Virtual Workshop: New Approaches to the Contentious Politics of Class

Convened online via Zoom
Friday 28 May 2021

Keynote Speakers
Dr. Matt Perry (Newcastle University, UK)
Professor Tithi Bhattacharya (Purdue University, USA)

In cooperation with Newcastle University, Northern Bridge Consortium (NBCDTP) and the Labour and Society Research Group

NORTHERN BRIDGE CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

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This cross-disciplinary workshop aims to explore the evolved understandings of class in both domestic and transnational contexts throughout the twentieth century and in the contemporary world. In particular, the centrality of the working-class within debates around recent political decisions and trends, such as the vote to leave the European Union, austerity and the resurgence of far-right thought, makes now a pertinent time to discuss the meanings of class, but also invites consideration of the historical significance of class more broadly. There has been a renewed interest in the micro-level experiences of class, leading to consideration of the affective and emotional meanings of class. Equally, in exploring the historical intersection between stigmatisation and class, greater attention is now paid to further layers of marginalisation as a result of gender, race, age or disability.

Prompted by the subject of global labour history, this workshop aims to draw attention to the complexity of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, international working class (Lucassen, 2006; Van der Linden, 2008). It embraces studies of gender, race, and postcolonialism to understand the globalised webs in which key issues of labour are located, such as colonialism, neo-liberalism, and industrial decline. In doing so, the workshop considers the salience of memory and nostalgia within understandings of class, both historically and in the present day. Furthermore, it questions how class and its related intersections have been employed to generate solidarity and resistance in some instances but used to sow disunity and stigma in others.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE, FRIDAY 28 MAY 2021

09.55-10.00: Registration
10.00-10.10: Welcome and opening remarks (Katherine Waugh and Joe Redmayne)

10.10-11.15: Keynote 1
Chaired by Joe Redmayne

- Dr. Matt Perry (Newcastle University), *Class analysis and the historical method*

11.15-11.20: *Break*

11.20-12.05: Panel 1, Intersectionality in Qualitative Research: Considering Class, Race and Gender in Project Design, Interviews, and the Archiving of Material
Chaired by Jack Hepworth

- Hannah James Louwerse (Newcastle University), *Only Time Will Tell: the ethical dilemma of oral histories*
- Moushumi Bhowmik (The Travelling Archive), *Not Pre-Designed: Creating a Travelling Archive of Field Recordings from Bengal*

12.05-13.00: *Lunch*

13.00-13.45: Panel 2, Interrogating the Global Colour Line

- Joe Redmayne (Newcastle University), *The Making and Remaking of County Durham's Working Class, 1919: Racism, Whiteness, and anti-imperialism*
- Duncan Money (Leiden University), *Historicizing the white working-class: Evidence from the Zambian Copperbelt*

13.45-14.45: Panel 3, Class and its Intersections
Chaired by Máire Cross

- Katjo Buissink (University of Waikato), *Modern Social Movements and an Intersectional Reading of Marx's Dual In-Itself/For-Itself Class Theory*
- David Cowan (Emmanuel College), *Gracie Fields, Class, and the Politics of Wealth in Second World War Britain*
- Elizabeth Tanner (University College Cork), *Relations of domination: The US, Pakistan, and the Bengali liberation war 1971*

14.45-15.00: *Break*

15.00-15.45: **Panel 4, Researching Working-Class Resistance**

Chaired by Christopher Loughlin

- Katherine Waugh (Newcastle University), *Refusing to Lie Down and Die: Community Resistance to the 'Category D' Policy*
- Christos Efstathiou (Kaplan International College), *The Re-emergence of Moral Economy*

15.45-15.50: *Break*

15.50-16.55: Keynote 2

Chaired by Katherine Waugh

- Prof. Tithi Bhattacharya (Purdue University), *Our Universal or Theirs? Race, Gender and Civil Society in Late Capitalism*

16.55-17.05: Closing Remarks (Katherine Waugh and Joe Redmayne)

ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKER INFORMATION

Matt Perry
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Matt Perry is a Reader in Labour History at Newcastle University. He convenes the Labour and Society Research Group here. He has published widely on British and French social and labour history. His publications include Red Ellen Wilkinson: Her Ideas, Movements and World (2014), and The Prisoners of Want: Experience and Protest of the Unemployed in France 1921–1941 (2007). His latest monograph is Mutinous Memories: A Subjective History of French Military Protest in 1919 (2019).

