

TPEP Newsletter

Trinity's Prison Education Project. June '25



Social for TPEP faculty and writing tutors, Sep. 2024. From left to right: Caitlin ('26), Erin Frymire, Jake ('25), James Truman, Andrew Conroe, Anna Terwiel, Theodora ('25), Joe Lea, Shaz Hussain, Sheila Fisher, Glenn Falk, and Leslie Ribovich.

NEW CONNECTIONS

As summer begins, we look back with joy and gratitude on another year of growth for Trinity's Prison Education Project (TPEP). At Hartford Correctional Center (HCC), the city jail, we started a collaboration with the Hartford Public Library (HPL) to give our students access to books. Before this initiative, no one at the Hartford jail had access to a library. We are grateful to the S&L Marx Foundation for supporting our work at HCC.

This spring, we expanded our peer tutoring initiative from HCC to York Correctional Institution, the state's prison for women. At both facilities, Trinity students who are trained as "Writing Associates" now regularly help incarcerated students with their writing, supplementing the work of our longtime study hall facilitators Jackie Stack and Peg Meehan. James also became TPEP codirector, joining Joe Lea and Anna Terwiel.

And thanks to a generous gift of the Lower Connecticut Valley chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), we are offering two classes at York this summer. You can read more about these and other exciting developments in this newsletter. Thank you for your support!

- Joe Lea, Anna Terwiel, and James Truman, TPEP codirectors

"I'm just grateful for the opportunity to better myself. I like the subject [Political Science] even in my personal life. I am also grateful for the professor's enthusiasm, this course was a great way to make me feel as if I wasn't in jail."

TPEP Student at HCC,
Spring 2025

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HIP HOP STUDIES COMES TO HCC. INTERVIEW WITH THE PROFESSOR AND THE TEACHER

During the Fall 2024 semester, Trinity Professor Seth Markle (History and International Studies) and Khaiim Rapoet (Hip Hop Artist and Educator) co-taught an experiential learning course titled, “Living Hip Hop: A Nonviolent Response to Stress and Conflict” at HCC.

Why did you want to be involved in the Trinity Prison Education Program?

Seth Markle: First and foremost, I wanted to continue to work with Khaiim Rapoet. When an opportunity to collaborate with him in an education-based setting emerges, I tend to jump on it. He is an incredibly talented artist AND educator. In 2017, we taught an undergraduate summer course together, which was really successful.

We developed “Living Hip Hop” over the last few years. We thought that the course’s emphasis on healing, health and wellness, and approaching it through a cultural lens that most of our students strongly identified with, combined with the fact that they were in space that induces stress and conflict, was appropriate given the context in which we were teaching the course.

I’m not going to lie, I had some reluctance like teaching at nights, which I really don’t like to do. Also, being an African American male, with experience working in prisons and having a firm understanding of the link between racism and mass incarceration, I knew it was going to be challenging from an emotional standpoint as well. In the end, the benefits of doing the course outweighed these concerns.



Seth Markle (top) and Khaiim Kelly

What was the purpose of your TPEP Class, "Living Hip Hop: A Creative Nonviolent Response to Stress and Conflict"?

Khaiim @rapoet: My co-teacher Professor Markle, and I, have been students and teachers of Hip-Hop Culture for well over a decade, and our purpose was to pass on what we've learned about it's less popular applications in our everyday lives. First is the way Hip-Hop allows people to release uncomfortable emotions in a nonviolent way. Second is the way Hip-Hop highlights the precious value of marginalized or overlooked people, and helps them reframe their own sense of self-worth.

What type of assignments did you use to fulfil this purpose?

Khaiim @rapoet: Our syllabus was set up so that students could focus intensively on demonstrating Hip-Hop elements through practice with me, and then focus intensively on learning the theory and history behind the practice with Professor Markle. Third we would partner at the beginning and end of the semester to help ensure a strong launch into the material, as well as a strong conclusion with feedback.

We covered the elements of Hip-Hop, underlying mindsets behind the elements (that would be misunderstood to most observers of the culture), and posed scenarios to the students to challenge their use of Hip-Hop to reframe or problem solve real-life dilemmas. Each week would focus on 1 element, with one class to practice and create, and a second class to discuss, debate, and clarify. This allowed us to cover the range of thinking, studying, and finding inspiration, through expressing, comparing, and constructively critiquing peers.

