Engaged Civic Learning – Draft Syllabus

Dr. Evan Jewell: Assistant Professor of History (specialty: Roman history and archaeology)

Contact: evan.jewell@rutgers.edu

Proposed Course Title: ***Slavery and Freedom from Ancient Rome to Rutgers***

Course Proposal and Description:

The history of slave systems in the Roman and Atlantic worlds has seen a surge of interest in recent years, not least because comparative histories of slavery have also become a topic of scholarly interest. Yet the subsequent histories of *freedom* for the (formerly) enslaved peoples studied are usually disconnected from one another, and are rarely put into comparative perspective. This course seeks to remedy this by examining both the history of slavery and freedom—including its transitional, more nebulous states—and the constituent experiences of enslavement and freed life in the Roman and Black Atlantic worlds in a comparative framework, stretching from the moment of abduction to the acts of resistance, rebellion, flight and emancipation, and finally to the experience of "limited freedom" which freedpeople in both societies were/are subjected to, not least in the forms of citizenship conferred on, or withheld from, them.

The course will highlight points of connection, contrast, and, not least, legacy between the ancient and (early) modern worlds—as the enslavers and enslaved of one world sometimes looked back to the other for inspiration and precedents around the justifications for slavery on the one hand, and the desire to seek justice for the community of the enslaved on the other. With a view to leveraging the history of the university itself, the course will draw on the archives from Rutgers University's *Scarlet and Black Project* (and other university slavery archives) for primary source readings throughout the course, as well as an array of primary sources (in translation) from the Roman world. The course also incorporates this theme heavily into its assessments and the last week of the class will be devoted to the theme of slavery, justice and the modern university—taking stock of where we stand (as a university, locally; and nationally, with regard to an array of universities at large) in these efforts, as well as other examples which have been more and less successful, thus far.

At the same time, this course is designed as an Engaged Civic Learning class and will see students work with community partners in a number of ways, beginning with, for example, some direct volunteering at the Mount Laurel African American cemetery. However, at the core of the class will be a project which I hope will last for several iterations of this class: the creation of a digital walking tour of the sites of slavery and freedom in Camden and other nearby sites, mapped onto a GIS or Google Maps site. Students develop this first by taking a walking tour with the Camden County Historical Society and potentially working with them, as well as local residents, MARCH, the Digital Studies Center and Prof. Boyd's Black Camden project to create

an accessible digital walking tour. The tour would also be possibly developed with a view to being used in local Camden high schools by working in tandem with Michele Garcon to leverage pre-existing relationships.

The course centers, as much as is possible, the lived experiences and material lives of enslaved and freedpeople, over that of enslavers, and where available, exposes students to the material culture of slavery, including walking tours of local sites and museum visits. I have also included a selection of *potential* guest speakers who might come to campus in person or via Zoom. Only a fraction of the suggested speakers would likely end up speaking to the class, but I have personal connections with many of these speakers—the majority of whom are also scholars of color and would expose students to the leading research on the various topics outlined below, as well as speaking to areas of expertise beyond my own (that is, beyond ancient Rome).

Engaged Civic Learning Outcomes

This course will specifically meet the following ECL General Education learning outcomes:

1. Reflect on how engaged civic learning experiences may or may not have altered their assumptions about the community and their relationship to it.

Students will be working with community partners to uncover and narrate critical aspects of the community's history for a public-facing and public-consuming audience, *primarily through the digital walking tour, but also the direct service learning.*

2. Analyze their own actions and those of others participating in the engaged civic learning project.

Students will be asked to write reflection pieces on their experience working with the Camden community, specifically in terms of a highly charged issue, such as slavery.

3. Articulate the challenges, needs, and aspirations of members of the local community.
4. Communicate effectively with community members.
5. Work constructively with diverse others to address public challenges.

Prior to going out to speak to local residents and/or the Camden County Historical Society, students will receive trainings in how to communicate, listen to, and effectively record, present and respond to the stories, concerns and opinions of community members. Dr. Tomè may be drawn upon here, as well as Dr. Boyd, to come into the class to discuss these aspects with students.

