

Presenter: Maurice Kriegel, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

Title: **“On the Dehumanization of the Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Process, Chronology, Context”**

Panel: Medieval History

A religious vocabulary was used in medieval and early modern Europe, that led to the dehumanization of the Jews with no less « efficiency » than the ‘scientific’, race-based vocabulary in the 19th-20th centuries. But not every kind of discourse in the Middle Ages, using terms that allude, for example, to the lack of human reason among Jews, should be understood as exemplifying a view of Jews as less than humans. Two issues will in particular be discussed. First, the theme of the *Judensau* — Jews sucking from the teats of a female pig — appearing in stone sculpture within German cathedrals, and most notably in the *Stadtkirche* in Wittenberg, where Luther used to preach (Luther ‘interprets’ the sculpture in his violently anti-Jewish tract of 1543, *Vom Schem hamphoras*), will be examined in its crossings, on one part, with the ritual murder accusations and, on the other part, with the witch hunt in the seventeenth century. This inquiry will of course be based on the classic study by Isaiah Shahrar (1974), but an attempt will be made to add some insights thanks to the added information offered by recent research. Secondly, a comparison will be attempted between processes of dehumanization of the Jews and parallel processes concerning other groups in medieval society, and a number of scholarly approaches will be discussed in this context.