What made teaching at HCC different from your other classes?

Khaiim @rapoet: In some ways, we covered the same content as we've covered with on-campus

College students, High School students, and Creative Professional Development events. Yet the content definitely took on another shape, as it was received differently, and led us to fine tune and deliver it differently than we would outside of jail.

First, we had to consider that 70% of incarcerated adults cannot read at a fourth-grade level, and are less likely to have a high-school diploma or GED. When teaching, this meant we needed to allow verbal communication along with the reading opportunities, rewarding creative expression through drawing as much as through writing.

We were not only pleasantly surprised, but truly astounded, and inspired to see the brilliant and creative ways students used limited materials to deliver work, not only on par with, but in many instances exceeding work produced by college students with access to vast resources.

What were some key highlights?

Seth Markle: I would say that the course served as a proof of concept. I appreciated that the students trusted the process, came to class prepared, and openly shared their views and opinions. I do think the course was healing for them, however temporary: that feeling of being seen and treated as a human being.

Another highlight for me was the challenge of teaching primary sources and getting students to see themselves as historians. We examined autobiographies, photographs, films, oral interviews, rap lyrics, manifestos and declarations, each one with their own set of strengths and weaknesses as sources. Once they started to see what I was trying to do besides sharing with them a story about the enduring power of conflict resolution during the first decade of Hip Hop in the 1970s, their critical analysis skills improved.

The end-of-semester presentations where students performed their final creative projects

were another highlight. Words can't really capture the creativity and originality on display, from graffiti pieces to poems and rap verses, to sculptures. Truly amazing and inspiring work.

*"Thank you for TPEP, I've really enjoyed it!
Thank you for coming to teach us and
taking your time to come here."
TPEP Student at HCC, Spring '25*



Sam Bailey (left) and Priscilla Pandozzi (right) at the Hartford Public Library with books for TPEP students at HCC.

By Sam Bailey and Priscilla Pandozzi.

Starting in October 2024, Hartford Public Library (HPL) has been making monthly visits to Hartford Correctional Center. The visits take place during TPEP study halls and provide students with a selection of books to borrow. Most of the items HPL brings in were formerly in HPL's circulating collection and vary in genre and reading level.

Sam Bailey, HPL's Assistant Director of Adult Services and Programming, and Social Worker Priscilla Pandozzi lead the visits and provide information about library services. They have developed meaningful connections with the students and seek to continue their visits to the HCC school in the future and expand library pop-up services.

So far, one student has visited the Library after his release to receive a full-service library card (using his correctional ID) and connect with the Social Worker about community resources to facilitate his transition back into the community. In total, Hartford Public Library has lent more than 200 books to the incarcerated people at HCC, and will continue their visits in the future!

WRITING IS A SOCIAL PRACTICE.

REPORT ON THE WRITING CENTER AT HCC AND YORK CI



From left to right: Prof. James Truman, Jake ('25), Ellie ('25), Beatrice ('26), and Lily ('27). Not pictured: Theodora ('25).

By James Truman, Director of Peer Tutoring in Writing and TPEP codirector.

The Trinity College Writing Center is a peer tutoring service where trained student-tutors work with their fellow students on any kind of writing and at any point in their writing process. Our goal is to empower students as writers and thinkers, and since the spring of '24, we have been fortunate to partner with TPEP to bring Trinity students into Hartford Correctional Center (HCC) to work as writing tutors with TPEP students.

This year, we were excited again to have Writing Center tutors work with students during the Tuesday night study hall at HCC (which I was able

to proctor), and to expand support to students at York CI. Over the last three semesters, tutors have been able to work with over 25 students and have over 190 individual appointments in (what we liked to call) our “satellite” Writing Center for TPEP students.

The tutors were able to work with students on projects for a wide variety of classes, from my own “Reading Science Fiction”, to Prof. Frymire’s “Language, Literacy, and Our Lives.” The tutors were particularly energized by getting to work with the students on their creative projects for Prof. Markle’s “Living Hip Hop” class. And for the first time, two of our tutors, Jake ('25) and Theodora ('25), were able to make the long drive down to York CI to work

with students in Prof. Falk's and Prof. Farlow's class.