Class analysis and the historical method

This paper will explore approaches to class analysis. It will look at industrial psychology and post-structurualism as influential ways in which working-class experience is understood. In formulating a critical engagement with both of these approaches, it will attempt to renew a classical Thompsonian approach to class. That renewal is possible through a more thorough engagement with understandings of worker subjectivity, that is working-class people as historical subjects in thought and action. That subjectivity needs to draw on a dialogue with the history of the senses and the history of the emotions and situating labouring subjects within the ecologically-threatened, racialised and gendered world of capitalism. Finally, the paper will consider the methodological implications of such an understanding of class, namely how we handle our archive materials, how we interview witnesses, how we reconstruct labour pasts.

Hannah James Louwerse
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Hannah started her CDA “Oral History’s Design: A creative collaboration. Sustaining visitor (re)use of oral histories on heritage sites” this January at Newcastle University. Her CDA is in collaboration with the National Trust site Seaton Delaval Hall, the Oral History Unit at Newcastle University and the Design school at Northumbria University. The project involves recording oral histories from the community that surrounds the hall and then using these as the foundation to build a sustainable archive. The archive will be built by facilitating design thinking workshops with the hall’s community, National Trust staff and the respective universities.

Only Time Will Tell: the ethical dilemma of oral histories

One of the most difficult things to archive is an oral history. An oral history is someone reflecting on the past in the present. When listening back to an oral history, you are effectively listening to one past talking about another past. One also need to consider when listening back the recordings meta data such as who the interviewer was and whether the interviewee is still alive holds the same views. After all people change their mind. I have been challenged with building an oral history archive at the National Trust property Seaton Delaval Hall. These oral histories will come from the local community. It is important that these are preserved in an ethical way, in order to avoid dispute between the giving and receiving parties. When put in the context of time, ethics can become rather messy, as oral histories regularly prove, so building a system that is able to handle ethical dilemmas as they arise through time will be extremely difficult but very valuable.

Moushumi Bhowmik
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Moushumi Bhowmik is a Bengali singer, writer based in Kolkata, while working alone and with other artists and scholars, across disciplines, in eastern India, Bangladesh and London. She is on the verge of completing her doctoral research, on the wax cylinder recordings of Arnold Bake from Bengal from the 1930s, at the School of Cultural Texts and Records, Jadavpur University. Her research interests are home and dislocation and she approaches her material through the methodology of listening. Moushumi is co-creator, with sound recordist Sukanta Majumdar, of an archive of songs and sounds from Bengal called The Travelling Archive (www.thetravellingarchive.org).

Not Pre-Designed: Creating a Travelling Archive of Field Recordings from Bengal

The project (www.thetravellingarchive.org) was not planned or 'designed' as such. It came out of my life as a singer and writer, at a point when I was feeling stuck both within my home and my art practice. I had to step out and go on a journey of listening, and what came out of this ongoing journey slowly became The Travelling Archive, an archive of field recordings and field notes from Bengal. I collaborated with many artists along the way. And collectively we created a shared space of listening. Therefore, The Travelling Archive was not a product that I had intended to make, there was no project design as such on my mind, just some impulses and questions. And a whole array of possibilities, marked also by uncertainties. Interestingly, as the map unfurled, we could also see shapes and patterns, which tell us things about how society is designed

around questions of class, gender, race, faith, ethnicity, language and so much more; everything which both gathers us together as a force as well as and breaks us up into the smallest units, making Us and Them of us. In this presentation I shall talk about how we come to know in the course of our work and how societal 'designs' reveal themselves to us. I shall illustrate the talk with recordings from the field; of workmen on ships voyaging from India to somewhere in Europe, of women who labour doubly at home and on stage, of descendants of indentured labour in the tea gardens for whom singing in a forgotten language itself can be read as an act of resistance.

Joe Redmayne
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Joe is a second year History PhD student at Newcastle University and is interested in global labour history. His thesis situates County Durham during the year 1919 transnationally, and explores the global implications of Empire on British society through regional working-class consciousness. He uses a multi-occupational approach to understand working-class experience across labour, anti-colonial and women's movements.

