



Lecture Series in Social Anthropology

Spring
Semester
2024

Tuesday 26 March 2024 | 4.15 p.m. | Room AND 4.06

Between the Technocratic and the Unruly: Work, Labour and Precarity in Times of Crisis

Dr. Rebecca Prentice (University of Sussex)

Anthropologists of work and labour have developed a unique understanding of precarity, based on extended ethnographic encounters with workers both 'at work' and in their lives and reproductive labours outside of workplaces. This approach foregrounds lived experience and shows precarity to be a carefully constructed mode of labour relations, not the inadvertent loss or lack of social protection. Drawing on insights from three ethnographic research projects – on the unionisation efforts of Deliveroo riders in London, on compensation claims of survivors of Bangladesh's most deadly garment factory disaster, and on the promise of clean, green factories in Bangladesh – this paper explores the kinds of crises that labour precarity creates. I show how the 'technocratic fix' worsens labour's position and leaves workers exposed to evermore rebounding crises. Understanding the relationship between technocratic governance and labour's creative possibilities for an unruly politics is a vital task for anthropology.

Organization:

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Entrance free of charge.

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