

## Free and Unfree Workers in Atlantic and Indian Ocean Port Cities (c. 1700-1850)

**Location:** [Pennsylvania, United States](#)

**Call for Papers Date:** 2015-09-01

**Date Submitted:** 2015-05-22

**Announcement ID:** 222734

We invite historians working on free and unfree workers in port cities to send in proposals for a workshop on May 6-7, 2016 at the University of Pittsburgh.

(Full CFP below.) Historians have long treated slave labor and free labor as mutually exclusive ideal types. Recent work has begun to challenge this view, yet research on the connections between free and unfree workers remains limited. Port cities are the perfect setting in which to explore a new, broader, more inclusive labor history for the period 1700-1850.

The workshop is organized by the University of Pittsburgh, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and the Collège d'Études Mondiales in Paris. It will lay the groundwork for a larger conference on global port cities to be held in 2017.

Proposals should include a title, a 250-word abstract, and a short CV, emailed as attachments to [laborportcities@gmail.com](mailto:laborportcities@gmail.com) by September 1, 2015.

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The emergence of international capitalism depended on the creation of a highly mobile working class that built, loaded, and sailed the ships that connected the globe. These ships inaugurated the Atlantic slave trade and other labor migrations, making possible new regimes of accumulation and labor based in port cities, dynamic centers of power that linked the slave labor of colonial plantations to Europe and other parts of the world. The laborers of port cities – sailors, indentured servants, and slaves, workers free and unfree – are the subjects of this workshop.

Historians have long treated slave labor and free labor as mutually exclusive ideal types, belonging to separate historical narratives. Recent work has begun to challenge this view, yet research on the connections between free and unfree workers remains limited. Port cities are the perfect setting in which to explore a new, broader, more inclusive labor history for the period 1700-1850.

### **Papers may address such questions as:**

- \* How did interaction among free and unfree laborers affect the economy of port cities and the rise of global capitalism?
- \* How did the employment of these laborers at the same site affect the development of new forms of social control, the racialization of hierarchies, and changes in gender relations?

\* How did the influx of large numbers of laborers of different statuses change patterns of forced and voluntary labor migration, including the opportunities for desertion, marooning, and jumping ship?

\* How did the interactions of free and unfree laborers in port cities affect the development of working-class cultures, forms of solidarity, and theories and practices of resistance?

We invite papers that concentrate on a single port, compare port cities, or trace connections among ports. We are especially interested in papers that range across imperial boundaries. In order to strengthen the coherence of the discussion, this workshop will concentrate primarily on the Atlantic, but in a wider global context. One of the five panels of this workshop will address comparisons and connections between Atlantic and Indian Ocean ports.

Clare Anderson (University of Leicester) and Seth Rockman (Brown University) will deliver keynote lectures. The workshop's concluding panel will consist of Marcel van der Linden (IISH, Amsterdam), Marcus Rediker (University of Pittsburgh), and Françoise Vergès (Collège d'Études Mondiales, Paris).

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**Organizing committee: Pepijn Brandon (University of Pittsburgh / IISH, Amsterdam), Niklas Frykman (University of Pittsburgh), Marcel van der Linden (IISH, Amsterdam), Marcus Rediker (University of Pittsburgh), Pernille Røge (University of Pittsburgh), Françoise Vergès (Collège d'Études Mondiales, Paris)**

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