



**Sadler Series Seminar**

## **Refugees, Austerity and Class Racism**

**Keynote Speaker: Dr Gholam Khiabany**

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

**Location-Leeds Humanities Research Institute**

In recent times sections of British press and political establishment have described refugees with reference to ‘toxic waste, human flotsam, an unstoppable flood and a terrorist threat’. Refugees are invariably accused of “seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has got jobs, it’s got a growing economy, it’s an incredible place to live” (David Cameron); as well as posing a threat to the EU’s standard of living and social structure (Phillip Hammond). During the EU Referendum the dominant media narrative revolved around a nation under siege by large number of illegal and legal immigrants who receive preferential treatment, strain social services, are the cause of unemployment and poverty, and threaten the very fabric of society. Examining some of the examples in which the economic crisis are blamed on migrations and ‘marauding’ refugees, it will be shown that the official response to and coverage of the refugee crisis attempts to a) advance the discourse of austerity as immigration reform; b) use the perceived threats of refugees from developing countries to introduce measures and policies (structural adjustment) that have been imposed on developing nations through IMF and World Bank; c) redefine anti-immigration in a post-racist disguise by introducing anti-immigration and militarisation of borders as austerity policy; d) displace the markers of ‘insecurity’ from the 99% as a whole on to ‘foreigners’ and refugees. It is through this narrative of anti-immigration justified on the basis of austerity that nationalism which is articulated in opposition to class struggle becomes the vehicle through which the concern of ‘native workers’ are articulated.

Gholam Khiabany teaches in the Department of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of *Iranian Media: The Paradox of Modernity* and co-author of *Blogistan*, with Annabelle Sreberny. He is an editor of the *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, and is a member of council of management of the Institute of Race Relations.

For more information visit:

[http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20045/leeds\\_humanities\\_research\\_institute/2844/whowhat\\_is\\_a\\_goodbad\\_migrant](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20045/leeds_humanities_research_institute/2844/whowhat_is_a_goodbad_migrant)