

Global History Lecture Series
September 13, 2023 (Wednesday)

Speaker: Philipp Roessner (Manchester University)

Marx's Missed Opportunity: Cameralist Visions of Commerce, Capitalism, and Wealth of Nations. What conceptual history and continental approaches to political economy can tell us about the origins of economic development

Discussant: Lars Magnusson (Uppsala University)

Abstract:

Premodern economic thinkers have rarely been considered in our narratives on the origins of industrialisation, and the making of modern capitalism. If at all, it is usually Adam Smith and other thinkers of the Scottish enlightenment who are credited as the inventors of modern political economy. Simultaneously, to the present day most accounts have focused on England (omitting not only Scotland and Ireland, but also a whole continent) when comparing “Europe” and “Asia” in long-term global economic development. In the process, the contributions by continental European thinkers and practitioners of historical economic development have fallen by the wayside. Defocusing from an Anglo-centric angle on the modern wealth of nations, and based on what Patrick O’Brien calls “economic cosmology”, I would like to bring in conceptual-historical approaches (Begriffsgeschichte) to political economy, in particular the contributions made by German-language speakers to the making of historical economic development from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution.