This lecture presents some findings and questions from Professor Trimble’s book-in-progress, *Seeing Roman Slaves*, which explores the role of Roman art and visual culture in representing and enforcing Roman slavery. Perceptions and experiences of slavery operated through seeing, inspecting, being seen—for enslaved, freed, and free people. What people *saw* was crucial to how they understood and experienced slavery. Part of the violence of the institution hinged on the enforced visibility or invisibility of enslaved people; at the same time, dynamics of visibility were where social and visual boundaries might be blurred or even crossed. The most surprising finding of this project so far has been the clear evidence that at least some enslaved people negotiated their own conditions of visibility and did so as knowledgeable cultural actors.

Investigating the ways in which slavery shaped Roman visual culture poses methodological challenges: people’s legal status was not always evident, either in everyday Roman life or in artworks. More productive is to explore a series of questions and consider the effects and implications of the answers. Who was represented—or not—in Roman art? How were they represented, and in what actions or interactions? How were questions of bodily integrity or violation, labor or suffering handled? Where were the boundaries between person and thing? These questions are about images, but viewing and reception, too, were fundamentally shaped by slavery. Here, we can ask who had permission or even encouragement to look, linger, or touch, and who did not; how the gestures, postures, and physical ease of potential viewers varied; in what contexts and in whose presence viewing happened, and with what praise or punishment. The answers show that visual expressions of personhood, figuration, aesthetics, and embodiment were intertwined with the practices and assumptions of slavery.