It was quite gratifying that the feedback about the tutors from the TPEP students was very positive—in their evaluations, they wrote that the tutors “were helpful and gave tons of feedback,” and that **“I was so happy they were part of this class.”** The students said they valued how the tutors shared their knowledge, that “they showed us how to use different writing tools and ways to be better with writing” and that **“they were very educated in our studies and knew how to help us.”** Students said they felt empowered to develop their own thinking, that the tutors “helped a lot because **they gave me many ideas and points of view,**” and that the tutors were able to help them develop their writing skills, saying “I explained what I needed help with, and [I] got help on how to write...essays and come up with subjects for each paragraph,” and that the tutors were “helpful because **I don't think I'm a great writer so having someone give feedback helped.**”

The Writing Center tutors themselves were inspired by the opportunity to work with these TPEP students. Jake ('25) said that “tutoring at HCC and York through TPEP has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life,” and that **“these students were amazing, thoughtful, and intellectually curious people who taught me so much about how they see the world and what learning should look like.”**

Lily ('27) said “I loved working with the students and feeling like I was making a difference in their writing/approach to the material...These are incredibly intelligent and motivated individuals. **To support them in their educational journeys has been such a privilege,** and I feel like I learned as much from them as they did from me, if not more so.”

For Theodora ('25), “working at HCC/York has been one of the best things I did in college. It is great to see the students get to be students for a few hours, especially those who are close to my age.” Overall, **“TPEP reminded me how valuable my education is and how important it is to use it in order to help others.”**

I was honored to facilitate The Writing Center tutors' work at HCC. The energy in the study halls was fantastic to witness, as both tutors and students brought their positive and collaborative intellectual spirit to any task they engaged with, be it building arguments about anthropology, crafting metaphorical graffiti projects, or figuring out the nuances of international relations. Supporting this kind of intellectual engagement is fundamental to Trinity's liberal arts values and is the core of TPEP's mission. I look forward to continuing The Writing Center's collaboration with TPEP next year!

“I liked the movies paired with the books, and I like our professor and the teacher aids. And I loved class discussion!”

TPEP Student at York, Spring 2025

“It was a great experience. Thank you!”

TPEP Student at York, Spring 2025

To learn more about TPEP and ways to get involved, please visit our website www.trincoll.edu/human-rights/trinity-prison-education-project or reach out to TPEP codirectors at:

**anna.terwiel@trincoll.edu;
james.truman@trincoll.edu;
joe.lea09@gmail.com.**

EMBODIED LEARNING.

INTERVIEW WITH LESLEY J. FARLOW

In spring 2025, Lesley J. Farlow co-taught a seminar on “Law, Literature, and Social Justice” at York CI, together with Glenn Falk. Farlow is Emerita Professor of Theater and Dance at Trinity College, and a longtime TPEP faculty member.

Anna Terwiel: TPEP was founded in 2012, and you were one of the first Trinity faculty members to teach at York CI. What was your experience then?

Lesley Farlow: I had started going to York in 2004 as part of a dance residency with Judy Dworin’s company, in which we worked with the women to create a piece called “Time In” that incorporated their writing, singing and choreography. I continued going to York for the next few years as the residencies continued. When the college program began, I was excited to participate. I was familiar with prison protocol, so that wasn’t particularly daunting.

I found the York students to be intimidated at first by the idea of taking a college course, especially because, at the time, Trinity students participated in the classes as students, alongside the women. But once we got going, the tension started to dissipate and everyone engaged with the material. In each course, I used examples from dance and theater to address the overarching theme of the course. For example, in a course on gender relations, we watched “Swan Lake” and analyzed how the staging of the ballet and the structure of the male/female partnering reinforced notions of class and gender hierarchies. I noticed that because the York students’ lives in prison require them to hone their powers of observation and understanding of subtle physical social cues, they were remarkably



Lesley J. Farlow

perceptive about meaning in movement.

While many of them struggled to articulate their thoughts in writing (Sheila [Fisher] and Joe [Lea] started a fall writing course to address this), they were hungry to be students. They felt it was a privilege for them to be in class. I felt it was a privilege to teach them. And, of course, I still do.

