

WORKSHOP 1: CALCULABILITY AND GAMBLING

09.15-10.45

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Getting lucky: the changing face of betting shops in Britain

The deregulation of gambling that has taken place over the past twenty years has frequently been investigated via the study of casinos, slot machines and lotteries in the United States and Australia. In Britain, the licensed betting shop is an important, but neglected, locus for betting activity, and one that has changed significantly since legalization in 1963. This paper will describe the relationships that enable and are created by a bet on the horses (or the dogs, random numbers or a sporting event) and relate them to the legislative context of Britain post Gambling Act 2005. It argues that the betting shop is an excellent space in which to consider late capitalism and the relationship between the state and its citizens, and in particular how this relationship is mediated by opaque legislative regimes and constantly changing technology.

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Gambling on God in post-apartheid South Africa: money and sacrifice in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God

When the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), a Pentecostal-Charismatic church (PCC) of Brazilian origin, first came to South Africa in 1994, large numbers of marginalised black people streamed to the church to claim luxury houses situated in previously whites-only suburbs, BMW's, and Armani suits. The UCKG quickly became one of the fastest growing churches in South Africa. Many of its converts asserted that the UCKG, because of its recent introduction and foreign origins, was "ahead of the witches" and other malicious forces that controlled the flows of money and power in southern Africa. The church leadership underlined this sentiment by claiming that the UCKG defeated the apartheid demon and that visible politics and economics had nothing to do with the fall of the apartheid regime. With the introduction of the country's first national lottery in March 2000, large numbers of people again streamed to the UCKG to have their lottery stubs blessed and to get the numbers from the church's pastors. Unlike other PCCs, the UCKG paid little attention to the establishment of Christian fellowships, good deeds or to the experience of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the church focussed on the individual's need to establish a contract with God, sealed with large monetary sacrifices. Sometimes such sacrifices were equal to the cost of the "blessing" that God had to provide. In this regard, my interviewees asserted that money was 'slippery' but that God's obligation somehow anchored its value and channelled its flows. In this paper, I'll pay particular attention to the UCKG's sacrifice economy while questioning the usefulness of traditional economic analyses for the understanding of the ways in which people in South Africa think of and use money.

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Three forms of gambling in central China

Whilst gambling for money had been prohibited during the Maoist era, since the 1980s it has become very common in many rural areas of central China. In fact, it often is the major communal activity in many villages, focus point of daily gossip and object of government campaigns. I want to describe three different forms of gambling common in Eastern Hubei, and relate such 'economies of gambling' to the political economy of agriculture and migrant labour, and to government policies of 'modernization'. Besides that I will explore the 'moral economy' of gambling. In gambling itself, and in the discourses on gambling, two central oppositions can be exemplified: the one between labouring and showing off one's prosperity, and the one between diligent calculation and risk-taking. Besides being a corollary of economic reform and re-structuring, gambling is not the least an expression of such moral conflicts within and between families in rural China.