The Making and Remaking of County Durham's Working Class, 1919: Racism, Whiteness and anti-imperialism

This paper will explore both the specific history and the broader implications of imperialism on the British working class after World War I. The exigencies of the war effort introduced a significant population of British colonial subjects from the empire to the metropole, but at the same time raised questions about continued desirability of their presence. Employers, policymakers and trade union leaders directed these changes, with white workers following protectionist labour policies to defend and enhance their material benefits over foreign labour. Therefore, desires of working people played a vital role within the politics of inclusion and exclusion, which shaped notions of class. The paper will also consider the year 1919 as a moment of remaking the British working-class and investigates the voices of whiteness and anti-imperialism within County Durham. Special attention is paid to labour leaders, trade unions and related left-wing organisations to explore opposing voices within working class communities.

Duncan Money
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Duncan Money is a historian of Southern Africa and works as at Researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden. His work focuses on labour, race and the mining industry. He is the co-editor of Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa, 1930s-1990s (Routledge, 2020) and the author of the forthcoming book In a Class of Their Own: White Mineworkers on Zambia's Copperbelt (Brill, 2021).

Historicizing the white working-class: Evidence from the Zambian Copperbelt

This paper assesses the use and meaning of the term 'white working-class' by examining historical antecedents. This term has become a convenient and popular shorthand for explaining the rise of right-wing populist political movements in Europe and North America and identifying the supposed base of these movements. However, several contemporary scholars have argued that the term is misleading and is used as a way to conflate race and class in political discourse.

This paper provides a historical dimension to this debate. While the contemporary term is conceptually vague, this was not always the case. In the recent past, a white working-class did exist and comparing this to the contemporary usage is a revealing way of showing the emptiness of the present-day concept. From the late nineteenth century, many workers moving between Britain and its settler colonies asserted a collective identity as white and as working-class and formed collective organisations on that basis. This was an international and racialised working class.

On the mines of the Zambian Copperbelt, white workers formed racially segregated trade unions and took collective action to win material gains for white workers. This was a collective identity along the lines of both race and class. Moreover, these white workers regularly called upon the international labour movement to assist them in their struggles, assistance they believed they were due by dint of their shared membership of that labour movement. This identification was reciprocated. British trade unions recognised the Copperbelt's white mineworkers as in some way part of Britain's extended labour movement and so deserving of support. Seen from this standpoint, this contemporary usage of the term 'white working class' is unrecognisable. It is hard to see how 'class' figures in this contemporary usage, and how it forms a collective identity other than a racial one.

Katjo Buissink
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Katjo Buissink BA *Well.* is a graduate student in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Their current research focuses on the motives and processes of worker organising and resistance in the food service sector with case studies of unionised fast food and non-unionised restaurants. They have also previously worked as a trade union organiser in this sector and have a particular interest in the sociology of both capitalist regulation and anti-capitalist movements.

Modern Social Movements and an Intersectional Reading of Marx's Dual In-Itself/For-Itself Class Theory

One of the most contested parts of social theory today is the relationship between class and intersectional identities. While nobody takes the extreme view that gender, race, etc. do not exist or matter, the basis upon which these interact with class is contested between various intersectional and/or reductionist approaches.

My paper argues that key to understanding this problem of intersecting identities is Marx's distinction between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. For Marx, the class-for-itself was a political formation, only forming in political struggle after diverse working people (economic class) could unify based on common interest. Thus Marxian class theory must have a subjective, political-organisational dimension, unlike Weberian and other class paradigms.

So what are these interests which could provide a unifying platform today? To understand this, we must understand Marx and Engels' more sophisticated work, where not a employment binary, but the contradiction of the socialisation of labour and private ownership was seen as "the germ of the whole of the social antagonisms of today". This expansion, while still maintaining the importance of the bourgeoisie-proletariat struggle, allows for intersectional exploitations such as indigenous land rights, gender, and race to be seen as fundamental struggles against capitalism and therefore essential to the formation of a class-in-itself.

