



Seminar in Early Modern Economic and Social History Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, Lent 2022

The seminar meets Thursdays at 5 pm in Room 12 of the History Faculty.

We normally have dinner with the speaker afterwards, to which all are welcome.

Convenors: Martin Andersson, Jonah Miller, Craig Muldrew, Elly Robson, Joris van den Tol

3 February: Heather Wolfe (Folger Library)

Initial thoughts on the cultural and economic value of writing paper in early modern England

Consumers of writing paper in early modern England had many options available to them in terms of price, size, preparation, and quality. In this talk I will explore some of the ways that consumers described this imported product, and discuss various attempts to produce and embellish it domestically.

17 February: Brodie Waddell (Birkbeck)

The People, the State, and the Power of Local Petitioning in Early Modern England

The county and city magistrates of early modern England received numerous ‘petitions’ every year from local communities and individuals. These requests and complaints often focused on responsibility for poor relief and other ‘public’ social and economic issues, drawing on a rhetoric of justice and statutory rights for legitimacy. This paper examines a large corpus of these local petitions to better understand how ‘the will of the people’ shaped governance on the ground.

24 February: Martin Anderson (Cambridge)

From slaves to servants: The servant labour institution in 16th-century Sweden

‘Servants’, living and working in the household of the ‘master’, was the most common form of rural labourers in early modern Sweden. In this talk, I challenge the concept of life-cycle service by arguing that primarily landless poor were recruited as servants, by studying how they were prevented from leaving their masters, and how these practices were reinforced by the rise of the early modern state.

17 March: Joris van den Tol (Cambridge)

The America Company: Petitioners, merchants, and institutions in the 17th-century Atlantic

English planters in Virginia, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands cooperated with merchants in the Dutch Republic to influence the worlds of international trade and international diplomacy. How did they collect signatures for their multinational petition campaign? And why did they want to become a state-chartered Company?

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