

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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## DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR

### Men Sold Like Pigs: Indentured Labour and the Making of the Modern World

Dr. Sascha Auerbach

CHAIRMAN

Dr John Solomon

Wednesday, 13 February 2019, 3 pm

Political Science Meeting Room, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences,  
Block AS1, #04-01, 11 Arts Link, Singapore 117570

#### Abstract

This seminar discusses the role of indentured labour in shaping the dynamics of race, labour and migration in the modern world. The indenture system, which became the primary form of semi-coerced labour in European tropical colonies in the nineteenth century, helped “make” the modern world in three regards. Firstly, it became the anchor of a colonial labour system that stretched from the cane-fields of the Caribbean to the rubber plantations of Malaysia. Secondly, products of indenture were also essential in the creation of mass consumer culture in the West and in the advance of the second industrial revolution. And lastly, the indenture system sustained the legal and economic systems of subordination, many of them inherited from the enslaved labour system of the eighteenth century, through which Europeans maintained control of the global labour market. The first part of the seminar will place indenture in historical and historiographical context, while the second will take a comparative look at the role of the British “overseer state” in the establishment of this system in the Caribbean and southeast Asia following the abolition of slavery in 1834.



#### About the Speaker

Dr. Sascha Auerbach is a Lecturer in the History Department of the University of Nottingham. He specializes in legal culture and the history of race and immigration in London and the British Empire in the late nineteenth century. His first monograph, *Race, Law, and “the Chinese Puzzle” in Imperial Britain*, was published in 2009. He has recently completed his second book manuscript, *Armed with Sword and Scales: Law, Culture, and Local Courtrooms in Modern London*. Dr. Auerbach’s research has appeared in a variety of scholarly journals, including the *Journal of Social History*, *Law and History Review*, the *Journal of British Studies* and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. His current project is an historical re-assessment of Indian and Chinese indentured labour in the nineteenth-century British Empire.

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