IN THIS LECTURE SERIES, I seek to offer a fresh perspective on the interactions between the Roman Empire and the indigenous peoples of North Africa. The consensus view of Africa in the Roman empire has tended to be closely aligned with the view from Rome and is heavily focused on the hundreds of urban sites, the huge volume of Latin epigraphy and the many extraordinary classical artworks. While not wishing to deny the importance of any of this traditional framework, my lectures follow a different transect across the African landscape to that more usually traversed. The geographical focus is the broad swathe of territory extending from the central Sahara to the coast spanning western Libya and eastern Algeria (broadly the area of the province of Africa Proconsularis) and in general the direction of the intellectual journey is from the desert to the sea. The main chronological focus is on the last centuries BC and early centuries AD. In place of the traditional interpretative paradigm of Romanisation, I use the concept of identity as a tool for exploring inter- and intra-communal differences in the patterns of adoption of material culture and behaviors in Africa under Roman rule.

The series starts with an overview of Africa and its varied populations in the pre-Roman period, contrasting the ancient historical and geographical sources with newly emerging archaeological evidence. The rest of the series looks at the relationship of three broad cultural communities with the Roman state: the army, the rural populations and townspeople. The second lecture focuses on the military community, reconsidering the development of the Roman frontier, the role of the army in Africa and the cultural self-definition of the garrison settlements and how and why these differed from indigenous settlements in the frontier zone. The third lecture explores the diverse histories, economic trajectories and cultural characteristics of rural communities, asking to what extent these can be attributed to pre-Roman regional diversity or to active agency in response to Rome’s massive impact on land-use and landholding. The final lecture examines different types of urban biography in Africa and the possible explanations for the diversity detected.

THE LECTURESHIP
By his will Mr. Thomas Spencer Jerome (1864-1914) endowed the lectureship which bears his name. It is jointly administered by the University of Michigan and the American Academy in Rome, and the lectures for which it provides are delivered at both institutions. They deal with phases of the history or culture of the Romans or of people included in the Roman Empire, and with other topics in historiography and the philosophy of history.

LECTURE 1
Cultural Encounters in 1st Millennium BC Africa: Romans, Libyphoenicians and Libyans
APRIL 8, 4:00 PM
Palmer Commons Forum Hall

LECTURE 2
Pacifying, Protecting, Policing, Posturing? The Military Community in Roman Africa
APRIL 10, 4:00 PM
Palmer Commons Forum Hall

LECTURE 3
A World of Difference: Rural Communities in Africa Under Rome
APRIL 15, 4:00 PM
Palmer Commons Forum Hall

LECTURE 4
Africa in the Roman Empire: Urban Identities and Urban Trajectories
APRIL 17, 4:00 PM
Palmer Commons Forum Hall

GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR*
Romaniisation and Discrepant Identity: A Theoretical Discussion
APRIL 13, 10:00 AM | Classical Studies Library
*Interested non-graduate students should call 734 764 0360

ABOUT DAVID MATTINGLY
David Mattingly is Professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester. He received his BA and PhD from the University of Manchester and was a British Academy Post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford. He then spent a period as Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan before moving to Leicester. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2003.

Mattingly’s research has been wide-ranging in chronological and geographical terms, as well as in subject matter, though with a strong focus on the socioeconomic history and archaeology of the Roman empire. A significant component throughout his career has been the study of Roman Africa, especially issues concerning rural settlement, the economy, urbanism and post-colonial approaches to the impact of Rome. He was a major author in the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey and he co-directed work at the Tunisian coastal site of Leptiminus, revealing much about that harbour town’s economy. More recently, he has researched the Saharan heartlands of the Garamantes, an ancient Libyan people neighboring the Roman empire. He currently holds a major research grant from the European Research Council for the Trans-Sahara Project, illuminating the relationships between the desert and the Mediterranean lands of Africa. He is also known for his research on Roman imperialism, power and identity and all these research strands will feature in the lecture series.
