

Job title	Research Associate (Fixed Term)
Grade	7
Salary range	£32,816 - £40,322 per annum (pro rata)
Staff Group	Research (non-clinical)
Length of appointment	3 months
Project	<b>Cleanliness, convenience and propriety: Plastic and waste in consumer societies</b> as part of an interdisciplinary joint project: 'Circular Economy Approaches to Eliminate Plastic Waste'
Department / Institution	Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

### **Role-specific information**

#### Role Summary

We are recruiting a fixed term postdoctoral research associate to contribute to the project:

#### **Cleanliness, convenience and propriety: Plastic and waste in consumer societies**

This project investigates how the use and disposal of plastic are embedded in the everyday lives of consumers. It asks how people's plastic use and recycling habits are influenced by the legal and procedural systems of waste collection/recycling and people's personal values, lifestyles and understanding of natural and social environments.

Plastic is a very useful, light-weight, durable, cheap, hygienic and often visually attractive material for storing food, domestic cleaning products and many other household items. At the same time, there is growing awareness and concern about the tons of plastic waste that are dumped into the environment and often enter the food chain. In this sense, plastic is not clean at all and its durability causes problems. Grabbing a take-away packed up in plastic is convenient, but sorting and taking out the waste is time-consuming, annoying and costly. Consequently, the use of plastic creates conflicting notions of cleanliness, convenience, economy and propriety for consumers and communities alike.

Using ethnographic methods this project investigates how plastic waste disposal and recycling rules as well as procedural systems influence people's views on cleanliness, convenience and the environment; it also examines people's agency in this matter and how they negotiate social relationships through plastic waste-related activities.

We aim to clarify what plastic packaging and other plastic items mean to people and try to understand why they prefer certain things over others. This should help us find solutions that reduce plastic waste but at the same time satisfy people's need for convenience, cleanliness and propriety. Three cases with different social and cultural background as well as different approaches to plastic use and recycling will be investigated: Japan, Uruguay, the UK and a fourth country, with preference for ODA recipient countries. – The position is being divided and there

may be further funding available in the near future. Applicants are expected to work independently on their project and propose their own research design. The focus on ODA recipients will allow us to apply for further funding and also put social and cultural issues as well as issues of international relations into the focus of discussion.

Rationale for the choice of countries:

Japan is a country with an elaborate packaging culture and abundant use of plastic in everyday consumer life; equally, the waste-sorting and recycling systems are highly sophisticated and demand a high degree of involvement from consumers and (private) neighbourhood associations.

Uruguay, in contrast, is a country with relatively high levels of recycling due to the activity of waste-pickers in the informal sector but low levels of household separation of waste and formal-sector recycling. Since 2014, however, four recycling plants have been built in the capital, Montevideo. These plants have brought with them an infrastructure that includes kerb-side containers for recyclables, thus partly shifting the onus for separation from the waste-picker to the consumer. The postdoctoral researcher is expected to turn her or his attention to household separation in Montevideo in order to understand how new recycling infrastructures are changing household waste disposal practices.

The focus of the study within the UK will be on Cambridgeshire and will be carried out in collaboration with the RECAP network (Recycle for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; <https://www.recap.co.uk>). It will also build on a circular business model with a local plastic packaging company, developed by a different team in the project.

In November 2019 we plan to hold an international and interdisciplinary academic workshop on 'The Social Life of Plastic'.

The project is part of an 18-month interdisciplinary research project to study 'Circular Economy Approaches to Eliminate Plastic Waste' and brings together scientists, engineers, economists as well as scholars from the social sciences, arts and humanities at the University of Cambridge and is funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Commencing in January 2019, the project aims to contribute towards the development of a sustainable plastics economy by examining the local and global distributions of plastics, providing innovative alternatives to plastics and developing novel technologies for the utilisation of waste plastics. The award will also help to establish a 'Cambridge Centre for Creative Circular Economy Approaches to Eliminate Plastic Waste'. [[https://www.energy.cam.ac.uk/Plastic\\_Waste](https://www.energy.cam.ac.uk/Plastic_Waste)]. The project is led by Professor Erwin Reisner (Chemistry) with Dr Steger heading the above project as well as one of the four Work Packages: 'Waste and Management: Producers and Consumers of Plastic in a Circular Economy'. Dr Steger will also act as the Social and Policy Impact Leader of the overall project. There will be many seminars and impact events related to the project. The post holder is expected to get involved in organising these events.

