

## **PLENARY LECTURE “ANCIENT HISTORY”**

Presenter: Erich S. Gruen, University of California, Berkeley

Title: **“Modern Debates on Ancient Anti-Semitism”**

The ancients themselves never talked about “anti-semitism.” The concept was foreign to them. Retrospective judgment, however, found much to discuss about manifestations of hostility to Jews in thought and action. Debates about the nature of pagan and Christian animosity toward Jews, its origin, purpose, meaning, and effects, have exercised scholars for many generations without definitive resolution. This plenary lecture cannot, of course, do justice to the massive scholarship on this subject. It traces, in very select fashion, some of the more influential contributions to the debates by historians of the ancient world from Mommsen to the present. It also endeavors to draw out the central issues that have fueled the disputes: how far hatred of the Jews stems from political or religious reasons, whether the Jews’ own practices and beliefs were responsible for the hostility, whether “Judeophobia” signals anxiety and fear by gentiles about Jewish expansion or infiltration, the extent to which Jews were special targets of animosity rather than just one among many alien peoples subject to oppression.