

Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU)

Seminar Speaker Series – Spring 2026 (Term 2)



Speakers: Ziyu Wang and Hamid Foroughi

**Research
Team
(alphabetical
order)**

Title: Hiring for Greedy Jobs: How Recruitment Pre-manufactures Consent to Overwork

Date: Wednesday 18 March 2026

Venue: WBS, room 1.005 (and online via Teams)

Time: 13:00 – 14:30 (GMT), light buffet lunch served at 12:30

Abstract: How do organizations secure workers' consent to greedy jobs before formal employment? Labour Process Theory and a parallel stream of Critical Management Studies have established a rich tradition of examining how organizations produce ideal working behaviour through coercive, normative, bureaucratic, and increasingly technology-mediated mechanisms that often regulate workers' subjectivities. Yet empirical research remains scarce on how such control operates prior to entry—specially, how workers' consent is formed during recruitment. Drawing on five-month ethnographic data from a high-tech company, we show how recruitment itself becomes a site of control before candidates join the organization. We identify three interlocking mechanisms. First, technology-enabled mass CV sourcing generates a pervasive sense of hyper-competition, prompting candidates to engage in anticipatory self-optimization. Second, high-threshold written tests function as ritualized screening devices, inducing candidates to game the assessment and signal compliance. Third, recruiters articulate narratives of reward and opportunity that elicit candidates' verbal consent to overtime. Although candidates may apply with heterogeneous values and orientations, this process leads many to rehearse idealized work behaviours and internalize organizational expectations of overwork prior to entry. We term this process “pre-manufacturing consent”. By theorizing recruitment as an upstream mechanism of control enabled by digital technologies, this study extends labour process perspectives beyond the point of employment.

Registration: Email IRRUoffice@wbs.ac.uk to reserve your space