AT: As Professor of Theater and Dance, you have taught both movement-based and text-based classes at York CI. Could you reflect on what each modality has to offer incarcerated students?

LF: Both modalities ask the students to learn new ways of observing and thinking about the world, and to find ways to synthesize and communicate that new information. Because movement communicates in both time and space, and the medium is the mover’s body and presence, there is the very satisfying component of literally being seen at the

moment of communication/performance. It's also scary! And requires a level of courage that is similar to, but different from, the courage required to set one's ideas on paper. I believe that for incarcerated students, being seen for who they are—and not for what they have done—is liberating. (And some have actually told me so!)

AT: In the contemporary US, there is growing uncertainty about the value and meaning of a liberal arts education. The most common defense of higher ed is economic: college is seen as a financial investment that "pays off" in higher salaries earned after graduation. Similarly, people often defend college classes in jails and prisons by pointing to evidence that education lowers reincarceration rates and boosts employment. As someone who works in a field—dance—that resists such instrumental logic, how do you see the value of education, especially behind bars?

LF: Yes. The field of dance is hardly one parents encourage their children to pursue in order to afford an apartment on Fifth Avenue...however, dance and the arts require sophisticated levels of problem-solving in order to communicate what the artist wishes to communicate. They also ask the student/practitioner to look inward and to know themselves in order to accomplish what they have set out to do. It is easy enough to mask, of course, in all media. But my point is that dance and the arts demand full attention, moment to moment problem-solving, the willingness to fail, to recognize failure and move on, and to innovate. All of these attributes are invaluable in the workforce. All of them are invaluable for relationships of all kinds and incarcerated people often perceive their world to be constructed by relationships.

In the classroom, I ask the students to enter the room as students and I let them know we are there to engage with ideas and questions. We have protocols for discussion and disagreement, and we laugh a lot. That experience alone offers incarcerated people the opportunity to learn and practice the kinds of

social skills that will make their lives more successful, both in and out of prison.

AT: How has teaching incarcerated students changed you or your work (your teaching, artistic practice, relation to the university...)?

LF: Though I had worked in a prison before coming to York—Hampshire County Jail—the opportunity to engage with these students over a period of years has taught me considerably more about how the prison system works—or doesn't. The women have let me into their lives through the connections they make between what we are discussing and their own experiences, and that has given me the incredible sense that I am making a difference in some way. When a student ran up to me in the hall last February (she is now in the Wesleyan program) and said, "I loved when we watched the Alvin Ailey Company dance Revelations," and then showed me movement from the dance, I just about burst into tears! That class took place over five years ago. Teaching in the prison has changed me in ways that I am not sure I can define, but I know I am proud to be doing the work.

2024- 2025 AT A GLANCE

7 classes taught by 10 faculty members

48 incarcerated students enrolled across HCC and York

190+ peer tutoring sessions behind bars to date

1 information session held at HCC by CT State Community College - Capital

EDUCATION FOR WOMEN. TPEP MEETS THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR UNIVERSITY WOMEN (AAUW)



Board members of the Education Scholarship Program of the AAUW's Lower Connecticut Valley branch. From left to right: Mary Jane Peterson, Judith Slisz, Linda Frigon, Gloria Gery, and Olga Saubermann.

By Judith Slisz, AAUW-LCV Board member.

In the spring of 2024, the Lower Connecticut Valley (LCV) Chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) held a joint meeting with the Shoreline Chapter of the AAUW. The program that evening featured a presentation by Professor Anna Terwiel, a National AAUW Fellow. Anna presented her research on the value of prison education and provided some details about the Trinity Prison Education Project (TPEP). Several of us from LCV were inspired by the mission of TPEP, and we began a dialogue with Anna to learn more about the courses at York Correctional Institution. LCV member Gloria Gery was already in touch with Jackie Stack, a tutor at YCI who accepted our donations of novels and writing materials for the women students at York.

By fall 2024, the LCV Education Scholarship

Program (ESP) Board approved a \$10,000 grant to fund a summer course at York. Judith Slisz volunteered to coordinate the LCV/TPEP Collaboration which included communicating with TPEP codirectors Anna, Joe, and James.

