The University of Cambridge Department of East Asian Studies is pleased to announce the following lecture in its series of East Asian seminars.

This seminar starts at 5:00PM and will take place in Rooms 8 & 9 in the Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies (formerly Oriental Studies), Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA, unless otherwise indicated.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Risky Business: How Japanese Corporations Shape Public Memory

Dr. Christopher Gerteis
SOAS, University of London
15 October 2012, Rooms 8 and 9, 5:00 pm

Dr. Christopher Gerteis is Lecturer in the History of Contemporary Japan at the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London. Dr Gerteis has previously held research and teaching positions at Hōsei University and Sophia University in Japan and Yale University in the United States. His current research examines the intersection of consumerism and social history by investigating popular memories of Japan's modern industrial heritage from the advent of passenger steamships to the last Japanese Formula One (F1) motor racing team. Dr Gerteis regularly appears as a commentator on BBC Radio and has advised a variety of media and film productions. Most recently he was historical advisor to the Universal Pictures production 47 Ronin starring Keanu Reeves, Hiroyuki Sanada and Ko Shibasaki.

In recent decades it has become somewhat fashionable in Japan to recount one's own personal history of the war and postwar years through a variety of public and private media. Recent scholarship on the phenomena examines how cultural and political elites have deployed personal history narratives as a means of constructing modes of local and national identity. This talk examines the role that historical narrative plays to shaping public perception of the company's place in history. The institutional histories constructed by Japan's oldest corporations since the start of the twenty-first century emphasize the lingering ambiguities of postwar Japan's relationship with its prewar and wartime past. Ironically, corporate historical narratives also expose the company to fiduciary risk by using the company's social responsibility scheme as a forum for presenting marketing narrative as history.