EXTENDEND DEADLINE: 29th November 2026

Call for Papers – Winter School 2027

What is Antisemitism, actually?

Dates: 14th Feb until 17th Feb 2027

Venue: University of Augsburg

What once was apparently self-evident has today become a worldwide battlefield: The question what constitutes antisemitism, how that age-old phenomenon should be defined at all, and most controversially, how does antisemitism emerge? Why do people hate Jews? Is antisemitism always strictly a scapegoat claim, hiding Jew-haters' true intentions, which are often economic, social, or even religiously motivated? Are Jews simply a convenient, "legitimate" victim, a group traditionally blamed for its persecutors' own woes? Or alternatively, is there something in "Jewish stiff-neckedness," Jewish history, identity, self-relatedness, social separateness etc., that, if does not justify, at least provokes the animosity Jews encounter?

The Hebrew Bible itself seems to proclaim Jews' unavoidable fate throughout human history as the eternal victim, the ever-persecuted people. This view has also become deeply rooted in the pessimistic mentality of many Jews. While this seems to be mythology, the "Jewish destiny" theory has also found an expression in Hegelian historical determinism suggesting the "sublation" of Judaism by Christianity. This conception's transformation into a Nietzschean power struggle between nations, has led to the oft-made claim that Zionist thought, especially, sapped the moral foundations of antisemitic accusations and built on Jewish (military) strength for the survival of the Jewish people. Thus, contemporary political debates about the State of Israel raise the highly contested question, if critique of the only Jewish state is always already antisemitic?

Beyond rallies and other forms of public protest, a newly-emerged, formidable movement in academic circles proclaims "the necessity of exile" (Shaul Magid) as the most authentic form of

Jewish existence; a sophisticated theory that only underscores the complexity of the discussion of collective antisemitism that targets the existence of a Jewish state. In addition, it is important to note that throughout its long history antisemitism underwent considerable changes: traditional forms of religiously-motivated Christian supersession that had always offered baptism as an escape from Jewish fate, are a long way away from the inescapable, biologist, exterminatory antisemitism of the Nazis.

The events of October 7th, 2023, led reprehensibly to an oversimplification of these complex problems and to the resurgence of raw, racist and vulgar street-bound antisemitism – as though antisemitic sentiments had been lying in wait for such an opportunity to rear their ugly head. The seeming rebirth of the monster makes all the more necessary humanistic, critical and philosophically-sound responses to the revival of Jew-hatred. Since neither the language of vengeance nor of victimhood should dominate the discussion, it is more pressing than ever to clearly define not only what antisemitism looks like, but also why it is morally wrong in a wider, universal sense; why is it an attack on human diversity as such (Arendt), and thus harmful to human society at large, and not just to Jews.

The aim of this Winter School is to foster interdisciplinary dialogue on antisemitism. We will discuss antisemitic case studies, as well as the critique of, and the fight against it in the study of history, literature, art and philosophy in the modern age – with the aim of approaching a well-founded, substantive definition of this historical phenomenon. Such definition, far removed from current political struggles, should be geared to expose antisemitism's deeper motives and immoral foundations. The interdisciplinary approach will provide us with the opportunity to study various forms of antisemitism and the opposition to it, and will hopefully lead to a clearer understanding of its inherent dangers and moral depravity.

Framework / Organisation

The Winter School invites early-career researchers (PhDs and Postdocs) from the fields of Jewish Studies, History, Literary Studies, Philosophy of Religion, Political science and related disciplines. Participant presentations should discuss antisemitism in the context of more than one of the aforementioned disciplines. Proposal topics are not limited to any geographical location/s, but

should be chronologically situated in the 19th, 20th, or 21st centuries. The program includes a keynote address by Lena Gorelik and a series of morning public lectures each day. The afternoon program is open to registered participants of the winter school only, where the doctoral candidates and postdocs will present and discuss their research. Presentations may, but do not have to be, related to their doctoral projects. Presentation durations are approximately 20 minutes (doctoral candidates) or 30 minutes (postdocs). The working language is English.

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Application

Please send your abstract (max. 400 words) together with a short biographical note (max. 100 words) in a single PDF-document by 29th November 2026, to juedische.studien@philhist.uni-augsburg.de. Proposals may be submitted in English. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 30th November 2026.

Organisers

Prof. Bettina Bannasch, German Literature, University of Augsburg

Prof. George Y. Kohler, Religious Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Joseph-Carlebach-Institut

Dr. Orr Scharf, Cultural Studies, Haifa University

Coordinator

Sonja Mues, University of Augsburg (juedische.studien@philhist.uni-augsburg.de)

Fees

No conference fee has to be paid to attend the Winter School. All meals will be provided, and rooms have been reserved for 80€ per night (incl. breakfast) at Ibis Hotel Augsburg. We kindly ask you to check with your home institutes for subsidies towards travel and accommodation. If you cannot find any financial support, please contact us as soon as possible.

You are welcome to forward this Call for Papers to interested colleagues and through your networks.

We look forward to welcoming you to Augsburg in February 2027!