ESP Board members were very pleased to hear that the students were excited about the plan that eventually evolved: for Trinity faculty to offer not one but two seven-week courses (each worth .5 academic credits) in summer 2025. "Religion and Gender in the United States" began on May 15. The second course, "Introduction to Philosophy," will be held in July and August.

The ESP Board and the entire LCV chapter are excited about the LCV/TPEP collaboration. We look forward to hearing about the students' response to these summer courses.



Leslie Ribovich

RELIGION AND GENDER. INTERVIEW WITH LESLIE RIBOVICH AND SHANE GLEASON

Trinity faculty members Leslie Ribovich and Shane Gleason are currently co-teaching a seminar on “Religion and Gender in the United States” at York CI. Ribovich is Director of the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Public Policy and Law. Gleason is Associate Professor of Public Policy and Law.

What led you to teach at York?

Leslie: I had taught community college classes in prisons during graduate school and have wanted to do so again, so I was thrilled that Trinity had this program. Mass incarceration and policing are deeply unjust elements of US society, and everyone has the right to an education. I also teach and research about intersections of religion and prisons, as well as the carceral elements of education.

Shane: I agree with Leslie, mass incarceration is a major problem in our society. I’ve been heartened by work finding that education can help formerly incarcerated persons successfully reintegrate into society. When offered the chance to participate in TPEP, I jumped at the opportunity.

How did you design this course? What led you to team teach?

Leslie: We were excited to teach together as colleagues in Public Policy & Law who come from totally different disciplinary backgrounds—Shane is a quantitative political scientist and I’m a religious studies historian/humanist. Since Shane focuses on gender and I concentrate on religion, we were excited to collaborate and learn from each other as we learned with the students. Practically, we sat down and shared theoretical texts and examples from each of our fields and found so many cool intersections and parallels!

Shane: I’ve always felt we can get a better picture of the world by looking at it from multiple perspectives. In every conversation with Leslie, I’ve been fascinated by her work. I was very pleasantly surprised by how easy it was to create a syllabus! There is also a somewhat selfish reason: I enjoy collaborating with Leslie and I feel I learn so much doing the readings she added to the syllabus and reading the assignments she has created.

Why the class?

Leslie: Studying religion and gender from an academic perspective allows students to uncover underlying assumptions about the world around them. We have also seen students make important connections to their own lives.

Shane: I really believe identity sits at the core of everything we do on a daily basis. While there are a myriad of identities that matter in our lives, I think religion and gender are two of the most salient. This is especially true in the way they overlap and intersect.

What have you learned from your students?
What have you learned from team teaching?

Leslie: Our York students, like all students, teach us by bringing new perspectives to material we might think we know well. York students bring a particular motivation to their learning that is admirable. From team teaching, we have learned the beauty of bringing diverse methods together, and also how fun and productive it can be to collaborate on assignments and course design!

Shane: So much! I think of class as a conversation rather than a lecture. Class is always dynamic and students pick up on nuanced things that make the material so much deeper and meaningful. I learn so much from them. I've also learned so much from the dynamic back and forth of our class planning. We have become better educators for it- and we get to have fun in the process!



Shane Gleason

MEET OUR NEW FACULTY! HERE'S WHO WILL TEACH WITH TPEP FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2025-'26



Lucius Couloute

LUCIUS COULOUTE is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Trinity College and a member of the Prison Policy Initiative's Board of Directors. His research primarily examines the multiple causes, consequences of, and alternatives to, mass criminalization. In particular, his work explores barriers to (re)integration, labor market exploitation, and direct cash transfers among formerly incarcerated people.

What will you be teaching? I will be co-teaching a course (with Dr. Ricardo Gabriel) at HCC on Racial Capitalism.

What made you want to teach with TPEP? I've found that people who have direct experience with the criminal legal system often demonstrate profound brilliance around how our social world works. So, while I'm hoping to impart some academic insights based on my sociological training, I'm more so excited about the opportunity to learn with and from students in the TPEP program.

RICARDO GABRIEL is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at Trinity College where he teaches classes on social movements, environmental and climate justice, and colonialism. His scholarship and community organizing focus on pro-Puerto Rican independence politics in the United States, anti-imperialism, and environmental/ climate justice.

