

Presenter: Jonathan Elukin, Trinity College

Title: “**Augustine’s Legacy and Understanding Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages**”

Panel: Medieval History

Augustine’s view of the Jews as the guardians of the Old Testament was at the core of his tolerant attitude towards the Jews. Traditionally, Augustine’s ideology has been seen as the key element in the survival of the Jews in medieval Europe. This paper will begin to test the impact of Augustine’s influence on attitudes towards the Jews in the middle Ages. Did Christians really see Jews as the guardians of the antiquity and authenticity of Scripture? Did they see the dispersion of the Jews as evidence of God's power — another aspect of Augustine’s ideology? To what extent was Augustine’s doctrine of toleration fundamental to the nature of pragmatic toleration that generally characterized interactions between Jews and Christians?

The absence of a consistent Augustinian ideology of tolerance suggests that thinking about Jews was much more ad hoc and situational rather than an ideological consensus defining animosity towards Jews. By reducing the importance of Augustine’s doctrine of toleration about the Jews, we can see that relations between Christians and Jews were likely defined by more pragmatic concerns.