Final Project

I have enjoyed this class immensely and have learned so much. Since starting this class, I have learned a lot of useful information to use when I teach Social Studies. Most of the information especially towards the end of the class was useful in incorporating into my project. It also gave me ideas on how to help students become incorporated into the lesson and be little “historians”. That has always been a goal as a teacher, but this gave me ideas for techniques to use in class such as perhaps making games for the students to learn about events by choosing different scenarios in the events or even coming up with stories to get students to discover history on their own. One of the projects I’m thinking of having them work on when we learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition is creating their own blog. By teaching them more digital aspects in the classroom, the students can learn more than just the subject matter and hopefully be able to use these techniques in the future. I’m also excited to use different techniques when I start researching for my thesis.

For my project, I wanted the students to be able to explore the Colonial America unit for themselves and use maps to be able to learn about the lives of the colonists. Most of the time, they learned about this unit through lecture and worksheets; having these hands-on techniques, I’m hoping they will be more interested in the unit. I believe that framing the question by having the student discover the information through graphs and geography, students will learn the techniques of processing the information from the graphs, just as historians have to read them as well. Using the website, students are able to have a tool that they can search multiple mediums, whether it’s pictures, graphs, videos, stories, or mini explanations, to have them gather information about the unit. I’m also planning on using some of the websites we used in class, such as “Recovered Histories” to have students explore primary sources. The History channel website has many videos that have been helpful when teaching my class about this unit and are provided on my website. Other teacher websites have also been helpful in terms of getting graphs. It was pretty near impossible to get these graphs otherwise, even after many different searches. I would like to complete the website by this summer so my students next September will be able to use it. I would also like to attach different suggested readings if the students would like to explore this topic further. I know when I was a student, I always asked my teacher how to get more information to study history topics and this would provide that for students if they wanted to explore further.

At first, I thought that the Omeka website would be best for the students to learn information about the unit. However, after I used the website and was trying to build the living history museum for the Colonial America unit, I started to realize that it would be too difficult for the students to navigate because it’s set up as a history museum. The students needed a website that would be more familiar to them like other websites they are used to navigating. Weebly seemed to be user-friendly, which it was. I was frustrated at first trying to understand the layout and trying to be able to get a flow of how I wanted students to move through the website when they were studying this unit. I think that it’s starting to become easier as I work on this website. I’m excited to continue to work on this project and test it out on next year’s students to see how successful it will be.