What will you be teaching? I will be co-teaching a course (with Dr. Lucius Couloute) at HCC on Racial Capitalism.

What made you want to teach with TPEP? I want to teach with TPEP because I believe access to higher education is a human right and because education can be an effective means for prisoners to resist the inherent violence and dehumanization of incarceration.

SHANE EWEGEN is Professor of Philosophy at Trinity College, where he teaches ancient Greek philosophy and 20th-century German philosophy. He has published extensively in both areas and has a new book—titled *The Grand Detour: Heidegger and the Question of the Animal*—coming out this year through SUNY Press.

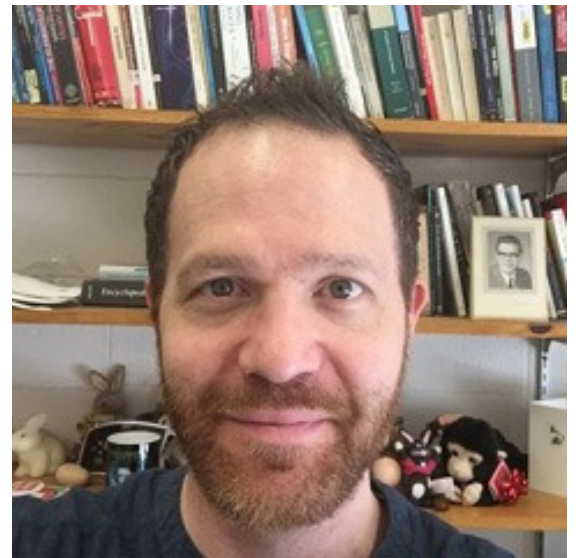
What will you be teaching? Introduction to Philosophy, at York this summer, with a total focus on works authored by female philosophers.

Why TPEP? I am interested in gaining new perspective from a fresh student body and teaching people of a variety of ages and backgrounds.

HERNAN FLOM is a political scientist who specializes in policing, criminal violence, and illegal markets.

What will you be teaching? I will be teaching either a course on social science research methods or an introduction to Comparative Politics at HCC.

What made you want to teach with TPEP? Both my research and teaching analyze the causes and consequences of criminal justice policies, including incarceration, which motivated me to teach with TPEP, as I wanted to have these new interactions and see this system, however briefly, from a different perspective.



From top: Ricardo Gabriel, Shane Ewegen, Hernán Flom

2024-2025 CLASSES

HARTFORD JAIL (HCC)

Fall 2024

“Reading Science Fiction”

Prof. James Truman (Writing and Rhetoric)

“Living Hip Hop: a Creative Nonviolent Response to Stress and Conflict”

Prof. Seth Markle (History and International Studies) and Khaiim Kelly

Spring 2025

“Language, Literacy, and our Lives”

Prof. Erin Frymire (Writing and Rhetoric)

“Foundations of International Relations”

Prof. Shaznene Hussain (American Studies)

Study hall: James Truman and undergraduate Writing Associates

YORK CI

Spring 2025

“Law, Literature, and Social Justice”

Prof. Glenn Falk (Public Policy and Law) and Prof. Lesley Farlow (Theater and Dance)

Summer 2025

“Religion and Gender in the US”

Prof. Leslie Ribovich (Public Policy and Law and Religious Studies) and Prof. Shane Gleason (Public Policy and Law)

“Introduction to Philosophy”

Prof. Shane Ewegen (Philosophy)

Study hall: Peg Meehan and Jacqueline Stack, with help from undergraduate Writing Associates

THANK YOU!

We could not do this work without the dedicated faculty members, students, and proctors who taught classes, offered one-on-one tutoring, and led weekly study hall. For their crucial institutional and financial support, we thank Sonia Cardenas, Dean of Faculty at Trinity College; Ben Carbonetti, Director of Trinity’s Human Rights Program; Amy Myerson, Senior Director of the Grants Office; the Board members of AAUW-LCV; and the S&L Marx Foundation. We also thank Teresita Romero for her administrative assistance.

– TPEP codirectors Joe Lea, Anna Terwiel (both pictured below), and James Truman (photo within)