Course Outline

Assuming a 14-15 week course schedule, the following topics would be covered:

- **Week 1: Comparative Histories of Slavery (and Freedom): Social Death, the "Slave Society" and the Free vs Freed Society**

A discussion of Orlando Patterson's influential argument about slavery as "social death" across multiple societies which practiced slavery, as well as a broader consideration of the validity and problems of comparative histories of slavery, the category of "slave society", and the components of "slave systems" more generally. We will then consider some initial thoughts as to how we might incorporate the history of freedpeople and freedom into this comparative framework.

- **Week 2a: Ancient Slavery: Definitions, Justifications and Doubts**

A discussion of ancient authors (usually enslavers and members of the elite) and how they defined and justified slavery (e.g. from Aristotle to early Christian thinkers), or questioned its justifications (e.g. Stoic thinkers).

Potential guest speaker:
- Dr. Tony Alimi (Classics: Cornell)

- **Week 2b: Post-Ancient Slavery: Ancient Justifications and Modern (In)justice**

A discussion of how pro-slavery advocates and abolitionists in the 18th and 19th centuries deployed ancient (Roman and Greek) texts to justify or question the institution and practice of slavery.

***ECL component*:** Introducing ECL, guidelines, ethics, and the major project (Dr. Tomè; Dr. Boyd).

- **Week 3: The Color of Slavery: Race, Ethnicity and Slavery from Rome to the Early Modern Period**

A discussion of how ideas of racial difference and racism existed in the Roman world prior to the advent of phrenology and scientific racism. In particular, we will examine how slavery was not necessarily predicated on colorism, race or ethnicity in the ancient world, but how certain groups were still more likely to become slaves due to the actions and imperatives of Roman imperialism, as well as considering how racism did exist more broadly in these contexts. The departures from, and inheritances from this world, in the medieval and early modern periods will also be explored.

Potential guest speakers:
- Paula Gaither (PhD student in Classics: Stanford University)
- Recorded lectures from the RaceB4Race initiative (Arizona State University – but with recent contributions from Rutgers faculty).

***ECL component*:** Fieldtrip to Mount Laurel African American cemetery.

- **Weeks 4-5: On Becoming and Being Enslaved: From Abduction to Slave Market to Household or Plantation**

These modules will consider how people became enslaved, where they were sold, and where they were forced to perform different types of labor, as well as their daily lives and processes of identity making in life and death. The emphasis will fall especially on the archaeology of slavery and the material lives of enslaved people in a comparative framework. In particular, this week will focus on sites slavery in Camden, as well as within the wider Rutgers University system.

***ECL component*:**

As a primer for their final group project, students will go on a walking tour of the sites of slave markets and other slavery-related sites in Camden itself, with the possibility of a follow-up tour in Philadelphia. This should also be a reflective exercise which sees them ask what has been emphasized, lost, suppressed or is missing but might be added to such a tour in digital form. *Facilitator*: it may be possible to call upon the expertise of the Camden County Historical Society, as well as Prof. Charlene Mires (History: Rutgers – Camden and MARCH) and Prof. Kimberlee Moran (Chemistry: Rutgers – Camden and excavator of African American and Native American sites in the area).

- **Week 6: A Slave to Love? Enslaver-enslaved relationships and the dynamics of enslaved sexuality and gender**

A discussion of how the institution of slavery—and emancipation—impacted the sexuality of enslaved and freed people, including readings that dispel misconceptions around how slaves "used" sex to gain their freedom. We will also discuss how freedpeople's sexuality and gender was scripted by their former owners (Roman context) and the state (Roman laws about reproduction and marriage; Freedman's Bureau and vagrancy laws policing the sexual life and relationships of freedpeople with a view to the promotion of nuclear families).

Potential guest speakers:
- Prof. Katharine Huemoeller (Classics: University of British Columbia) – by Zoom
- Prof. Marissa Fuentes (History: Rutgers – New Brunswick) or Adam McNeil (PhD student in History at Rutgers – New Brunswick)

- **Week 7a: Resistance – Slave Revolts in the Roman Empire (and before: Sparta and Sicily)**

A discussion of the main uprisings of the enslaved populations in the Roman empire, as well as earlier precedents in ancient Sparta (*helots*) and Sicily, and the possible formation of slave revolt societies.

