

**CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA,
R-1 BAISHNABGHATA PATULI,
KOLKATA 700094**

GENERAL SEMINAR

Arnab Dey
Assistant Professor of History,
State University of New York (SUNY), Binghamton

will give a talk titled:

**“Three ‘Bodies’ of Evidence: Law, Commerce, and the Political Economy of Health
in Assam, 1860-1920”**

This paper argues that histories of labour health and morbidity in the Assam tea plantations cannot be understood within medical theories of bodily disorder, scientific ‘objectivity’ or preventive cure. On the one hand, I revisit etiological debates on malaria, kala-azar, and cholera to show how imperatives of commerce conditioned and constrained attitudes to worker sickness and well-being in these estates. On the other, I demonstrate that ‘standards’ of labour health and un-health were simultaneously regulated by the regime of law in these plantations that both aided (and often ran counter to) the politics of profit and productivity. In other words, collusive and conflicting agendas of control and power between the colonial state, planters and sanitarians set parameters of labour wellness that defied neat somatic logics. Within this context, my paper argues that epidemiological theory and praxis in the Assam estates emerged from a concurrent—albeit expedient—‘reading’ of three registers of the labouring body: the pathological, the productive, and the legal. It is hoped that this paper adds to and complicates social histories of public health and plantation life in colonial India.

Date: Tuesday, 19th January, 2016 Time: 3 – 5 pm.
Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus.

Trina Nileena Banerjee
(Convener, Seminar Committee)
All are welcome to attend.