## Key Responsibilities

<b>1</b>	<b>Research and scholarship</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection;</li> <li>• (co)-authoring of presentations and publications.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Teaching and learning support</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the post does not involve any teaching, but the post holder may be asked to contribute to teaching if there is a need</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Public engagement and dissemination</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribution to the team's public engagement and dissemination activities.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Liaison and networking</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liaise with academic colleagues;</li> <li>• build internal and external contacts and participate in networks for the exchange of information and to form relationships for future collaboration;</li> <li>• liaise with external partners as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Planning and organising</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan and manage own research activity within the framework of the overall project and agreed programme;</li> <li>• co-organise academic workshop and event with stakeholder involvement;</li> <li>• contribute to planning research projects led by the team;</li> <li>• contribute to the administration of the project.</li> </ul>

## Person Profile

This section details the knowledge, skills and experience we require for the role.

<b>Education &amp; qualifications</b>	Completed (or about to be awarded) a Ph.D. in social anthropology, area studies, sociology, human geography or related field
<b>Specialist knowledge &amp; skills</b>	Advanced fluency in English and in the research language Qualitative/ethnographic research skills and experience Research background in waste studies, material culture or related area.
<b>Interpersonal &amp; communication skills</b>	Proven collaborative/communication/networking skills.
<b>Relevant experience</b>	Experience of managing own workload and fieldwork. Experience in organising academic events and outreach desirable
<b>Additional requirements</b>	A developing bibliography of high quality outputs, including publication in leading journals and conferences in the field, or at least the promise of whilst in post at Cambridge.  An interdisciplinary and collaborative research approach  A willingness to undertake administrative duties related to the project
<b>Pre-employment checks</b>	All applicants are legally required to demonstrate the right to work/permission to work in the UK. The requirement for any higher level pre-employment checks is dependent on the role and is detailed in the advert and/or further particulars. Offers of employment will be conditional upon the satisfactory outcome of all required pre-employment checks and whether an outcome is satisfactory will be determined by the University

## Terms and Conditions

<b>Location</b>	Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA
<b>Working pattern</b>	Full time for 3 months although flexible working arrangements will be considered.
<b>Hours of work</b>	There are no formal conditions relating to hours and times of work but you are expected to work such hours and days as are reasonably necessary for the proper performance of your duties.  Your times of work should be agreed between you and your head of Department.
<b>Length of appointment</b>	3 months with a possibility of extension depending on funding
<b>Limited funding</b>	The funds for this post are currently available for 3 months, but further funding opportunities may be available.
<b>Probation period</b>	3 months.
<b>Annual leave</b>	Full time employees are entitled to annual paid leave of 6.6 weeks (or 33 days for those working full time), plus public holidays.
<b>Pension eligibility</b>	Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).  Pension scheme details, including information about the legal requirement for the University to automatically enrol its eligible jobholders into a qualifying workplace pension scheme from 1 March 2013, is available at: <a href="http://www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/">http://www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/</a> .

## Screening Check Requirements

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can start working for us. If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon you gaining it. If you need further information, you may find the Right to Work page within the 'Applying for a job' section of the University's Job Opportunities pages helpful (please see <http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/right/have/>).

Once an offer of employment has been accepted, the successful candidate will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check (enhanced with children's barred list).

