

Presenter: Lars Fischer, University College London

Title: **“The Study of Antisemitism in the Modern Judaic Studies Context”**

Panel: Judaism, Jewish Studies and Anti-Semitism

My paper will take the vexed relationship between the study of antisemitism and Judaic Studies for its point of departure and touch on core theoretical concepts relevant to this relationship before drawing on insights developed in the context of the Frankfurt School’s grappling with antisemitism to suggest ways in which Judaic Studies might help avoid and possibly even combat antisemitism today. Insofar as antisemitism is fundamentally a non-Jewish problem one might well argue that it is hardly a fundamental concern of Judaic Studies. The ability of non-Jew to make antisemitism a problem for Jews obviously complicates this notion, however. Modern Judaic Studies scholars have frequently found it difficult to cope with the fundamental non-reciprocity of Jewish/non-Jewish relations and been tempted by the desire to restore Jewish agency to the non-Jewish assault on Jews to credit antisemitism with a kernel (and sometimes rather more than just a kernel) of truth. Having explained these issues in as concise a manner as possible, I want to turn to the Frankfurt School’s insights regarding the potentially harmful effects of facile, often apologetic attempts to combat antisemitism and develop my own suggestions as to how this potential pitfall might be avoided.