Potential guest speakers:

- Emeritus Professor Brent Shaw (Classics: Princeton)
- Prof. Dan-el Padilla Peralta (Classics and its receptions in the Black Atlantic/Caribbean: Princeton)

- **Week 7b: Resistance – Slave Revolts in the Black Atlantic, Caribbean and Latin America**

A discussion of the main uprisings of the enslaved populations in the Americas, and the formation of "maroon" or slave revolt societies, as well as entirely new polities, such as Haiti. Emeric Bergeaud's novella (in translation from the French), *Stella*, and its use of classical Roman characters to re-tell the history of the Haitian revolution, will be studied as a case study that bridges the ancient and modern worlds.

Potential guest speakers:

- Tayzhaun Glover, Ayanna Legros, or Kristina Williams (all Duke PhD students working on this topic)

- **Week 8: From Spartacus to *Spartacus* (1960)**

A discussion of the "historical" Spartacus through close readings of ancient sources, and a comparison with a viewing of the classic Stanley Kubrick film *Spartacus* (1960) in terms of its own complex political agenda and reception in the era of McCarthyism, the Civil Rights movement, and JFK.

***ECL component*:** Class at the Digital Studies Center.

- **Week 9: Black Spartacus: Slave Revolt leaders from Nat Turner to Alabi of Suriname**

A discussion of slave revolt leaders, including Nat Turner, Toussaint Louverture (the "Black Spartacus") and accounts of other lesser known leaders, such as Alabi in Suriname, passed down by oral tradition, slave autobiographies and narratives, as well as missionary and colonial records.

Potential guest speaker:

- Prof. Keith Green (English: Rutgers – Camden)

- **Week 10: Moments of Freedom: Flight, refuge, and processes of emancipation at Rome and in the Antebellum Americas**

This class examines how individuals or small groups of enslaved people escaped slavery, whether through flight, or through formal emancipation (e.g. buying one's freedom or being freed in a will). The grant of citizenship to freedpeople in the Roman Republic will be underscored as a major difference between the Roman and antebellum American processes and parameters of freedom.

- **Week 11a: Slave or Free? Contested emancipations in ancient Rome and antebellum America**

A microstudy of how courts, in both societies, adjudicated cases of disputed free(d) status and what this tells us about the nature of each respective slave system.

Potential guest speaker:

- Geneva Smith (PhD student in Black Atlantic History at Princeton)

- **Week 11b: What's in a name? Slave names and free(d) names from ancient Rome to post-civil war America**

A discussion of (re)naming practices for enslaved people in the Roman empire, and further, how enslaved people in antebellum America were given classically inspired Greek and Roman names. We will also consider how and why an enslaved person's name would change after emancipation: for Romans due to the institution of citizenship and taking a patron's name; for post-civil war freedpeople due to the Freedman's Bureau, the creation of marriage certificates, and didactic literature distributed to newly freedpeople, such as *John Freeman*.

- **Week 12: Colonies of freedom? Displacing Freedpeople to Colonies, from the Latin Colony to Liberia**

A discussion of how both Roman freeborn (elite) authors (3rd c. BCE to 1st c. CE) and American politicians (including Abraham Lincoln) in the Reconstruction-era (and after) sought to remove freedpeople from their polity/nation state by sending or enticing them to leave for overseas colonies, such as Corinth (Greece) or Liberia.

Potential guest speaker:

- Prof. Ousmane K. Power-Greene

Field trip (Friday or weekend): either National Museum of African American History and Culture (DC) or African American Museum in Philadelphia.

- **Week 13: (Cons)training Freedom: the Roman Patronage System and the Post-Civil War Freedman's Bureau**

A discussion of how freedpeople's lives were constricted, surveilled and "trained" for free life as citizens in two very different contexts.

Potential guest speaker:

- Prof. Priya Kandaswamy (Reconstruction era history: Mills College) – via Zoom

- **Week 14: Free enterprise: Freedpeople as Businesspeople**

A discussion of how freedpeople in the Roman empire became well-known, but also stereotyped for their success as businesspeople and as the *nouveau riche* of society. We then consider whether this occurred in the late 19th century and early 20th century in terms of Black businesspeople.

Potential guest speakers:

- Prof. Kendra Boyd (Black business: Rutgers – Camden)
- Prof. Rose Maclean (Roman imperial freedmen in the emperor's household: UCSB)

- **Week 15: Seeking Justice: Reparations and recovering histories of slavery in the modern university**

An examination and discussion of current efforts to investigate the complicity of universities in slavery, including their own ownership of slaves, through extensive archival sources. We will examine Rutgers' very own *Scarlet and Black* project, as well as the Georgetown Slavery Archive and GU272 project, university reparation efforts, and other new projects (e.g. at Clemson, UPenn), complete with the problems they face and criticisms they have received.