### Application Process

To submit an application for this vacancy, please click on the link in the 'Apply online' section of the advert published on the University's Job Opportunities pages. This will route you to the University's Web Recruitment System, where you will need to register an account (if you have not already) and log in before completing the online application form.

In the Suitability section of the application, please ensure that you explain in detail how you meet the requirements listed in the Person Profile of the Further Information document. Applicants must provide the names and contact details of two referees who are familiar with your work in the relevant field whom we can contact for a reference once the vacancy has closed.

In order for your application to be considered, please upload a covering letter, a detailed curriculum vitae, an academic writing sample (a single authored chapter or article, preferably related to the topic of the project) and an outline (ca.1000 words) of your own project and ideas for the academic workshop on 'the social life of plastic' .

The closing date is 5:00PM (GMT) on 10 **October 2019**. Interviews will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

Informal enquiries may be made to Dr Brigitte Steger [bs382@cam.ac.uk](mailto:bs382@cam.ac.uk). For questions on the application process or procedure, please contact Susie Nightingale: [deputy@ames@cam.ac.uk](mailto:deputy@ames@cam.ac.uk)  
Please quote reference GU20783 on your application and in any correspondence about this vacancy.

## **General Information**

### **The University of Cambridge**

The University of Cambridge is one of the world's oldest and most successful Universities, with an outstanding reputation for academic achievement and research. It was ranked first in the 2011 QS World University Rankings and its graduates have won more Nobel Prizes than any other university in the world. The University comprises more than 150 departments, faculties, schools and other institutions, plus a central administration and 31 independent and autonomous colleges.

The University and the Colleges are linked in a complex historical relationship. The Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities which appoint their own staff. They admit students, provide student accommodation and deliver small group teaching (supervisions). The University awards degrees and its faculties and departments provide lectures and seminars for students, determine the syllabi for teaching and conduct research.

There is much more information about the University at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/univ/works/index.html>, which we hope you, will find helpful.

### **The Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies**

The Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies combines world class scholarship with a vibrant teaching and learning environment for undergraduates and postgraduate students. Our academics are engaged in internationally recognized scholarship on the histories, literatures, linguistics, social anthropology, religion, politics, and contemporary cultures of the Middle East, North Africa, China, Japan, and the two Koreas. The work of several staff crosses traditional geographic and subject boundaries. All our work is firmly grounded in primary source research.

The Faculty consists of two departments: the Department of East Asian Studies and the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. It is home to the Centre of Islamic Studies. The Department of East Asian Studies comprises of four full-time language instructors, several part-time language staff, and twelve full time specialists who cover a range of disciplines. Currently, there are six dedicated members of staff of ancient, medieval and early modern era Japanese and Chinese history and literature (who also teach classical Japanese and Chinese) and two historians of modern Japan and China, a specialist in the contemporary politics of Korea and Japan, and two anthropologists of Japan and China, not to mention other fields such as a specialist in Chinese linguistics. All of the teaching staff are well published and internationally recognised in their fields. In 2016 the Japanese Studies section launched the highly successful 'Japan and the World campaign' which aims to develop and expand Japanese Studies at Cambridge to ensure that Japan is not studied in isolation but it approached from a comparative and integrated perspective that recognises the importance of East Asia both as a region of deep-rooted customs and histories, and as a dynamic area of rapid economic, social and technological change. The Faculty's work is overseen by a Faculty Board, to which a range of committees report, while financially it is underpinned by several significant trustfunds.

Essential information on undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the Faculty is available on the Faculty's website <https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk> and in the University's Guide to Courses. The website includes a list of members of the Department, showing their teaching and research interests.

### **What the University can offer you**

One of our core values at the University of Cambridge is to recognise and reward our staff as our greatest asset. We realise that it's our people who have built our outstanding reputation and that we will only

maintain our leading position in the academic world by continuing to attract and retain talented and motivated people. If you choose to come and work with us, you will find that we offer:

- **Excellent benefits** – You will be eligible for a wide range of competitive benefits and services, including numerous discounts on shopping, health care, financial services and public transport. We also offer defined benefits pension schemes and tax-efficient bicycle, car lease and charity-giving schemes.

