

Nicholas Courtman
Erin Hochman
Lisa Pine
Julia Ng

Leo Baeck Institute
London
Lecture Series 2025

Belonging
and Exclusion

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Does belonging always require exclusion? This lecture series explores this universal question through the lens of the German-Jewish experience, a community deeply shaped by its complex relationship to inclusion and exclusion. Spanning key moments in modern history, these talks examine German-Jewish thinkers' responses to the dominant 'Protestant ethic', debates over nationalism in interwar Germany and Austria, the warped ideology of Adolf Hitler, and the long struggle of German Jews to reclaim citizenship after the Holocaust. Join us as we situate these experiences within today's urgent debates about identity and belonging.

Lectures in this series are held at Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU and are also live streamed on Zoom. Places at Senate House are strictly limited and must be reserved by contacting the Leo Baeck Institute London at info@lbilondon.ac.uk. Admission is free. Lectures will begin promptly at 5.30pm. Latecomers may not be admitted.

Zoom links will be shared closer to the dates of individual events through our lecture announcements via email, social media, and our website (www.lbilondon.ac.uk). To participate online, please follow the registration instructions provided in these communications.

Nicholas Courtman
King's College London, UK
(Un)Welcome Returns? Re-Naturalisation Rights of German Jews in Germany
5.30pm, Thursday, 27th March 2025

Since 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany has allowed former citizens, whose citizenship was revoked by the Nazis due to their Jewish faith or 'race', to reclaim it. Yet, over the past 75 years, there have been significant changes regarding which German Jews – and which descendants – can enjoy that right. This talk tracks those developments, from the restrictive, often antisemitic decisions made in the 1950s, to attempts to uphold those regulations in the following decades, through to the 2021 reform of the German Nationality Act that finally redressed such exclusions.

Nicholas Courtman is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in History and Languages at King's College London, working on the Alfred Landecker-funded project 'Citizenship after Hitler: Continuity and Change in German Citizenship Law'. He completed his PhD in German Studies at the University of Cambridge and previously worked at The Expert Council on Integration and Migration in Berlin, authoring a report on naturalisation practices for the German government. He has also served as an expert witness in two Bundestag hearings on reparative justice in citizenship law.



Erin Hochman
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, USA
Rethinking German Nationalism in the Interwar Period
5.30pm, Thursday 22nd May 2025
(online-only talk)

Due to the horrors of the Third Reich, we have come to think of German nationalism as inherently antisemitic, racist, antidemocratic, and violent. This talk challenges this conventional interpretation. It shows how the defenders of the Weimar and First Austrian Republics used the *großdeutsch* idea, the notion that Austria should be part of a German nation-state, to create a democratic nationalism. Unlike their conservative and right-wing opponents, these republicans did not view democracy and Germany, socialism and nationalism, or Jew and German as mutually exclusive categories. As such, the triumph of Nazi ideas about nationalism was far from inevitable.

Erin Hochman is Associate Professor of History at Southern Methodist University. She is the author of *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss* (Cornell University Press, 2016). Her current book project examines how various political groups in the Weimar Republic used the concept of a German diaspora to support or challenge democracy, as well as the involvement of so-called Germans abroad in Germany's political struggles.



Lisa Pine
Institute of Historical Research, University of London, UK
The LBI London Summer Lecture
Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: Reflections 100 Years On
5.30pm, Thursday 10th July 2025

Hitler and the history of the Nazis remain extremely popular topics and ones that never cease to attract people's interest, even fascination. It is crucial to comprehend the nature of *Mein Kampf*, the mindset of its author, Adolf Hitler, and the ideology he espoused that brought untold tragedy to millions of people – death, destruction, genocide and war. The book presents a dangerous set of ideas, regrettably ones that still have followers today, one hundred years after *Mein Kampf* was originally penned. This lecture focusses on some key themes of the text, as well as examining the work in its historical context.

Lisa Pine is Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London. Her main research interests are the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. She is the author or editor of nine books, the most recent of which is a co-authored book (with Kees Boterbloem), *Soviet and Nazi Posters: Propaganda and Policies* (Bloomsbury, 2025).



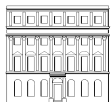
Julia Ng
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK
A Politics of Inaction: Daoism in German-Jewish Thought
5.30pm, Thursday 27th November 2025

In the early twentieth century, German-Jewish thinkers converged upon Daoism as a means to criticise state power and the dominance of economic productivity in modern society. Figures like Moses Mendelssohn, Franz Rosenzweig, and Walter Benjamin explored how Daoist ideas could inspire alternative ways of organising social and economic life, thereby challenging stereotypes of 'China' as passive or non-productive. This talk examines how their engagement with Daoism offered a vision of religion's role in everyday life that moved beyond racialised notions of activity and inactivity, and the mercantilist-salvational paradigm then dominant in Western societies.

Julia Ng is Reader in Critical Theory and founding Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought at Goldsmiths, University of London. A specialist in the work of Walter Benjamin, whose essay 'Toward the Critique of Violence' she recently translated for a critical edition she co-edited for Stanford University Press (2021), she is currently completing a book on Daoism and Capitalism with support from a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship.



The Leo Baeck Institute
London Lecture Series
2025 is organised
by the Leo Baeck
Institute London, in
cooperation with the
German Historical
Institute London



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LEO BAECK INSTITUTE LONDON
for the Study of German-Jewish
History and Culture

Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium
des Innern, für Bau
und Heimat

aufgrund eines Beschlusses
des Deutschen Bundestages