Movements that disregard these diverse intersectional oppressions, no matter what they may claim, cannot act in genuine class interests. This can be seen within case studies of successes and failures within modern social movements from migrant worker organising to Sanders' rejection of reparations.

A deep understanding of how intersectional oppressions link with the capitalist mode of production and, more importantly, how these intersectional struggles can form part of an anti-capitalist social movement requires not just recognition of the diverse nature of the working class but the pluralist solidarity necessary for the formation of a class-for-itself.

David Cowan
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David Cowan is a Research Fellow in History at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he also teaches modern British history. He is working on two projects: a study of memory and popular politics in Britain since the Second World War, based on his doctorate, and a cultural history of the rich in modern Britain. He has published articles in Twentieth Century British History and Social History.

Gracie Fields, Class, and the Politics of Wealth in Second World War Britain

This paper uses an episode in the history of mass culture to probe the origins of class antagonism, as well as its limits, in Second World War Britain.

Gracie Fields, a versatile musical and cinematic performer, was one of the most popular British celebrities of the 1930s. Born in Rochdale, she had worked in a mill whilst still at school; in 1934, she earned a fee for appearing in a film which reputedly 'was the biggest yet paid to any kinema star in this country'. In 1940, early on in the Second World War, Fields left Britain for North America. She argued that her trip intended to raise money abroad for Britain's war effort by performing concerts—that she was using her talents to support Britain at a moment of national crisis—but it was widely suspected that she had other, less altruistic, reasons for leaving, intended to protect her Italian husband. Through a study of the public's response to the ensuing scandal, drawing on social investigations and archived letters, this paper explores everyday languages of class in Second World War Britain. It considers the force of the claim that Fields, as a well-connected, wealthy celebrity, was unfairly benefiting from an opportunity to work comfortably in relatively safe climes abroad—a choice denied to most 'ordinary' people who remained on the Home Front, facing the threats of invasion and the blitz. But it also considers how, amongst Fields's defenders, her continued charitable support of the British people, despite her mobility, served to excuse her apparent disloyalty. The paper, finally, uses the episode to consider how class sentiment intersected with other identities in wartime Britain: national pride and anti-Italian feeling.

Elizabeth Tanner
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Irish Research Council PhD scholar at the School of History, University College Cork, Ireland. My research field is twentieth century diplomatic history, specializing in US foreign policy in South Asia in 1971. Received an MA in History and International Relations at UCC and obtained a BL in Law with History and Sociology at the University of Limerick. Lectured in international relations at UCC. Co-authored an article with Professor David Ryan in 2019 which formed part of the Journal of Transatlantic Studies' special issue on Henry Kissinger. Other research interests include postcolonial studies, and gender and race in US foreign policy.

Relations of domination: The US, Pakistan, and the Bengali liberation war 1971

The dynamics of the Bengali liberation war 1971 reveal the coincidences of interests between local dominant classes and the links that bound them to US power. During the 1971 war, the Pakistan nation split in to with the emergence of the new nation of Bangladesh. The Pakistan military regime received US diplomatic, economic and military support for facilitating its Cold War manoeuvres with respect to communist China. It was a war of widening regional economic disparities inherent in the unevenness of capitalist development. But also, a war produced by a distorted postcolonial economy in the form of the US backed ruling bureaucratic-military oligarchy and the challenges posed by the rising democratic forces in the country. Powerful challenges to the dominant central authority of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy came primarily from political movements emerging in underprivileged regions and demands for regional autonomy and for a fuller share for the regions in the distribution of material resources as well as in state power grew. The decision to deploy military force across the borders of West Pakistan to the East to crush the emerging sense of a separate national identity amongst that underprivileged regional group in March 1971 resided with the West Pakistani military regime. The use of force in pursuit of domestic order in Pakistan had a reciprocal relationship with White House policy and produced mutually reinforcing ways of managing through the provision of US arms and aid. The war is primarily cast in US historiography as an unfortunate consequence of American grand strategy, borne out of the personal persuasions of President Richard Nixon and his national security advisor Henry Kissinger. Using US and World Bank archives as well as South Asian

perspectives, the paper aims to revaluate the significance of class to the dynamics of the war in an international context.