We will help you balance your home and work life by providing you with generous annual leave entitlement and procedures for requesting a career break or flexible working arrangements if you need them. You will also have access to a range of well-being support services, including in-house Occupational Health and Counselling services. If you have childcare responsibilities, you may also benefit from the enhanced maternity/adoption pay, two nurseries and a holiday play scheme that we provide.

We are keen to welcome new employees from other parts of the UK and other countries to Cambridge. If you will be relocating to Cambridge on a centrally funded appointment of two years or more, you may be eligible for our relocation expenses scheme. The University Accommodation Service (<http://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/>) will also be available to help you find suitable rented accommodation and to provide advice on renting arrangements and local facilities, if required. In addition, certain academic and academic-related appointments are eligible for the Shared Equity Scheme, which offers financial assistance with the purchase of living accommodation.

- **A welcoming and inclusive environment** - We will help you settle into your new role and working environment through a central University induction event, local induction activities and our online induction package. Where appropriate to your role, you will have a probation period to provide a supportive framework for reviewing your progress and discussing your training and development needs.

If you are relocating to Cambridge, you and your family will be welcome to attend the Newcomers and Visiting Scholars Group, which provides an opportunity to find out more about Cambridge and meet other people new to the area.

- **Extensive development opportunities** - The encouragement of career development for staff is one of the University's core values. We put this into practice through various services and initiatives, including:
  - A wide-range of training courses and online learning packages.
  - The Staff Review and Development (SRD) Scheme, which is designed to enhance work effectiveness and facilitate career development post-probation.
  - Leave for career and personal development, including long-term study leave for assistant staff and sabbatical leave for academic staff.
  - The CareerStart@Cam programme, which supports assistant staff roles without higher education qualifications to develop their skills, experience and qualifications. Assistant staff may also apply for financial assistance for study, which results in a qualification.
  - Reduced staff fees for University of Cambridge graduate courses.
  - The opportunity to attend lectures and seminars held by University departments and institutions.
  - Policies and processes dedicated to the career development of researchers and the implementation of the principles of the Concordat, which have led to the University being recognised with an HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission.

You can find further details of the benefits, services and opportunities we offer can be found in our CAMBens Employee Benefits web pages at <http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/pay-benefits/cambens-employee-benefits>. A range of information about living and working in Cambridge is also available to you within the University's web pages at <http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/> and <http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-staff/information-staff>.

## Equality of Opportunity at the University

We are committed to a proactive approach to equality, which includes supporting and encouraging all under-represented groups, promoting an inclusive culture and valuing diversity. We make selection decisions based on personal merit and an objective assessment against the criteria required for the post. We do not treat job applicants or members of staff less favourably than one another on the grounds of sex (including gender reassignment), marital or parental status, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability (including HIV status), sexual orientation, religion, age or socio-economic factors.

We have various diversity networks to help us progress equality; these include the Women's Staff Network, the Disabled Staff Network, the Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Network and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Network. In addition, we were ranked in the top 100 employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index 2013 and we hold an Athena SWAN silver award at organisation level for promoting women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine.

We are supportive of staff with caring responsibilities, such as through our flexible working, career break and returning carers schemes. We encourage individuals to include details of any breaks in employment due to caring responsibilities in applications for employment so that these can be taken into consideration in assessments made, where appropriate.

## Information if you have a Disability

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities and we are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so, and, if successful, to assist them during their employment. Information for disabled applicants is available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/disabled/>.

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time.

If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact Susie Nightingale who is responsible for recruitment to this position, on 01223 335113 or by email on [deputy@ames.cam.ac.uk](mailto:deputy@ames.cam.ac.uk). Alternatively, you may contact the HR Business Manager responsible for the department you are applying to via [hadmin@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hadmin@admin.cam.ac.uk).