



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

THE MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES / DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Scarlett Rebman Teaching Letter of Support

Scarlett Rebman is by far the most outstanding TA with whom I had the pleasure to work, in my 10 years at Syracuse University. She worked with me in Fall 2014, when I taught Global History HST 121 for the first time. As it was my first year teaching the course of about 100 students, my TAs were very involved in the assignment-writing and class preparation processes. We met every week to discuss lecture, reading and recitation material. Each week, my TAs emailed me possibilities for weekly assignments. Over the course of the semester, each of my TAs delivered a lecture. I attended one of their sections in November.

Scarlett's teaching strengths surpass what I would expect of a TA. Indeed she is on par with those of some of the most seasoned instructors in our program. The students' comments on her evaluations for the course attest to her successes in the classroom. Several students commented that she was the "best," "most outstanding" TA and "the best all around teacher," they had encountered at SU. "She is so clear in her answers when asked questions," wrote one. It is impressive that a student claimed, "she is very passionate about the subject matter," given she was teaching far outside her field in modern US History. Her numerical statistics were all well above the averages for TAs in our department. To the question, "I feel my Teaching Assistant is in control of the class," she scored 4.77 (department mean 4.45). For the question "I feel my TA provides high-quality instruction," she scored 4.81 (department mean 4.21). She scored highest in the questions regarding preparedness (4.96—department mean 4.53); respectfulness towards students (5.00—department mean 4.67); interest in subject (4.96—department mean 4.60); and success promoting comprehension of readings (4.92—department average 4.26).

Scarlett's 50 minute lecture (and powerpoint presentation) "Land Empires of the New World" was fantastic. She covered 3 main topics: 1) the range of bound labor in the 18th century Atlantic; 2) the development of racialized slavery; 3) resistance and adaptations to slavery. She began by showing a 2-minute clip from *Amistad* to give the students a visual representation of the Middle Passage, then worked in a textual discussion of the *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* that the students had to read for recitation. She used 2 case studies (labor in Britain, and labor in Barbados), to highlight how population and demographic changes in the 17th century led to the rise of bound labor, from indentured servitude to slavery. She explained how the Atlantic world economy, and the development of sugar, coffee, tobacco, indigo and cotton increasingly led to reliance on slave labor. The third part of the lecture involved a discussion on resistance, from armed rebellions (Toussaint l'Ouverture, Haiti) and the development of maroon communities in



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the Caribbean, to abolition. In her conclusion, she discussed the racialization of slavery, then encouraged the students to think about present-day examples of bound labor. Her final powerpoint slide included a list of important terms and concepts, and a review of the class objectives. At the end of the lecture, the students broke into applause!

Scarlett is a natural and gifted teacher, and she revealed her strengths in the classroom during her recitation. She began by reviewing the previous lectures from the week, and involved the students by having them discuss the three most important themes from the week, then having a volunteer write them on the board. Then she divided them into groups, in order to get the more reticent students to talk to one another. After a few minutes of small group exercises, she brought the whole group together and lead a role-play exercise, whereby each group stood at the front of the class to "play" interactions between French missionaries and Native tribes in French Canada (text: Black Robe), then between French missionaries and Indian Brahmins (text: Francis Xavier in India). It was clear that she had a great rapport with her students.

The weekly assignment ideas that she contributed were very well thought out, as they encouraged careful reading and comparisons between texts. She was an extremely fair grader, and was always available to meet with students in extended office hours.

I was particularly impressed with Scarlett's performance as a lecturer and recitation leader because this was a topic very far from her field in 20th century US History. I would absolutely welcome the opportunity to work with her again in the future. She brings energy, passion, and knowledge to the classroom that is contagious. Our students understand the topics of history better because of her, but more importantly, some have decided to minor or major in history because of the positive experience she shared with them. I was humbled by her teaching, and she has driven me to continue improving my own.

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