Katherine Waugh
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Katherine is a second year PhD student at Newcastle University. Her research uses oral history to explore cross-generational experiences of deindustrialisation in County Durham. Last year, Katherine began a placement with Northern Heartlands, conducting archival research with the aim of producing a small exhibition to accompany Christina Castling's play *A Way Home* that represents community experiences of Durham County Council's Category D policy, which aimed to eradicate 'economically unviable' villages from the map.

Refusing to Lie Down and Die: Community Resistance to the 'Category D' Policy

In 1951, the Durham County Development Plan classified villages in the County with a series of letters: A, B, C, and D. In the villages categorised as 'D', no future development would be permitted, buildings were to be demolished, and residents were to be rehoused. Starved of investment and population, it was hoped that the villages would quietly pass out of existence. Yet by the 1970s, only three villages had been entirely demolished, and the plan was scrapped. This paper explores the centrality of community resistance to the ultimate failure of the policy, drawing on archival sources that document both the council's vision for the County and the personal testimony of residents who strongly resisted their displacement. In doing so, it will examine how residents articulated and utilised their affective bonds to place and community as part of this resistance, exploring the frequent emotional discourse of war-like destruction and death that was deployed by these communities via the local press and individual correspondence.

The research for this paper was initially conducted with the intention of producing a small exhibition to travel with Christina Castling's play A Way Home, which itself was based on extensive research within the former Category D villages. As such, this paper will also examine the way in which the Category D policy continues to reside in the collective memory of the villages, thinking particularly of how a reflective nostalgia of community spirit and resistance is used in the present day to advocate for the current needs of the

villages that ultimately 'would not die' (Halbwachs,1992; Boym, 2012; Biggs. et all, 2002).

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Christos Efstathiou is currently Academic Tutor at Kaplan International College London and Associate Fellow of the University of Warwick. He specialises in social and intellectual history of contemporary Europe. Some of his latest publications are the following: 'Dreaming through the Ages: Towards a Global History of Utopian Thought', Modern Intellectual History; 'From Petty to Piketty: Writing the History of Economic Thought in an Age of Disgregation', Global Intellectual History; '"The Great Debate": Welfarism, Objectivity and Cold-War Ideology in the Workers' Educational Association', Labour History Review, 84(1); 'E. P. Thompson, the early New Left and the Fife Socialist League", Labour History Review, 81(1); E. P. Thompson: A Twentieth-Century Romantic, London: Merlin.

The Re-emergence of Moral Economy

Why has the term of 'moral economy' become popular again? Is this re-emergence only connected to some features of modern academic discourses in the study of the working class? Or its use suggests something about new forms of political activity after the 1960s? Should it be connected to new forms of working-class identity? On the one hand, the paper will try offer a critical historical analysis of the term. On the other, it will try to explain its connection to new forms of social action that started to take place worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century. Some of these actions will be seen as typical case studies of modern reformism, but a particular mention will be paid to several African and Latin American revolts. Some questions that the paper hopes to explore are: What is the particular ideological affinity between 'moral economists' and several late twentieth-century riots? Can we reinterpret the May '68 events as a moral revolt? Is there a difference between moral economy and an economy of morals? Is the term of 'moral economy' still fruitful for social scientists or should it be abandoned?

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Tithi Bhattacharya is a professor of South Asian History and the Director of Global Studies at Purdue University. She is the author of The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education, and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (Oxford University Press, 2005) and the editor of the now classic study, Social

Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression (Pluto Press, 2017). Her recent coauthored book includes the popular Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto (Verso, 2019) which has been translated in over 25 languages. She writes extensively on Marxist theory, gender, and the politics of Islamophobia. Her work has been published in the Journal of Asian Studies, South Asia Research, Electronic Intifada, Jacobin, Salon.com, The Nation, and the New Left Review. She is on the editorial board of Studies on Asia and Spectre.

Our Universal or Theirs? Race, Gender and Civil Society in Late Capitalism

Class is often understood to be the universal condition by Marxists and liberals alike, a cohering subjectivity grounded in the objective reality of the capital-labour relation. Race, gender, ability, and all similar forms of oppression are, in this reckoning, seen as 'special oppressions' which detract or fracture the universality of class. In this paper, I want to explore and challenge this understanding of the universal and relatedly the place of the so-called special oppressions within it.

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