



Call for Applications

International Summer Academy

“Unfree Labour Old and New”

3 November – 10 November 2019, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The international research center “Work and Human Lifecycle in Global History” (re:work) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Department of History of Addis Ababa University will hold a Summer Academy exploring the historical lineages and contemporary meanings and practices of unfree work in a global context. The Summer Academy is an annual interactive workshop that the Center has been holding since 2010 at different venues. It is open for doctoral students working in the field of work/labour from historical, anthropological, sociological, and other social sciences’ perspectives. Advanced doctoral students will have a chance to present their work before their peers and a group of senior scholars. This year’s workshop will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from November 3 to November 10, 2019.

Unfree labour has a long pedigree, going back to the Egypt of the Pharaohs, ancient Rome, and empires and kingdoms throughout the world. In feudal Europe, it was largely characterized by farm labour that the peasant was obligated to perform for the lord and in some instances the state. This practice persisted in some places until the middle of the nineteenth century. In Asia, it assumed the character of the conscription of labour for plantations (as in Indonesia), the provision of transport for state officials and goods (as in India and Japan) and the obligation of merchant guilds to provide labour for the repair of temples, palaces and offices. In colonial Africa, unfree labour was mobilized for the repair of roads, railroad construction, and settler farms. Statutory interventions by international organizations like the ILO aimed at regulating rather than abolishing unfree labour.

Elsewhere, adaptation to the end of slavery went along with the constitution of new households, the reconfiguration of domestic household labour, new or revived forms of coerced labour, trafficking, conflicts over the control of labour and the emergence of sharecropping,



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debt bondage, and forced marriages as a form of labour mobilization. These developments had a differential impact on men and women, and on different generations. In much of Europe, regulations on labour contracts, punishment of vagabondage, stigmatization of a “dangerous” underclass, and restrictions on mobility complicated contentions that labour was allocated by the “free market.” In Africa, the Americas, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean world, the ideological distinction between “free” and “unfree” became essential even though practices developed within a “grey” zone where coercion, constraint, choice, and mobility overlapped each other. Wars brought repeated episodes of coerced work and communist regimes brought their own forms of gulag labour and “re-education” camps. Global markets in agricultural and mineral products projected an image of world markets that concealed different forms of coercion at the point of production. The Summer Academy will therefore focus on the ambiguities of the concept of “free labour” and “unfree labour” and its “blurred character.”

The Summer Academy shall focus methodologically on historical and transdisciplinary perspectives that investigate global interconnections and entanglements. Critical reflection on general notions such as “work and labour,” “freedom” and “servitude” should be part of the individual projects presented at the Summer Academy. The need for an intensive engagement with these issues arises from fundamental redefinitions of work that have emerged in a world that is connected and unequal.

The Summer Academy is designed to provide the venue for an in-depth discussion of methodological issues and the question of sources with renowned historians and social scientists from around the world.

Applicants are expected to address one of the following themes, or themes closely related, in their proposals:

- Languages of free and unfree labour
- Slave emancipation
- Domestic work
- Households and different forms of labour
- Recruitment, coercion, and consent in military and bureaucratic labour
- Control of labour



- Debt bondage / pawnshop
- Indentured labour
- Trafficking (sexual or otherwise)
- Forced / coerced labour in colonial and other contexts
- Child labour / children's work
- Gender differences in labour experience
- Generational differences in labour experience
- Labour mobilization and control in communist and fascist regimes

The language of the Summer Academy will be English. Selected participants will present their research (30 minutes) and comment on the project of a peer (10 minutes). It is mandatory that all selected participants hand in their papers on the selected theme as well as read a set of pre-circulated key texts prior to the event.

Application

To participate in the Summer Academy researchers at the doctoral level need to apply with a brief outline of their current project describing how their work relates to the themes of the Summer Academy (max. 1.500 words). Proposed projects should assume as much as possible a historical perspective and will be particularly pertinent if they take account of connections beyond the nation state and attempt to reflect upon the possibilities of integrating regional and systematic approaches. This does not exclude carefully contextualized case studies.

We welcome relevant applications from all parts of the globe. Travel and accommodation costs of the selected participants will be covered by the organisers of the Summer Academy.

Application procedure:

Please use [this](#) form to apply.

Selected applicants will be asked to provide a full cv, details of their current research, as well as the names of two referees.

Please note that we can only accept electronically submitted applications!

Application deadline: 30 April 2019



For further information, please contact:

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