

University of Helsinki  
Social and Cultural Anthropology Visiting Seminars 2015-16  
14:15 – 15:45 on Fridays  
Unioninkatu 35 Room 114

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## Professor Deborah James (LSE)

Life and Debt: a View from the South

This paper explores how, in countries in the global south where sharp rises in indebtedness have accompanied the financialization of the economy, debt factors into other relationships and meanings in the life of the family and household. Exploring local concepts of householding, obligation and saving, it asks whether relations of commodified debt nullify those of longstanding social commitment, investigates how people convert between cash-based or short term imperatives and moral or longer-term ones, and shows how barriers are sometimes erected between these separate spheres thus making them incommensurable. The lecture challenges some accounts of the 'financialisation of daily life' which imply a one-way, top-down intrusion by the market – with state backing – into people's intimate relations, commitments and aspirations, and maintains that we need to explore the complicity of participants' engagement with these processes rather than seeing them as imposed on unwilling victims.