EASTER TERM SEMINAR 2017

Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure

Seminars take place at 1pm in Room 5, Faculty of History, West Road, CB3 9EF

Sandwiches and fruit will be available from 12.45pm. All welcome

15 May
James Boyd (Cambridge)

Commodities, Commerce and Risk: Transforming Access to American Settlement after Napoleon

Immediately after the Napoleonic Wars, the type of migrant leaving Europe for the United States, and the nature of their migration, changed dramatically. “Commodities, Commerce and Risk” explores pivotal changes in trade and passenger shipping between continental Europe and the United States from the 1790s to 1817, examining how those changes ended the institution of indenture, and in turn defined who could access the young American Republic in the pre-steam age. In a unique period when neither indenture nor extensive remittances could provide cheap access for continental Europeans, capital became more important to the migration decision – and to potential settlement choices - than in any prior period of mass migration, or any subsequent period after the crises of 1846. Using sources from German Europe to examine the changes to trade, commerce and law which helped to define post-Napoleonic migration, this paper seeks not only to explain changes in migration models, but to question the consequences of those changes for the development of the young United States.

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