Experiential component: Students will both use the *Scarlet and Black* database, as well as attend a field trip to the archives at New Brunswick, if possible.

Potential guest speakers:

- Prof. Kendra Boyd (Black business: Rutgers – Camden) or other members of the *Scarlet and Black* editorial team.

Note: original source readings from *Scarlet and Black* as well as other university slavery archives (e.g. GU272 archive at Georgetown) will be incorporated *throughout* the course where possible.

Course Assessments

Note: I am a strong believer in multi-modal assessment, and as such, the following assessments are designed to provide students with various different ways to succeed in the class, showcase their different strengths, and cater to their individual interests.

***Attendance and preparation* (20%)**

In my classes, I find that an attendance grade, as opposed to a "participation" grade, is more effective—since there will be no escaping from participating in class discussion in my classes. However, I do expect my students to have completed the readings and to have thought about them to some extent, so that we can have those meaningful discussions and be ready to interact with any guest presentations or my own questions and comments on the week's topic.

***Discussion board posts and reflection responses* (20%)**

Students will be required to post a response of 300-400 words to the weekly readings OR the ECL project, prompted by stimulus questions on the Canvas discussion board, *and* respond to the comments of at least two of their peers.

***Group ECL project:* (30%)** *Digital Walking Tour of Slavery and Freedom in Camden*
(either through Google Maps or GIS mapping)

Students will draw on the resources at the Digital Studies Center to provide a foundation for the presentation of their project.

Students will create a linked map of the major sites of slavery and freedom in the Camden and/or Philadelphia area (e.g. cemeteries, slave markets, abolitionist sites, churches, early businesses), with links to the main documents or evidence for these sites on an accompanying blog or website; it might also involve mini-podcasts or audioclips. This might involve travelling to these sites and taking their own photos, interviewing local residents and other stakeholders. It should include an assessment of how these sites are *or* are *not* publicly labeled (e.g. with signage) appropriately or inappropriately as sites of slavery. All groups would contribute to the *same* single digital map, with a view to presenting this at a forum, perhaps hosted by the Camden County Historical Society and with local community members and/or high school students in attendance to ask questions.

***Individual project:* (30%)**

Students will have a choice between two types of final projects with a wide latitude to pursue their own interests, in consultation with me to determine the viability of their project.

EITHER

- Genealogy Project:

Using the resources in Robeson Library (as well as librarian Julie Still's formidable genealogy skills), students will research their family's connection to slavery (either as enslaved, enslavers, or indeterminate connections). Students must compare the genealogy of slavery in the Balck Atlantic to how enslaved and freed people represented their own "stain of slavery" and negotiated it through their graves and familial relationships. Students can either write a traditional paper, create a presentation, or a digital presentation (e.g. a blog or website) about the process and their findings, *but* they must all include a 500 word reflection on the ethical implications of their findings, which references the existing literature around this type of research and contemporary ethical considerations (e.g. debates over reparations). Scaffolding for this ethical exercise will be provided in class sessions.

OR

- Slavery and Freedom Podcast – Narrating Two Lives

In this task (which I have used to great success in previous classes), students can form small groups of 2-3 or go it alone and formulate a two-episode podcast (approximately 10-15 minutes for each episode). One episode will focus on the life of a Roman enslaved or freed person (or, ideally, their experience of both slavery and freedom), while the second episode will focus on an individual from the early modern or modern slave societies and systems spanning west Africa, the Atlantic, Caribbean or broader Americas. Students will submit a draft script with full research references, then revise the script after receiving feedback, and then present their final episodes to the class at the end of the semester.

Other relevant General Education categories:

- Heritages and Civilizations (HAC)
- Ethics and Values (EAV)
- Diversity (DIV)
- Experiential Learning (XPL)
- United States and the World (USW)

Further possible ECL ideas:

- Excursion to Petty Island (site of slavery nearby)
- Excursion to Harriet Tubman Museum of New Jersey (Cape May).
- Excursion to Dr. James Still Office Site and Education Center.