

Speaker : Sylvie Anne Golberg

The European matrix of anti-Judaism

In 2013, David Nirenberg, an American scholar specialized in late medieval and early modern Jewish history, published a copious book of more than 400 pages, titled *Anti-Judaism. The Western Tradition*. Within the academic Jewish studies' world, the book made a buzz: forum, workshops, and reviews multiplied, discussing the contents, hypotheses, and contentions. Yet the buzz didn't come from the work itself, all the readers agreeing that it was a quasi-masterpiece, but rather from the way the question of anti-Judaism was dealt: encompassing the whole known Jewish history from Antiquity to contemporary times. In a way, one could say that it was a retro-projection of a 21st Jewish historian, suddenly realizing that the massacres of the 20th century had not once and for all solved the question of antisemitism as had been thought by a number of people, including scholars. Following the works conducted during the previous century, scholars admitted that a clear cut between the hate against Judaism and the hate against the Jews has to be made. This resulted in two different ways of naming these phenomena, and furthermore determined precise and distinct periodization. The first, called anti-Judaism, covered late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and partly the Early Modern period, while antisemitism covered the modern and contemporary periods. Thus, Nirenberg, taking into account in the same historical movement the changing faces of the mode of expression of the hatred of the Jews throughout the ages, broke with a well-established historiographical tradition. This introductory lecture will present some of the most debated aspects of the controversies surrounding the question of the recurrent, eternal and irreducible hatred of the Jews.