

International Consortium for Research on Antisemitism and Racism (ICRAR)

Revitalising the study of antisemitism

The International Consortium for Research on Antisemitism and Racism (ICRAR) involves leading scholars from universities and institutes across Europe, Israel and the US who share the common goal of revitalising and reshaping the study of antisemitism. It was launched in November 2011.

The challenge

Antisemitism is an important and a contentious problem. Yet our understanding of it remains under-developed. There are two reasons for this.

First, the study of antisemitism stands in isolation – set apart from contemporary, intellectual currents that encourage new thinking and approaches. It has become divorced from related fields of scholarly inquiry such as Jewish studies and race studies. Similarly, a growing body of work on hostility to Jews by scholars who approach the subject from a broader set of concerns, gender studies or the history of Christianity for example, has made little impression on scholars who specialise in antisemitism. As a result, theoretical and methodological approaches which have invigorated other fields in recent decades have made little impact on the study of antisemitism.

The second reason relates to the politicisation of antisemitism. Too often its study has been shaped and corralled by immediate political concerns. This has not only foreshortened our understanding of antisemitism in the past and present but it has also undermined the specific contribution academics can make to overcome it.

Aims

The goal of the Consortium is to reshape and revitalise the study of antisemitism through rigorous, independent inquiry. We are predominantly a group of historians, but in our collective endeavour we will reach out across disciplinary boundaries. In so doing, we aim to encourage scholars to re-evaluate the tools they bring to the study of antisemitism, to question the predominant theoretical and methodological approaches they use, to innovate, and to extend the topics considered a part of the field.

In realising this goal we will promote a contextualised and comparative understanding of antisemitism. A contextualised understanding will seek to uncover the content, meanings, functions and dynamics of antisemitism - as it occurred in the past and recurs in the present. A comparative approach will consider antisemitism over time and place. Importantly, it will also explore the connections between antisemitism and other racisms. Indeed, the relationship of antisemitism to racism both historically and today will be a particular concern for us.

Promoting new thinking

The Consortium will organise:

- Annual Workshops
- Summer schools
- Publications

These will be interdisciplinary in scope, explore the cross-currents of time and place and address topical and theoretical questions and issues. Taking examples from the past to the present day, historical and multidisciplinary perspectives will aid our understanding of contemporary concerns and phenomena.

The Consortium's first workshop, *Boycotts: Past and Present* will be held in London in 2012/13, hosted by the Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism.

Founding members

David Feldman, Director, Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism, Birkbeck, University of London

Scott Ury, Head, Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, Tel Aviv University

François Guesnet, Sidney and Elizabeth Corob Reader in Modern Jewish History, University College London

Jonathan Judaken, Spence L. Wilson Chair in Humanities, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee

Veronika Lipphardt, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science; Friedrich Meinecke Institute, Free University, Berlin.

Michael Miller, Central European University, Budapest

Amos Morris-Reich, University of Haifa; Director, Bucerius Institute for Research of Contemporary German History and Society, Haifa

Maurice Samuels, Director, Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism, New Haven, Connecticut

Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, Director, Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University, Berlin

The co-convenors of the Consortium are David Feldman and Scott Ury

For more information on the International Consortium for Research on Antisemitism and Racism please e-mail: ICRAR@bbk.ac.uk.